

vol. { 7 }

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

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المجلد { 7 }



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

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Published by :



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Tel +97126265151

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Printing & Binding:

Printing Group

info@printinggroup.com

ISBN: 978-9948-36-806-9

First edition 1441 H. - 2020

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The Chapter of

al-An'am

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

The chapter of *al-An`am* which was revealed in Mecca comes right after a chapter revealed in Medina in the arrangement of the Quran per the instructions given on the final review of the Quran which took place during the last *Ramadan* in the life of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and in the presence of Jibril. We know that the Quran has two arrangements; one which follows the chronological order of revelation, and another which follows the already existing written arrangement. The chronological order tells us whether a given chapter was revealed in Mecca or Medina. Someone might say, ‘The True Lord *Glorified is He* revealed these noble words on Mount ‘Arafat: ‘...Today I have perfected your religion for you, and completed My blessing upon you...’ (*al-Ma`ida*: 3), so how could it be said that it is a revelation from Medina?’ This question means that we need to properly understand the terms ‘Meccan’ and ‘Medinan’. There are certain verses of the Quran which were revealed in Medina and others which were revealed in Mecca, and there are others which were revealed between both locations, in addition to others which were revealed between the Heavens and Earth. The term ‘Meccan’ refers to the verses which were revealed before the emigration, and the term ‘Medinan’ refers to the verses which were revealed after the emigration, even if they were revealed in Mecca.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted the Quran to have a chronological order that follows the revelation and another for the written form. He wanted the Quran to restore the balance of human life after it went chaotic. The balance of human life went chaotic because of people who did not believe in Allah, or people who believed in Allah but associated partners with Him and worshipped idols with the pretext that they worshiped these idols so they would bring them nearer to the true God. Allah says, ‘...And those who take

protectors besides Him [say], “We only worship them so that they may bring us nearer to Allah in position.” (az-Zumar: 3) Others worshipped fire, or followed a revealed religion after they altered it a bit or a lot.

The ones who were nearest to believing in Allah were those who believed in the messages which were revealed before Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Their messengers came to them bearing miracles and scriptures of guidance; and logically such people would be closer to believing than others. Therefore, we first had to deal with the idolaters, and we only engage the people of the Scripture at a later stage, since the latter were familiar with revealed religions sent from a deity by means of messengers.

The parts of the Quran which were revealed first in Mecca came with the essential postulates of doctrine so prominent, namely establishing the existence of One Deity who resides over all existence. In Medina, however, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke with the people of the Scripture about all the affairs of religion, after the principle of monotheism had been firmly engrained.

This arrangement was therefore logical for there were two waves in the world at the time: a wave of atheism and a wave of distortion seeking to distort the way of Allah. Therefore, the believers as well as Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were, in essence, with the people of the Scripture because at least they believed in a Deity, and they believed that a Deity would send messengers bearing guidance and miracles to prove the truth of their messages. Even those of them who went astray continued to refer to the scriptures, which were revealed to them, even though they had altered them.

We know that prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was on the side of the Byzantines when they fought the Persians; and when the Byzantines were defeated, the believers grieved, whereas the disbelievers rejoiced. Being Christians, the Byzantines were People of the Scripture, and their defeat meant that the followers of the Divine revelation had been defeated by the followers of atheism. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to portray this for us, and He wanted to incline our hearts towards those who believed in Him, even if their image of Him and His message was flawed, or their understanding of what the messengers had brought was flawed as well. So,

Allah revealed, 'Alif Lam Mim. The Byzantines have been defeated. In a near land, and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome within a few years. Allah's is the command before and after; and on that day, the believers shall rejoice, with the help of Allah...' (*ar-Rum*: 1-5). The believers rejoiced to see the Byzantines defeat the Persians because the Byzantines had a connection to Divinity, to messengers, to religious guidance and revelation. Allah clarified it as thus to show our position, and to make it a miracle for His Book and Messenger, bearing in mind that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was present at the headquarters of the call of Islam, Arabia, and he did not have embassies, spies or a 'war office' to give him news or tell him of the Byzantine preparations for the counter-attack.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* predicted the results of a battle which would take place (seven or nine years later) between the Byzantines and Persians, and in which the Byzantines would triumph, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* made a wager with the idolaters about this. He stated that the Byzantines would defeat Persia within five years, and he told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about this, so the Prophet said to him, 'A *bid*' (few) means something between three to nine, so increase the stakes and lengthen the time.' The wager was thus settled for one hundred camels with a nine-year deadline.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was speaking so confidently, for he was conveying Allah's message, and Allah had placed this news in the Quran which would be read and recited in prayer and preserved until the end of time; and the One Who spoke these words could not lie, for He has domination over the entire universe. No man of military expertise in our time can predict the exact result of any future battle, despite all the intelligence that can be gathered about the strength and preparations of its parties. But Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was conveying what Allah Himself said on the matter, and so he was fully confident.

Whilst Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was facing the atheist rivals, his heart was with the people of the Scripture; and we may also observe that the people of the Scripture used to predict the advent of a messenger. Did some of the people of the Scripture in Medina, namely the

Jews, not say to the tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj, 'Time is nigh for the advent of a prophet whom we shall follow, and slay you (fighting by his side) as 'Ad and Iram were slain'? But they disbelieved in him, once he came because he threatened their authority and historical power.

So, the revelation of the Quran began in Mecca and later moved to Medina. But in the written order of the Quran, as we know, the Medinan chapters came first, and then the Meccan. This is what Allah willed when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* reviewed the Quran with Jibril *peace be upon him* in the last *Ramadan* in Prophet Muhammad's life.

The concept of faith is always the same: believing in Allah, the revelation, the messengers and religion. The benefit of all of this is that it leads to the establishment of order in life, an order which is essential to life's proper functioning, whether the people believe or disbelieve. This order which governs life was revealed first in the Medinan chapters, yet Allah did not completely leave it out of the Meccan chapters. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted His Messenger to capture the hearts of the believers first to face the forces of atheism; but some of them differed and rejected the route of the messengers.

So, this is all we have to say about the chapter of *al-Ma'ida*; and although it was revealed in Medina and the chapter of *al-An'am* in Mecca, yet the ending of *al-Ma'ida* is perfectly aligned with the beginning of *al-An'am*. Allah *Glorified is He* closes the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* saying, 'Control of the heavens and earth and everything in them belongs to Allah; He has power over all things.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 120) And He opens the chapter of *al-An'am* saying, 'Praise belongs to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light...' (*al-An'am*: 1).

Allah *Glorified is He* is All-powerful and has Domination over everything. He did not seize this domination from anyone nor did He stake a claim to it, but rather, He is the One Who created the heavens and the earth, and brought darkness and light into being.

Allah *Glorified is He* begins the chapter of *al-An'am* saying:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ
وَالنُّورَ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ

Praise belongs to God who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light; yet the disbelievers set up equals to their Lord! [1] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 1)

When you hear the word *al-hamd* (all praise), then you must understand that it is a word of praise, glorification and gratitude. Praise is present within one's natural disposition and we direct it towards Allah because He has clarified and explained to us that praise is for Him so that we may not differ about where to direct it. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who has empowered every man with some of His means.

Ask about anything and the natural sequence of events will always lead to the sole doer; Allah. Hence, all praise must be directed towards Allah.

Let me give you an example. Imagine a man landing with a plane on some deserted place in which there are no means of sustenance whatsoever. He wants to eat, drink, and cover himself to sleep, but he cannot find anything to do any of these. He falls asleep for a while and then wakes up, and is surprised to find a table laid with the finest food and drinks. Next to it, he finds a tent with a bed, covers, and a tap for washing. When he sees all of this, he cannot help using any of it before wondering about its origin. He surely wants to thank whoever blessed him with all these abundant blessings. Just as with us when we first came face to face with the universe and we found things that benefit us without having anything to do about providing them, neither us and nor the ones who preceded us. This is because no one claimed this role for himself, so you find a sun rising, wind blowing, water flowing, land green with verdure and flora, all of which serve you. Now the True Lord *Glorified is He* informs us that He is the One Who has granted us all of this, so should we not thank Him?

When humanity benefited from the electric lamp, they clamoured in honour of Edison, the inventor, so how about the Creator of the sun which illuminates the entire universe? Human inventions immortalize the inventors and we go through great lengths to honour them, but what about the Creator

of the entire universe? Why do we honour the maker of the lamp which only illuminates limited parts of the earth, while some of us are heedless of the transcendence of the sun's Creator which illuminates the earth in the daytime and is hidden for half the day so that we can rest? This is because the earth is constantly moving, then when the sun sets for you, it rises over somewhere else; and thus, it stays in its orbit.

Therefore, all praise is for Allah when man came into existence, and found all the essentials of his life that cannot be subjected to human power, or to human claims. Indeed, praise is something that must exist, even if mankind differed over whom to praise. We direct it towards Allah because He is the One Who grants the blessings.

The chapters of the Quran in which the Creator begins with praise for Allah are five: *al-Fatiha*, *al-An'am*, *al-Kahf*, *Saba'*, and *Fatir*. They are focused on two things: concrete edification related to strengthening our bodies through nourishment, or procreation by means of marriage or the spiritual and value-based edification. Hence, Allah provides us with the heavenly method. In one instance, He says, 'Praise be to Allah, Lord of all the worlds' and the word *rabb* (Lord) means that He is educating humanity towards an objective and a mission, and this *tarbiyah* (education) requires abstract and concrete components; spiritual and systematic. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses it about the entire universe, as in the opening of the Quran, when He says that all praise is due to Him alone, the Lord of all words. 'All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.' (*al-Fatiha*: 2)

He is thus, the Master of all the worlds, and He is their Owner and their Educator. He is the One Who raises us in such a way that we can carry on our tasks in life with the help of our strong bodies, with procreation by means of marriage and with our set of solid values. In another instance the True Lord *Glorified is He* brings to focus the method only such as when He says that all praise is due to Him for sending down the Scripture to His servant and making it unerringly straight. 'All praise is due to Allah, who has sent down upon His servant the Book and has not made therein any deviance.' (*al-Kahf*: 1) In another instance, He uses it regarding the tangible or perceived things and says, 'Praise belongs to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and

made darkness and light...' (*al-An'am*: 1). Here He is specifying tangible things which can be perceived like the heavens and the earth, darkness and light, and these are things that we can clearly see. Another instance the True Lord *Glorified is He* associates things that are unseen along with tangible things, as when He tells us, 'All praise is due to Allah, Creator of the heavens and the earth, who made the angel messengers having wings; two, three or four. He increases in creation what He wills. Indeed, Allah is over all things competent.' (*Fatir*: 1)

He mentions all of it in its entirety in the opening chapter of the Quran (*al-Fatiha*), and He mentions the method only in *al-Kahf*, and mentions the perceived universe in *al-An'am*, and both the unseen and tangible in *Fatir*.

Therefore, praise is deserved and deserving, and it is directed towards Allah, even if it ostensibly seems to come from other than Allah because all means in the life of this universe go to Allah in the end. Here, in *al-An'am*, the True Lord *Glorified is He* singles out the praise of Allah, who created the heavens and the earth and everything that exists in them. After that, He mentions darkness and light. As you know, *khalq* (creation) is the bringing of something into existence from naught, while *ja'al* (making) is creating something then directing it towards its purpose. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* used 'made' with 'darkness and light'. Darkness is the default while light is created; light dispels darkness.

Therefore, the original state is that of darkness which has different shades, such as the darkness of a cave, the darkness of an ocean and the darkness of a well. In another verse the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us, '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).

Even though we know the direction of our hand, yet from the layers of darkness, we cannot see it. Hence, the True Lord *Glorified is He* specifies praise here for the creation of the heavens and the earth because they are the vessels for all existence. The scholars say, 'Do not assume that this is a concrete darkness where things are just concealed, and nor assume that this is a

concrete light where things can just be perceived! Rather, you should assume that the darkness and light are both concrete and abstract'. That is why, Allah *Glorified is He* brings darkness in the plural, and light in the singular because darkness has various causes, whereas light has only one cause.

In another verse Allah tells us, 'And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This He has instructed you so that you may become righteous.' (*al-An'am*: 153) The *subul* (other ways) come in the plural, while Allah's *Sabil* (way) comes in the singular because it is just one, as if the ways of Satan are numerous and the ways of people's whims are numerous. But the way that leads to Allah's path is one, and therefore, Allah caused light to be 'guidance' and *zhulumat* (darkness) to be misguidance. '...and made darkness and light; yet the disbelievers set up equals to their Lord!' (*al-An'am*: 1) We say – and to Allah belongs the highest similitude – that when Allah gives man in abundance and He bestows upon him that which he passes on in courtesy to someone else saying, 'I made such-and-such for so-and-so!' and he denies Allah's role.' So, the word *thumma* (yet) is used here to indicate time lapse. *Thumma* is a conjunction like *fa`* which is used to indicate two events without a time lapse between them. As when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Then He causes him to die, then assigns to him a grave.' ('*Abasa*: 21)

Whoever loves someone and this person dies, he buries him quickly before his body rots in front of him. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us that after brining man to the grave, 'then' He will rise him again to life (for judgment), 'Then when He wills, He will resurrect him.' ('*Abasa*: 22)

This indicates the time lapse extended until the Day of Resurrection, where the True Lord *Glorified is He* will resurrect His creation. The time lapse could also be a gap in rank or status. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses *thumma* here as a separator between the creation of the heavens and earth and the making of darkness and light, and between those who disbelieve in their Lord, '...yet the disbelievers set up equals to their Lord!' (*al-An'am*: 1) These are the ones who equate Allah with others. We can regard, 'set up equals to their Lord' as their subject of disbelief, i.e. because of their disbelief they equate others with Allah. Or, it could mean that they turn away from the

True Lord to other than Him, or that they ascribe partners to Him. This statement applies to atheists or those who ascribe partners to Allah. He is indeed the One Who brought the heavens and earth into existence from naught and no one can dare ask Him, 'How did You create the heavens and earth'? This is because Allah tells us in another verse, 'I did not make them witness to the creation of the heavens and the earth or to the creation of themselves, and I would not have taken those who lead others astray as assistants.' (*al-Kahf*: 51)

He brought the heavens and earth into existence from naught, and the heavens and earth became the vessel of the whole being. He created them before man and before the rest of creation. No one from His creation witnessed Him creating them. Thus, we cannot ask Allah 'how'. He created the heavens and earth; rather, we should take our information about the creation from the Creator, Allah. Some people have claimed that the earth was separated from the sun and then it cooled down, but this is just a mere hypothesis. We can never be sure because none of us saw the creation of the heavens and earth. To such people I say, '...I would not have taken those who lead others astray as assistants.' (*al-Kahf*: 51)

The Quran provides the answer even before these people came to existence. It is as if Allah is telling us that these misleading people will come at some point in history even before they existed. They did not witness creation; they just 'happened unexpectedly' upon the heavens and earth, like all of us. So, they should not have made facts from mere guesses about things they neither know nor have witnessed. It is Just like the ones who claim that man was first created an ape, although they were not with Allah when He created the universe and man, and, nor were they His partners. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* teaches us to have etiquette with Him, and tells us not to follow blindly what we do not know to be true, for the ears, eyes, and heart will be questioned about all these: 'And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those, [one] will be questioned' (*al-Isra'*: 36) It is upon us to learn about the creation from Allah *Glorified is He* who says:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ، ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٢﴾

He is the one who created you from clay and specified a term [for you] and another fixed time, known only to Him; yet still you doubt! [2] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 2)

He brings before us the matter of creation and He has made it clear that He created us from clay after talking about the creation of the heavens and earth. Before that, He informed us that He created us from dust, moulded mud, and dry clay. These are all complementary and not contradictory elements. Likewise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has made it clear to us that He created everything from water. Thus, we understand that water was mixed with dust to become clay, then moulded mud and then dry clay, and all of them are complementary parts of a sequence. We did not witness the creation, but we have learned about the matter of creation from Allah *Glorified is He* and we know that clay is a substance for cultivation and fertilization.

When scientists analysed the earth, they found that clay is comprised of several elements, and the largest proportion of these elements is oxygen, then carbon, then hydrogen, then fluorine, then chlorine, then sodium, then magnesium, then potassium, then iron, then cellulose and then manganese and other elements.

The elements in the universe are more than one hundred, but not all of them are part of the composition of man. Man is only composed from those elements that benefit him in terms of structure, adornment and other things. Allah tells us that He shall show us His signs in every region of the earth and in ourselves until it becomes clear to us that this is the Truth. Allah says, 'We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?' (*Fussilat*: 53)

The scientist disbelievers who analysed the earth mentioned the results which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed us of in conveying the inimitable and everlasting Quran that is preserved by Allah's Command as a confirming proof. The True Lord *Glorified is He* kept this proof for us till a non-believing scientist came along to discover some of the realities that were revealed in the Quran.

None of us witnessed the moment of creation, but we witness death which is the demolition of life, and the demolition of something is the reverse of its formation. We see how building demolishers start their work by first demolishing the external parts – which were added last; they remove the glass sheets first, then the wood planks, then the bricks, much so like death in reverse of life. Man's *ruh* (spirit) departs first, and then his body dries till it becomes like dry clay. Then it becomes moulded mud, i.e. stinking and decaying. Then the remaining moisture evaporates and the body turns into dust. Therefore, we believe our Creator when He tells us about our creation and when He tells us about creating the heavens and earth. When someone says other than this, we tell him, 'I did not make them witness to the creation of the heavens and the earth or to the creation of themselves, and I would not have taken those who lead others astray as assistants.' (*al-Kahf*: 51) Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* informs us here of the decreed term, '...and specified a term [for you] and another fixed time, known only to Him; yet still you doubt!' (*al-An'am*: 2)

Not even one of us knows his decreed term, no matter how often he visits the doctor. The specified term is the decreed term that has been determined for each of us. The fixed term (known only to Allah) is our term in the interstice between the physical and spiritual worlds (*barzakh*) and our resurrection from the graves. Hence, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'They ask you, [O Muhammad], about the Hour and when is its arrival. Say, "Its knowledge is only with my Lord. None will reveal its time except Him. It lies heavily upon the heavens and the earth. It will not come upon you except unexpectedly." They ask you as if you are familiar with it. Say, "Its knowledge is only with Allah, but most of the people do not know."' (*al-A'raf*: 187)

The initial steps leading to someone's end and the approach of death could be revealed by way of what Allah unveils, i.e. by means of science. Yet, this is not of the occult because in some cases a person may regain health and recovers fully. People around him might even say that 'A miracle has happened'. As for the fixed term, it is known only to Him; we cannot know anything about it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* determines five things to be only known to Him. He is the One Who has the Knowledge of the Hour of

Resurrection; it is He Who sends down the relieving rain; He knows what is hidden in the wombs; no soul knows what it will reap tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die; it is Allah Who is All Knowing and All-Aware. Allah says, 'Indeed, Allah [alone] has knowledge of the Hour and sends down the rain and knows what is in the wombs. And no soul perceives what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul perceives in what land it will die. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.' (*Luqman*: 34)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has indeed spoken about the place but He has not spoken about the time. '...and specified a term [for you]...' (*al-An'am*: 2). He decreed a specified time for every individual, and then He decreed another fixed term for everything. The specified terms of individuals succeed one another until the fixed term of all comes which is Resurrection Day, '...yet still you doubt!' (*al-An'am*: 2) The proofs conveyed by Allah are enough to block any doubt, but still there are those who doubt after all these signs. After this, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ وَجَهْرَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٣﴾

**He is God in the heavens and on earth, He knows
your secrets and what you reveal, and He knows
what you do [3] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 3)**

The noun 'Allah' is a proper noun indicating the One Who is Necessarily Existent '*wajib al-wujud*'. It is the name that Allah has chosen for Himself and it comprises all the attributes of perfection. We call the other attributes the 'beautiful names' such as *al-Qadir* (The Fully Capable), *as-Sami`* (The All-Hearing), *al-Basir* (The All-Seeing), *al-Hayy* (The Ever-Living), *al-Qayyum* (The All-Sustaining), *al-Qahhar* (The All-Vanquisher). All of them are attributes that became names because they are absolute with respect to Allah. When these attributes are applied in their absolute sense then they belong to Allah, but when (some of them) are applied to other than Allah, they come in their relative sense. As for the name Allah, it can only apply to the True Lord *Glorified is He*.

Allah challenges the disbelievers, to name anything other than Him Allah, and He asks them if they know of anyone carrying the same name!

Allah says, 'Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them - so worship Him and have patience for His worship. Do you know of any similarity to Him?' (*Maryam*: 65)

The disbelievers heard this and none of them dared to call anything Allah, and this is the type of challenge that sustains until the Final Hour. No one dares to say its opposite or to give it to a thing or a being that is other than Allah. We do not know of anything that existed in its essence in pre-eternity before the universe came into existence besides Allah.

As for the lesser things in life which are considered non-essentials, they did not bring themselves in existence but required a maker. A cup of water, for example, does not perform an essential task in life because man can drink water with his hand or directly using his mouth. This cup requires the knowledge, capabilities, power, and wisdom of man. Knowledge comes to man with the power that Allah has granted him, so man searched the universe, found sand, and discovered a means for melting it and blowing it into a vessel. Then he discovered a way for clarifying the molten glass using chemicals and finally he managed to 'make' a cup.

The scientific and manufacturing process that the cup goes through at the hands of man is massive even though it is not one of the absolute necessities of life. It is a luxury. So, how about the necessities such as the sun, the moon, air, and water? These things too must have a maker! If the makers of non-essential things, apply for 'patents' for their inventions to reap their benefit, then how about the One Who made everything, not for His own benefit but solely for the benefit of His creation?

We all know the inventor of the lamp and his history, where he was born, where he lived, where he studied. So what about the One Who made the sun, the stars, the earth, and man? Out of His utter mercy, the True Lord *Glorified is He* informed us that He is the Creator, and no one challenged Him and claimed that they created the universe. Since there is nothing in existence that influences without an influencing factor, then we must know that because Allah said that He created and originated, and no one challenged Him, then surely what He says is true. If there is another maker of the universe, and he does not know what Allah has informed us then this

forgetful, slumbering maker does not deserve to be a Deity. And if he knows what Allah has informed us, and yet he dares not speak out the truth about himself, then this imposter has no right to divinity.

As the True Lord *Glorified is He* has taught us and informed us with decisive proofs that He is the One Who created the universe, and so long as that is the case, then we must listen to Him. The practical implementation for this would be to obey Him in what He commanded and prohibited. Indeed, the world of the *malakut* that we do not see, worships Him and everything in existence carries out His command and glorifies and praises Him. The seven heavens and the earth and everyone in them glorify Him. There is not a single thing that does not celebrate His praise, though we do not understand their praise; He is most forbearing, most forgiving. Allah says, 'The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him. And there is not a thing except that it exalts [Allah] by His praise, but you do not understand their [way of] exalting. Indeed, He is ever Forbearing and Forgiving.' (*al-Isra'*: 44)

The seven heavens and the earth and all the created things they contain indicate the precision to the Maker and His kingship. He is transcendent and sanctified above having any partner, and everything has a means of glorifying and affirming His transcendence, but we do not see it or comprehend it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us here that He is worshipped and existent in all of existence. 'He is Allah in the heavens and on earth; He knows your secrets and what you reveal...' (*al-An'am*: 3). Since He is worshipped, then He must be obeyed in His commands and prohibitions; but some of us obey and some of us do not. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has made a recompense for obedience: either bliss or punishment. There is a difference between the existence of something and its realisation, so never confuse realising existence and existence itself. Not being able to realise the existence of one thing, does not mean it is not in existence.

Examples of this can be seen throughout history. The Creator has left for His creation secrets in existence that they can deduce to unravel the benefits beyond them. These things were there carrying out their tasks in existence even before man knew about them, things like the force of gravity, for instance. It existed before man discovered it and it carried out its role before

man knew of it. Such things are mentioned in the Quran in a way that did not cause confusion at the time of its revelation. Ponder Allah's saying, 'Indeed, Allah holds the heavens and the earth, lest they cease. And if they should cease, no one could hold them [in place] after Him. Indeed, He is Forbearing and Forgiving.' (*Fatir*: 41)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* brought into existence gravity so that the heavens and earth can carry out their tasks, and from gravity, He has created a unique system that protects the universe from collapsing by His Power. Hence, gravity existed the whole time, but man did not know about it until recently; this is the difference between existence and the realisation of existence.

So, when Allah tells us, 'Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle, the Acquainted' (*al-An'am*: 103), does this not affirm that the essence of the True Lord cannot be seen by the eyes whereas He knows everything that is hidden from our limited vision? In the universe, there are things that we might not encompass even though He created them and placed them at our service, and after we understand them they remain acting in our service. If the True Lord *Glorified is He* relates something to us that we do not comprehend, we cannot say, 'Since I cannot understand it, then it does not exist'. For example, we cannot fully fathom electricity or gravity or the epitome of life's secrets (*ruh* [the spirit]) that endows us with the secret of life, and keeps all our limbs under its influence. When the spirit departs, the body becomes a stiff corpse. No one knows where the spirit is and no one understands it. No one has ever heard it, smelt it, tasted it, or touched it. Indeed, the spirit is present in our essence and we do not realise it. So, that is how we truly are unable to realise only one thing that is created by Allah; so how can you realise the Creator, and that He is Allah? Indeed, even if you were to realise Him, you would not become a deity still. This is because, when you realise something, your extremities will have power over it, and it will be subordinated to your eyes, your hands and so on. But the All-Powerful, whose power is absolute, will never become realised or subordinated, and it is from His Utter Magnitude that He remains as such.

Another example is the dreams which we see when we sleep; are these dreams found inside our bodies, or what? *Hilm* (forbearance) is a type of

restraint which you extend towards people to endure and show sympathy; it is an emotional reaction, but do you realise what this sentiment is? Indeed, it is one of the abstract emotions you have within you that keeps you in motion without you realizing them. Like the courage that you use to attack or evade, but you never see or touch. You do not know its shape, colour, or taste. Likewise, the Most Exalted Who conducts this universe is not grasped by human vision. What bears a lot on people is that they try to associate the realised with the existing; but if we looked profoundly into the universe, we will surely deduct that there is a difference between realisation and existence.

We know that the name Allah itself is an utterance that we articulate in full comprehension that He is the Creator *the Most Exalted* and that He claims it resolutely. By way of example – man invented the television, but before it was brought into existence it was non-existent and had no name. It came to have a name only from the time man brought it into existence, a name that suits its specific task. As for the name Allah, it is existent and eternal before our time and before the messengers informed us of it. Allah has a name in every language, and the existence of this name in all languages, in a different pronunciation, is a proof on the precedence of Allah's existence. Then disbelief came, and we know that disbelief is an attempt to conceal the First Existence. This means that the word 'disbelief' indicates faith, and what really bears on man is his attempt to put a shape for the Most Exalted Existence, a shape that is defined by the capacities and limitation of humanity. But no one can restrict His Existence in a specific shape because it is from His Magnitude that we cannot picture Him. Faith in Him is a proof of Him, and He says whatever He wills about Himself; and I would love for you to remember this following example and to say it to your young ones.

Let us suppose that a man is sitting with his family in an apartment, and there is a knock on the door. Everyone sitting in the apartment is confident that someone knocked on the door and none of them differ about this. One of the children says, 'The one knocking is Mohammad'. The second one says, 'It is Mahmoud'. The third one says, 'No, it is Ibrahim'. The wife says, 'I am sure it is a woman'. However, one of the children says, 'No, it is a man'. The father says, 'Maybe it is a police officer who came to ask me

something'. The wife responds, 'Expect goodness. You only do goodness, so only goodness would come knocking at your door'. Here the family differed not over the existence of a knocker, but over realising his essence. The father says, 'Instead of all the confusion, let us ask him who he is'. The one knocking responds, 'I am so-and-so'.

The same goes for the universe. Man comes across it and asks who created it. This is because heedlessness overtook us after Adam *peace be upon him* knew his Lord and after the True Lord *Glorified is He* made Adam's offspring bear witness that He is their Lord. Then Allah sent messengers to convey to the creation His way, His name and His attributes. With that, Allah did not want to fatigue His creation, and by way of the messengers, mankind was informed that He is the Most Praiseworthy Creator.

The plight of the philosophers is that they were not content with rationalising Allah; they wanted to picture Him as well. This is an impossible matter. Therefore, we say that it is upon us to listen to the True Lord *Glorified is He* when He says whatever He wills about Himself ending any real need for conflict over the issue. He tells us, 'He is Allah in the heavens and on earth' (*al-An'am*: 3). Beware, O Muslim, of thinking that the heavens and the earth here are a finite vessel. If you do not know the place of your spirit in your body, then how can you know the place of Allah? ⁽¹⁾ Allah wants to tell us that He is worshipped in the heavens and on earth.

We should keep in consideration that some of the verses of the Quran baffle us so that we would always be occupied with the words of Allah. Had the Quran been revealed with over-simplified ideas and words, the meanings of His Noble Book would not have been renewed with every age. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* had intended this so that the people could be reassured of their faith in every age. Some of the first people who tried to delve into the Quran wondered a lot about Allah's statement, 'And it is Allah who is [the only] deity in the heaven, and on the earth [the only] deity. And He is the Wise, the Knowing.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 84)

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

They questioned the repetition that He is Allah in the heaven and Allah on earth. Some superficial people thought the repetition meant that there is a God in the heavens and another God on earth. They did not understand that the intended meaning is; He is Allah who is worshipped in the heavens and Allah who is worshipped on earth, and He possesses absolute wisdom in all His actions and encompasses His entire universe. All that the True Lord *Glorified is He* intends by this statement is to grasp the human minds and keep them busy with His remembrance. To those who did not understand the meaning we say, 'There is a rule in the language about the definite and indefinite'. When we say, 'the man came to me', this man is known to both the speaker and the listener. However, when we say 'a man came to me', this man is not known to the listener and might be known to the speaker. If we say 'a man came to me and I honoured a man', then the speaker is talking about two men; one of them came and the other was honoured. When the speaker says 'a man came to me and then I honoured the man', then the speech here is about one man. Therefore, when the indefinite is repeated as an indefinite, we are talking about two different entities, but when the indefinite is repeated as a definite, and then they are the same entity. So, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'And it is Allah who is [the only] deity in the heaven, and on the earth [the only] deity. And He is the Wise, the Knowing.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 84) Some people thought that 'Allah' is indefinite, and when it was repeated, this meant they are two different entities. Had this been the case, the whole being would have been ruined. But the dominant rule came from the scholars who realised the essence of the text. Scholars of monotheism said, 'We must not forget that the word *alladhi* (it is He) here is a relative pronoun which indicates to us that the True Lord's connection to the heaven and the earth is one'. Therefore, we say to the ones who reflect on this verse, 'Do not stop at the repeated indefinite and forget about the relative pronoun because the relative pronoun is definite'.

'He is Allah in the heavens and on earth, He knows your secrets and what you reveal ...' (*al-An'am*: 3). This means that Allah *Glorified is He* is one God and He knows what you keep secret and what you do openly. So, Allah *Glorified is He* rewards and punishes you per your actions. Do not think then, O man, that you will escape being brought to task by your Lord *Glorified is He*. Since He knows what you keep secret, He knows with greater

reason what you do openly. If Allah *Glorified is He* had said that He only knows what is kept secret, then some people would have thought that He only knows that which is concealed because He is unseen. We may say, 'No'. Though Allah *Glorified is He* is unseen, He knows what is unseen and what is witnessed. In other words, He *Glorified is He* has such Infinite Knowledge that He does not wait until something becomes manifest; He, with His Perfect Knowledge and His Absolute Awareness knows such a thing from the beginning when it is secret and He knows and encompasses it after it becomes existent and manifest. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* records the history of knowledge within the same person, '...He knows your secrets and what you reveal ...' (*al-An'am*: 3).

Allah *Glorified is He* informs us that He does not stop at what is hidden: 'Whatever you may say aloud, He knows what you keep secret and what is even more hidden.' (*Ta Ha*: 7) Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* knows what is secret before it becomes secret. All matters are secret before they are known; and before matters become secret, they are even more hidden.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* concludes this verse by saying, '...and He knows that which you earn.' (*al-An'am*: 3) *Kasb* in Arabic originally means 'earning profits' which occurs when someone invests their capital. *Kasb* can be good or evil; the one who earns through evil means is the one who goes beyond what Allah *Glorified is He* has permitted. On the other hand, the one who earns it through good is the one who wins. So, if a man does one good deed, he earns the reward of ten good deeds. The speaker is Allah *Glorified is He* Who deserves all praise because He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and darkness and light. However, the disbelievers at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stood in opposition of the Oneness of Allah *Glorified is He*. Though they were told that the True Lord *Glorified is He* created man from clay and He knows what is secret and what is even more hidden as well as the good and evil deeds we earn, none of them came to believe in the Call of the Truth and the Straight Path and follow Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

وَمَا تَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٤﴾

**But every time revelation comes to them from
their Lord, they turn their backs on it [4]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 4)**

Those disbelievers were not convinced of the signs that proved the truth of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Though he was truthful about what he conveyed from his Lord, they turned away and rejected faith. They must have listened to the guidance that showed them the reality of the worldly life. We still witness the same opposition and aversion in our time. We are now able to learn how longsome man-made things such as electric lamps and other devices can be used before they should be replaced with others. Meanwhile, we know nothing about the life span of the sun, for instance, which has never needed maintenance. We should ask ourselves, 'How do such wonders happen?'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to make it clear to us that the One Who created all creatures advises us of what He wants and shows us His signs in this universe; but man turns away and does not care for all this.

The first mistake committed by man is that he has turned away from the signs he has received from the Creator, which explain to him the facts of existence, how the universe was administered before the coming of man, and how man can make use of this universe to sustain his life and maintain his species. However, he turns away from hearing any of this. The disbelievers have not just turned away, but they have moved on to another stage: denial. They not only deserted faith, but also reached a more degrading stage outlined in the next verse. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيهِمْ أَنْبَاءُ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٥﴾

**So they denied the truth when it came to them, but the very thing they
laughed at will be brought home to them [5] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 5)**

This is a shift from turning away to denial. Turning away is just a negative behaviour, while denial is aimed at strongly opposing and obstructing

Allah's Path. Then there comes the third stage which is ridicule. Thus, we have here three stages: turning away, denial, and ridicule. The disbelievers did all of this so that they could take people away from following guidance. An example of this is what the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says concerning Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*: 'And build the Ark under Our [Watchful] Eyes and with Our Inspiration. Do not plead with Me for those who have done evil—they will be drowned. So, he began to build the Ark, and whenever the leaders of his people passed by, they laughed at him. He said, "You may scorn us now, but we will come to scorn you."' (Hud: 37-38)

Allah *Glorified is He* revealed to Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* the most truthful words and commanded him to build the Ark under His Providence and not to intercede with Him on behalf of the wrongdoing disbelievers who had not responded to Allah's Call. Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* embarked on constructing the Ark, but the disbelievers mocked him because of their ignorance and suspicions. In return, Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* made fun of everyone who laughed at him.

Let us see another example during the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* showing how Islam emerged victorious after the people of disbelief had been powerful. The arrogant transgressors amongst them came to be humiliated. Some of them were killed, while others were captured and suffered the bitterness of humiliation. Those people who had been mocking Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* included Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughirah, their chief who is mentioned in the True Lord's Statement: 'When Our Revelations are recited to him, he says, "These are just ancient fables." We shall brand him on the snout!' (*al-Qalam*: 15-16) Al-Walid was a man of great wealth, and power. He also had many children. Since he turned away from the Quran and made fun of it, Allah *Glorified is He* has made an example of him and branded his nose with a mark which exposed him; such a mark is regarded as a disgrace and shame that is never separated from him whenever he is mentioned.

These Quranic verses were revealed when the Muslims were weak. Such verses told the Muslims that that disbeliever will be struck on the nose which is the symbol of pride and arrogance. When the Battle of Badr

occurred, the Muslims saw the reality of what the Quran had stated. Indeed, it is miraculous Divine Speech whose recitation is an act of worship. Thus, every issue revealed by Allah *Glorified is He* turns to be true. After that, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَا لَمْ
نُمْكِنْ لَكُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِدْرَارًا وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَنْهَارَ تَجْرَى
مِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٦﴾

Do they not realize how many generations We destroyed before them? We established them in the earth more firmly than you, sent down abundant rain on them from the sky and made running rivers flow at their feet, yet We destroyed them for their misdeeds and raised other generations after them [6]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 6)

This is what Quraysh witnessed in its winter and summer trade journeys. They saw the ruins of `Ad, the people of Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him* and the remnants of Thamud, the people of Saleh (Shelah) *peace be upon him*. The power of `Ad and Thamud were much greater than that of Quraysh who got their supremacy only from the *Ka'ba*. If the True Lord *Glorified is He* had left Abraha to destroy the *Ka'ba*, they would not have been established on earth. The True Lord *Glorified is He* destroyed many nations with great civilizations as narrated clearly by the Quran, 'Have you [Prophet Muhammad] considered how your Lord dealt with [the people] of `Ad, of Iram, [the city] of lofty pillars, whose like has never been made in any land, and 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.' (*al-Fajr*: 6-13) Indeed, they were great civilizations that acquired fame and status in this worldly life, such as the civilization of the Pharaohs. However, the power and glory of those nations could not protect any of them from Allah's Decree of Destruction. They were utterly ruined as if they never existed. Here are the Words of the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He*: 'And We punished each one of them for their sins. Some We struck with a violent

storm, some were overcome by a sudden blast, some We made the earth swallow and some We drowned. It was not Allah who wronged them; they wronged themselves.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* repays every disbeliever in full. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed his people of what happened to the previous nations, 'Do they not realize how many generations We destroyed before them...?' (*al-An'am*: 6) A *qarn* (generation) is usually governed by a fixed time or certain conditions. As for time, a *qarn* is equal, at maximum, to one hundred years. The members of a generation who live this period may see their grandchildren during the stage of manhood. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'We sent Nuh (Noah) out to his people. He lived among them for fifty years short of a thousand...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 14). Though long, Nuh's (Noah's) life is called '*qarn*'. Therefore, *qarn* is a generation that is determined by a time frame or an intangible frame. *Qarn* of time is a period of one hundred years as we have said, whereas an intangible *qarn* could be the life span of a message or a kingdom.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells the people of disbelief that He defeated and destroyed the previous nations after He had established them on earth in different ways, '...sent down abundant rain on them from the sky and made running rivers flow at their feet, yet We destroyed them for their misdeeds and raised other generations after them.' (*al-An'am*: 6) This news comes from Allah regarding what happened to the previous peoples such as the people of Sheba. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says about those people: 'There was a sign for the people of Sheba too, in their dwelling place; two gardens, one on the right and one on the left. Eat from what your Lord has provided for you and give Him thanks, for your land is good, and your Lord, Most Forgiving.' (*Saba'*: 15)

The dwelling place of Sheba in Yemen is a sign of Allah's Power. Two flourishing gardens on the right and on the left, so that the people of Sheba can eat from Allah's Provision and thank Allah *Glorified is He* for His Blessings. Allah *Glorified is He* granted them the power to build the famous Marib Dam. They cut rugged mountains down to retain rainwater. Everything they did was only done because Allah *Glorified is He* had willed it. However, they turned away from the abundant provision that Allah *Glorified is He* had

granted them since they wanted to rely on themselves just as Qarun (Korah) did when he said, ‘... “This wealth was given to me because the knowledge I possess...”’ (*an-Naml*: 28). They thought they were capable of providing for themselves; hence, they did not thank Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* let loose on them a flood from the dam. It was a punishment that matched their misdeeds. This is how punishment is inflicted on those who disbelieve in Allah’s Blessings and turn away from His Path. Allah *Glorified is He* let one of the weakest and tiniest animals, the mouse, penetrate the dam, to have their wealth drowned and their houses buried.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about all these stories to draw the attention of his people who saw the ruins of the civilizations of ‘Ad and Thamud since vision has the greatest impact. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* informed them of those stories to realise the consequences of aversion, denial and ridicule. The True Lord *Glorified is He* asked His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to just convey the Message clearly since he is not responsible for the faith of his people. Those disbelievers were always in fear of the supremacy of ‘there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah’ because they were the ones who made gods from amongst themselves and put some of them in control of others. The strong played God for the weak; the rich played God for the poor and the learned played God for the ignorant. Meanwhile, ‘there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah’ makes all people equal, which was refused by those people since they wanted supremacy. Allah *Glorified is He* gives us an example of this when He says, ‘And they said, “Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

They did not dare defame the Quran; they rather demanded that supremacy be for a rich man from amongst the wealthy people of the two towns, Mecca and Ta’if. This statement contradicted their actions and conduct towards Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since they used to entrust their valuable belongings with him. If one of them had seen the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* doing anything bad or shameful, they would not have done such an act. He was the only one who gained their confidence despite their disbelief and denial of his Message. Thus, those people sought their own interests, even through those whom they disbelieved, and attacked.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear that those people are quite wrong and oppressive in regards to their aversion, denial, and ridicule of the Prophet's noble Message and the Glorious Quran. They are only driven by stubbornness just like the people of Pharaoh who rejected Allah's Signs after seeing them with their own eyes, though they were sure that they had been sent by Him: 'They denied them, in their wickedness and their pride, even though their souls acknowledged them as true. See how those who spread corruption met their end!' (*an-Naml*: 14) The people of Pharaoh denied the message of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* though they were certain of its truth; but they denied it out of arrogance, pride and oppression. Thus, they faced a most desperate end; this is the destiny of those who always deny Allah's signs.

Here, we are faced with new deniers of the Message of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Concerning those disbelievers, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قِرْطَاسٍ فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالُوا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا اِنْ هٰذَا اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٧﴾

**Even if We had sent down to you [Prophet] a book inscribed
on parchment, and they had touched it with their own
hands, the disbelievers would still say, 'This is nothing but
blatant sorcery'[7] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 7)**

Had this Book—the Quran—been revealed to those deniers in a written form that can be felt and seen; and had they touched it with their own hands, they would have said what every disbeliever says, 'This is obvious magic'. As one of their conditions, the deniers demanded Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he send down to them a book from heaven to read it. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* outlines their rejection by saying: 'They say, "We will not believe you [Muhammad] until you make a spring gush out of the ground for us, or until you have a garden of date palms and vines, and make rivers pour through them, or make the sky fall on us in pieces, as you claimed will happen; or bring Allah and the angels before us face to face, or have a house made of gold or ascend into the sky— even then, we will not believe in your ascension until you send a real book down

for us to read.' Say, "Glory be to my Lord! Am I anything but a mortal, a messenger?" (al-Isra': 90: 93)

After the inimitability of the Quran became clear to them, they made false demands and suggested that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bring to them one of the following signs in order that they could believe: break open a spring in the land of Mecca, the water of which would never be cut off; have a garden of palm trees and grapes in Mecca and make rivers gush forth within them; supplicate that the sky fall upon them in fragments as a severe punishment; bring Allah and the angels to be seen by them; have a house made of gold or ascend into the sky and bring them a book from Allah affirming the veracity of his Message. However, Allah the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate exalts His Essence above all His creatures that they can neither control Him, and nor can they have a share of His Omnipotence. So, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* commanded His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say in the Glorious Quran: '...Say, "Glory be to my Lord! Am I anything but a mortal, a messenger?"' (al-Isra': 93) This is because the One Who sends signs, is the Lord of all the worlds. No one dares to impose signs upon Him. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one who receives Allah's Signs; he does not propose them. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knows well that whoever suggests a sign to be revealed by Allah *Glorified is He* and then denies it, he will be punished and destroyed. This is the Way that Allah *Glorified is He* has imposed. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* learns that he is the Seal of the Prophets; thus, he will never request a sign from Allah *Glorified is He* lest Allah's Punishment befall them if they deny it. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* tells His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the insolence and arrogance of those disbelieving haughty people: 'Even if We had sent down to you [Prophet Muhammad] a book inscribed on parchment, and they had touched it with their own hands, the disbelievers would still say, "This is nothing but blatant sorcery."' (al-An'am: 7)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* knows that the hearts of some of these deniers have indeed become heedless in regards to their faith. Allah *Glorified is He* wants such people to be believers. However, if Allah *Glorified is He* had sent

down to them a book written on parchment and they had seen it with their eyes and touched it with their hands, they would not have believed. Allah *Glorified is He* mentions touching the book with hands because touching is a sense joined by everyone, even the blind; but they will deny this fact saying, 'This is nothing but blatant sorcery.' Such a response has nothing to do with reason, good thinking, or wisdom. Moreover, it does not come in harmony with those people who are known for rhetoric, eloquence and beautiful speech and composition. Sorcery is intended to change people's vision of reality. Since they accused Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of practising sorcery, why did he not bewitch them and why did they resist sorcery? We know that a sorcerer deprives his victims of their will and ability to act; and if Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been a sorcerer, he would have used sorcery to make them believe.

Those deniers were known for their language and discourse skills that could distinguish between good and false statements, as well as their wide experience that could differentiate between the various forms of speech: oratory, writing, prose, poetry, rhymed speech, and non-rhymed speech. Nevertheless, it is astonishing that they stood fully bewildered and shackled before the inimitability of the Quran, saying, 'It is sorcery' at one time, 'It is the speech of a soothsayer' another time and 'It is the speech of mad person' at a third time.

The Quran is not sorcery because it has eloquence that cannot be matched by that of the Arab disbelievers. Though Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was one of the Arabs, he did not do anything to make them believe against their will. Likewise, the Quran is not the speech of soothsaying because the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was raised amongst them and known as the most truthful and trustworthy person who did not get knowledge from others. In addition, the speech of soothsayers has a specific mode and rhyme scheme which has nothing to do with the Quran. Those disbelievers learned that it was the speech of a sane man since the speech of a madman is neither coherent nor cohesive. In this regard, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says the following words about His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Your Lord's Grace does not

make you [Prophet Muhammad] a madman. You will have a never-ending reward—truly you have a great moral character' (*al-Qalam*: 24).

Allah *Glorified is He* prepared His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to receive prophecy with good thinking that is far away from foolishness of opinion. He will have a reward that is neither cut off, nor withheld for conveying the Message of his Lord. He is of a great moral character who wisely deals with events via compatible faculties that never conflict each other. Those old deniers themselves bore witness to the good character of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, how could this exalted character be attributed to a madman and how could such sound and good behaviour come from a madman? Thus, all their accusations levelled to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came because of their insistence on disbelief, not due to concrete facts. They learned well that they had seen and witnessed the very opposite of what they attributed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Insisting on disbelief, they started to demand another sign:

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ وَلَوْ أَنزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْظَرُونَ

They say, 'Why was no angel sent down to [support] him?' But had We sent down an angel, their judgement would have come at once with no respite given [8] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 8)

What are angels? Angels are a species that Allah *Glorified is He* has made a part of the unseen world. We believe in them because Allah *Glorified is He* Who we believe in, says that He has angels, just as He says that there are jinn. Angels belong to the unseen as we have said, and the jinn are concealed from us too. Those stubborn deniers demanded that an angel be sent down so that they could believe. Thus, they knew that there is an invisible world and that their original disposition has something in common with the heaven, but they continued to deny. Their mentioning of an angel is evidence that they still had traces of the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them* in the depths of their hearts. Those traces remained in their souls because they were not related to sovereignty. Had the True Lord

Glorified is He sent down an angel to them, they would not still have believed because they were deniers. The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not want to apply His Established Practice to them by sending down the sign that they had demanded in order not to punish them in case they deny it. Had the True Lord *Glorified is He* sent down an angel to them as they had requested and had they disbelieved afterwards, the matter would have been decided and they would have been destroyed without any respite. Thus, if an angel had made himself apparent and manifest to them in its real state, their human nature would not have been able to tolerate such an experience.

Indeed, the Angel Jibril (Gabriel) that belongs to the invisible world came down in his overwhelming nature with Allah's Revelation to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Though the coming down of this noble angel had a tremendous impact on the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* only traces remained in the wake of their meeting. In this context, the moment that Jibril (Gabriel) came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for the first time in the Cave of Hira` was related as follows: 'Jibril (Gabriel) came to me and told me to read. I replied, "I do not know how to read." Jibril (Gabriel) then held me (forcibly) and pressed me so hard that I felt distressed. Then he released me and again told me to read, and I replied, "I do not know how to read." Thereupon he held me again and pressed me for the second time till I felt distressed. He then released me and asked me to read, but I replied again, "I do not know how to read." Thereupon he held me for the third time and pressed me till I got distressed, and then he released me and said, "Read! In the name of your Lord who created. He created man from a clinging clot. Read! Your Lord is the Most Bountiful One Who taught by [means of] the pen, Who taught man what he did not know." (*al-'Alaq*: 1-5) Then Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* returned with that experience; and his heart beating severely till he came upon Khadijah (his wife) *Allah be pleased with her* and said, "Wrap me up! Wrap me up!" She wrapped him, and when the state of fear was over, he said to Khadijah, "O Khadijah! What is wrong with me? I was afraid that something bad might happen to me." Then he told her the story. Khadijah said, "Never! But be glad with the good tidings! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you, for by Allah, you keep good relations with your relatives,

help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously and assist those who are stricken with calamities.”⁽¹⁾

Thus, Khadijah *Allah be pleased with her* was the first person to have faith immediately after she knew about the Revelation. Then, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* relieved to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘Did We not relieve your heart for you [Prophet Muhammad], and remove the burden that weighed so heavily on your back, and raise your reputation high?’ (*ash-Sharh*: 1-4) Allah *Glorified is He* relieved the heart of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to receive the Divine Secrets and Knowledge. Allah *Glorified is He* further removed from His Noble Messenger the burdens that had weighed heavily upon his back. Allah *Glorified is He* connected the name of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to the core of faith and religion to the extent that his name is joined to that of the Holy Essence in the Testimony, the first pillar of Islam: ‘I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’

We have seen how the situation was extremely difficult for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when the Jibril (Gabriel) was shown to him in his true form, but Allah *Glorified is He* helped His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to receive Jibril (Gabriel) in this form. We may know that there is a difference between the human physique and the angelic physique. The human physique is associated with material elements that suit its formation. So, if it is exposed to a higher power, it cannot bear it unless Allah *Glorified is He* prepares and shapes the Angel in a way that makes him qualified to be sent, and in the meantime, prepares the messenger to be qualified to receive the Revelation. This is the case when messengers receive angels, then what about their seeing the Holy Essence. We learn the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he came to meet his Lord. In this context, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘When Musa (Moses) came for the appointment, and his Lord spoke to him, he said, “My Lord, show Yourself to me: let me see You!” He said, “You will never see Me, but look

(1) *Al-Bukhari*

at that mountain: if it remains standing firm, you will see Me”, and when his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He made it crumble. Musa (Moses) fell down unconscious. When he recovered, he said, “Glory be to You! To You I turn in repentance! I am the first to believe!”” (*al-A'raf*: 143)

What prevents man from seeing Allah *Glorified is He* is man's inability to visually encompass Him. When Allah *Glorified is He* appeared to the firm and solid mountain it was levelled to the ground and became dust. On his part, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* fell down unconscious because of the tremendous scene he had just witnessed. When he awoke, he repented to Allah *Glorified is He* and declared himself to be the first to believe in Him. Thus, if man is made unconscious by the True Lord *Glorified is He* showing Himself to the mountain, then how could he stand the True Lord *Glorified is He* showing Himself to him?

We may know that every creature has a certain capacity that qualifies it to get the elements it needs; we give an example of this from our everyday life —Allah has the highest image and He is Exalted above every likeness. When a person gets a house, he intends to provide it with the electricity required to obtain light as well as the power necessary to operate different devices. When this person goes to bed, he dispenses with light and seeks darkness. He turns the lights off and uses a small lamp that cannot take power directly from the main source of electricity. So, he brings a power transformer which reduces the high electric energy of the source to be suitable for the small lamp. Thus, he maintains a dim light at night so that he can benefit from darkness and get to sleep.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has indeed blessed us with the creation of light and darkness; each has its mission. While the creation of light, illumination, and electricity has allowed man to develop civilisations, darkness has allowed man to find rest and tranquillity so that he can regain his energy and vitality. We maintain little light that does not disturb us at night in order not to collide with things or break them when we get up to relieve ourselves.

Similarly, man, still a weak creature, is incapable of receiving the Revelation from Allah *Glorified is He* in a direct way. It is from the True Lord's Mercy towards His creation that He placed a link between Him and mankind. As a link, Jibril (Gabriel) learns the Revelation from Allah *Glorified is He* to convey it to the chosen messenger; and in turn the chosen messenger becomes

another link. The disbelievers were foolish enough to demand that an angel be sent down as a messenger. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* responds to them in another verse in the Glorious Quran, saying: 'The only thing that kept these people from believing, when Guidance came to them, was that they said, "How could Allah have sent a human being as a messenger?" Say, "If there were angels walking about on earth, feeling at home, We would have sent them an angel from Heaven as a messenger."' (al-Isra': 94-95)

Being ignorant people, they asked that an angel be sent down with Guidance as a messenger. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* commanded His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to answer them by saying that if there had been angels amongst human beings, i.e. if there had been angels walking on the earth, and then an angel would have been sent to them as a messenger. As this was not the case, then the True Lord *Glorified is He* sent a messenger from amongst human beings. A messenger must convey Allah's Message to his people and be an example for them by adopting as a person his religion's way of life. If an angel had been sent down as a messenger and adopted the religion's way of life in person, the human beings concerned would have said to him, 'You are an angel and you can do things that we cannot do; so, you are not a good example for us'. For this reason, a messenger must be of the same species of the targeted people so that he can be an example and model for them.

Indeed, this nullifies the claims that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is God or son of God because 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* demanded his people to act as he did. The True Lord *Glorified is He* sent humans only as messengers to underscore that they are models and examples with their nations. Thus, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, '...But had We sent down an angel', their judgement would have come at once...' (al-An'am: 8) because humans cannot receive an angel's rays of illumination and radiance since they are not prepared to have these rays of illumination and radiance. Therefore, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says:

وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكًا لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِم مَّا يَلِيشُونَ

Indeed, if We had sent an angel as messenger, We would still have sent him in the form of a man, so increasing their confusion [9] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 9)

Hence, if Allah *Glorified is He* had intended to send a messenger from amongst the angels, He would have made him in the form of a human because of people's inability to see an angel in his original shape; they may even be destroyed when witnessing him, '...so increasing their confusion.' This means that We confuse them by making the angel resemble a man, thus adding to their original confusion. Encountering this situation, they would say, 'You are only a man, not an angel'. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* sent down an angel in the form of a man as in the case of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. In this regard, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'Tell them too about Ibrahim's [Abraham's] guests; when they came to him and said, "Peace," he said, "We are afraid of you." "Do not be afraid", they said, "We bring you good news of a son who will have great knowledge."' (*al-Hijr*: 51-53)

When Allah *Glorified is He* sent angels as guests to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* he was afraid of them after he had seen them not eating from the calf he had served them. They told him to be at ease by telling him the good news sent from Allah *Glorified is He* that he would be granted a child named Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him* from his wife Sarah after Allah *Glorified is He* had given him Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* from Hajar at an earlier time.

Likewise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* sent an angel to the Virgin Maryam (Mary), *peace be upon her*; and he appeared before her in the form of a perfected man and informed her that she would get pregnant with 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Thus, an angel is embodied in the form of a man when Allah *Glorified is He* sends him on a mission to human beings because an angel does not come to humans in his original form. It is Allah's Grace towards His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He permitted him to see Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* in his original form once in the Cave of Hira' and another at the Lote Tree of the utmost boundary. Meanwhile, he saw Jibril (Gabriel) as a man when he appeared in the form of Dehyah Al-Kalbi and when he came as a traveller to Messenger

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask him about Islam and faith. This last incident was related to us by ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar Allah *be pleased with him* who said, ‘My father, ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah *be pleased with him* told me, “Once we were sitting in the company of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* when there appeared a man dressed in very white clothes and having extraordinary black hair. No signs of fatigue of a journey appeared on him and he was known to none of us. He sat down facing the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* putting his knees against the knees of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and placing both of his palms over his two thighs and said, “O Muhammad! Tell me about Islam”. He *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, “Islam is to testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; that you observe *salat* (prayers), give *zakat* (alms), observe *sawm* (fasting) of *Ramadan* and perform *Hajj* (pilgrimage) at the Sacred House (*Ka’ba*), provided you have resources of making a journey to it.” He replied, “You have spoken the truth.” We were surprised to see that he had asked him and confirmed the correctness of the answers. He then enquired, “Tell me about faith.” The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, “It is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Last Day and that you believe in preordainment (destiny), its bad and good consequences.” He said, “You have spoken the truth.” He then enquired, “Tell me about *ihsan* (doing the most perfect deed).” He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, “It is to worship Allah as if you are seeing Him; and although you do not see Him, He sees you.” He enquired, “Inform me about the Hour (i.e., the Day of Resurrection).” He *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, “I have no more knowledge thereof than you.” He said, “Inform me about some of its signs.” He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, “They are that a slave will give birth to her own master, and that you will find the barefooted, naked, poor shepherds competing one another in the construction of higher buildings.” Then he departed. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* kept silent for a while, and then he said to me, “O ‘Umar! Do you know who the questioner was?” I replied, “Allah and His Messenger know best.” The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, “He was Jibril (Gabriel); he came to you to teach you your religion.”⁽¹⁾

(1) This Hadith was narrated by Muslim in the *Book of Faith* and was not mentioned in=

Thus, we as humans are incapable of seeing angels unless Allah *Glorified is He* sends them in the form of men. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, 'Indeed, if We had sent an angel as messenger, We would still have sent him in the form of a man, so increasing their confusion.' (*al-An'am*: 9) So, sending angels in the form of humans is there all the time as Allah *Glorified is He* sent angels as men to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* Maryam (Mary), the daughter of 'Imran *peace be upon her* and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while he was sitting among his people.

Afterwards, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* comforts His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَكَافَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا
سَخَرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ

**Messengers have been mocked before you
[Muhammad], and those who mocked them were
engulfed by the very punishment they had
mocked [10] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 10)**

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* tells His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the people of disbelief always made fun of the previous messengers; so Allah *Glorified is He* humiliated them with the same punishment He prepares for the deniers of the messengers' guidance. Those who mock the news coming from the heavens will be severely punished by Allah *Glorified is He* because of their ridicule and mocking.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* then says:

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- = Al-Bukhari. Ibn Hibban also narrated the same Hadith in his *Sahih* (collection of Ahadith) based on the narration of Abu Hurayra Allah *be pleased with him* who said, 'One day The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was preaching to the people when a man came to him and said, "What is faith?" He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Faith is to believe in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers and believe in the resurrection..." Moreover, Ahmad narrated the Hadith in his *Musnad* (collection of Ahadith), while At-Tirmidhi narrated it, with the question about faith being the start of the Hadith.

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ أَنْظِرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١١﴾

**Say, 'Travel throughout the earth and see what
fate befell those who rejected the truth' [11]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 11)**

You should know that the True Lord *Glorified is He* never says, 'Travel on the earth' because the earth is a container in which man can walk as he is placed within this container. Allah *Glorified is He* had told man about this piece of knowledge before science proved that the earth is spherical and hanging in the air, and that it is encompassed by the air which is considered the source of nourishment for man through oxygen and for plants through carbon dioxide. We may learn that man can live without food for weeks and without water for days; but he cannot live if the air is prevented from him for a few moments. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* never allows anyone to take possession of the air. Thus, we have learned that the air belongs to the earth. Wherever we go, we are surrounded by the air; so, we travel throughout the earth. This is a bit of the scientific inimitability manifested in the Quran. In another similar place, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: '...So travel through the earth and see what was the fate of those who denied the Truth!' (*an-Nahl*: 36)

Here in the chapter of *al-An'am* (Livestock), the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, 'Say, "Travel throughout the earth; *then* see what fate befell those who rejected the Truth."' (*al-An'am*: 11)

What is the difference between the two verses? Per Arabic, both *fa'* (and) and *thumma* (then) are particles of conjunctions that indicate sequence. However, *fa'* denotes sequence with succession, i.e. without any delay or passing of time. For example, we may say, 'We welcomed Zaid and (*fa'*) 'Amr', i.e. we welcomed 'Amr after we welcomed Zaid without any delay. On the other hand, *thumma* refers to a long period of time separating two events. Hence, when the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: '...So travel through the earth and see what was the fate of those who denied the Truth!' (*an-Nahl*: 36), it is as if observation and contemplation are the goal of travelling; people travel through the land to learn lessons.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, ‘Say, “Travel throughout the earth; then see what fate befell those who rejected the Truth.”’ (*al-An'am*: 11) This means that a man may go through the earth for the sake of trade, cultivation or any other business. During this journey, he must think and contemplate. So, travelling may be for drawing lessons or for doing business. When travelling for learning lessons, man gains experience directly, but when travelling for doing business, he derives lessons during conducting such business. When Quraysh went on their trade caravans to Syria and Yemen, they could see the ruins of the old deniers, whether they belonged to Thamud, 'Ad or others. The travellers of Quraysh had to learn lessons during their journeys which were made for the sake of trade. Afterwards, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*:

قُلْ لِمَنْ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قُلْ لِلَّهِ كُنْزٌ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةُ لِيَجْمَعَ كُمْ
إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

Say, ‘To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and earth?’
Say, ‘To God. He has taken it upon Himself to be merciful.
He will certainly gather you on the Day of Resurrection,
which is beyond all doubt. Those who deceive themselves
will not believe [12] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 12)

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* teaches His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* how to ask and how to answer so that people learn through this dialogue that the entire Dominion is Allah's. Had people, including the deniers, searched for an owner of this universe, they would have found none except Allah. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says about those disbelievers: ‘If you ask the disbelievers who created the heavens and the earth and who harnessed the sun and the moon, they are sure to say, “Allah.” Then why do they turn away from Him?’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 61)

Despite their associating of partners with Allah *Glorified is He* they cannot keep themselves from recognizing that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator of everything. Man may be deluded by his will of choice; but when he finds himself forced to do certain things, he immediately acknowledges the Truth.

Man may have the choice to do some actions, while he has no choice concerning other events that may happen to him. This is because the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to alert His creation that He does whatever He wills and that He governs the entire universe. Allah *Glorified is He* grants man free will in order that he may test himself in regards to obeying Allah's Commands.

Generally speaking, events are of three kinds: an event that happens to you, an event that happens within yourself, and an event that comes from you. You have no choice regarding the events which occur to you as well as those occurring within yourself. All that is left for you is a third the events; that third which comes from you. You are thus placed inside two brackets in which you have no choice: the bracket of birth and the bracket of death. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* controls everything.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* comforts His creation when saying, '...He has taken it upon Himself to be Merciful...' (*al-An'am*: 12). The True Lord *Glorified is He* voices this statement to make His slaves feel secure so as not think that Allah *Glorified is He* will punish them without calling them to account. We must learn that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Most Forbearing and the Possessor of Great Bounty, Who says: 'Say [Prophet Muhammad], "In Allah's Grace and Mercy let them rejoice..."' (*Yunus*: 58).

Allah *Glorified is He* forgives much; the entrance to His Mercy and Grace is quite open and the way to repentance is paved before sinners. It is Allah's Bounty that He *Glorified is He* made some of the disbelievers stand in opposition to Muslims at the beginning of the Call, and afterwards they became like swords in defence of Islam. Allah, the Most Compassionate, gathers us for reckoning on the Day of Resurrection which is beyond doubt and uncertainty. We are all heading towards that day; the disbelievers will come there against their will, while the believers will be delighted for they are going to meet their Lord, being sure of Allah's Mercy and Grace.

The disbelievers lose themselves due to their evil deeds—we seek refuge in God—as confirmed by the True Lord *Glorified is He* Who says, '...Those who will lose themselves [that Day] do not believe.' (*al-An'am*: 12) Losing oneself is a consequence of losing faith. When we consider ends and means, we will find that one's means comes before their end; but in reality,

the end becomes clear before the means. For example, a student keeps in mind the end of success; so, he exerts every effort to succeed. We should know that any conditional statement is situated between two responses: the motivating response and the actual response. Success is a motive for studying, whereas studying makes success a reality. Ibn Ar-Rumi, a poet, said,

Who can show me my end before my means?

How come? Indeed, ends come after means?

The poet's lines here do not speak the truth because man must be aware of the end first, then he must look for the means that will lead him to the end. When we find that man's ultimate end is to resort to Allah *Glorified is He* while the means is the religion's way of life, then why are people at a loss? Thus, we learn that those who have not believed in faith have lost themselves because they have not distinguished the motivating end which is to repent and submit to Allah *Glorified is He* from the existing end which is the means. Allah *Glorified is He* has made it easy for His slaves when He has given them the way of life they must follow.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

وَلَهُ مَا سَكَنَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣﴾

All that rests by night or by day belongs to Him.

He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing [13]

(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 13)

It is the Greatness of the Supreme Existent Whose Existence comes from His Self that He speaks about Himself in the third-person. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says at the beginning of some verses, 'Say: "He is Allah..."'.

'Say' is a command; as if when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says 'He', it only belongs to Allah *Glorified is He*. 'All that rests by night or by day belongs to Him...' (*al-An'am*: 13). The verb *sakana* (rest) is comprised of the Arabic letters *sin*, *kaf* and *nun* from which we can get several meanings. There is, for instance, the word *sakan* (settlement or dwelling) and the word *sukoon* (stillness or the opposite of movement). An example of dwelling is Allah's

Words for Adam *peace be upon him*: ‘...O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in this garden...’ (*al-Baqara*: 35).

Again, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘All that rests by night or by day belongs to Him...’ (*al-An‘am*: 13). It is as if night and day are a vessel and all of existence is contained within it. Night and day here refer to the dimension of place which is the earth. Every place on earth has night and day. If we want to refer to dwelling, the verb *sakana* refers to that, and if we want stillness—which is the opposite of movement—the meaning is still there. Everything in motion eventually becomes still. Man controls movement for some time, then he dies or becomes motionless inside the earth. Thus, the common feature that characterizes both night and day is ‘All that rests...’ (*ma sakana*). Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘All that rests by night or by day belongs to Him. He is the All-Hearing, the All Knowing.’ (*al-An‘am*: 13)

When Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, ‘All that rests by night or by day belongs to Him...’ (*al-An‘am*: 13), He talks about time as well as the events that occur within it. As we may know, man is an event, and everything that happens to him is an event too. Everything in the universe is also an event. All these events are originated by the True Lord *Glorified is He* Who gets His Existence from His Essence.

Since events are created, they must have time and place. The place of events is the heaven and the earth and what is between them, while the time of events is night and day. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about the creation of time after telling us that He is the Creator of place. ‘Say, “To whom belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth?” Say, “To Allah”’ (*al-An‘am*: 12).

So, time and place were created when Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to bring this universe into existence. Never say, ‘Where had Allah *Glorified is He* been before He created the universe?’ This is because the word ‘where?’ is an inquiry about place, and ‘when?’ is an inquiry about time. Both were established following the existence of events in the universe. The universe is a fixed state, while time is not a fixed state because it can be in the past, the present, or the future.

When the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, 'All that rests by night or by day belongs to Him...' (*al-An'am*: 13), it means that He controls the two states: the fixed and the unfixed, or what is stationary and what is moving in the universe. This is because everything that moves will eventually become stationary. Or, the True Lord's statement, 'All that rests by night or by day belongs to Him...' (*al-An'am*: 13), refers to what occurs during the night and the day. In other words, everything that occurs by night and day, whether it is moving or stationary is possessed by Allah *Glorified is He*.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* concludes this verse by saying, 'He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing.' (*al-An'am*: 13) Hearing is connected to something heard, i.e. that which is in motion, while knowledge is connected to something heard, seen, smelt and involving other forms of perception. Therefore, Allah's statement, 'He is the All-Hearing, the All Knowing.' (*al-An'am*: 13), is rendered to include both moving and stationary things, for nothing is concealed from him or escapes him.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes Himself with an attribute that is shared by humans, we should understand it within the context of '...There is nothing like Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11). You, O man, hear and can be described as 'hearing'; you have knowledge and can be described as 'knowing'; you have sight and can be described as 'seeing' and you have power and can be described as 'powerful'. Further, you may possess wealth and you can be described as 'rich'; you exist and you can be described as 'existing' and you are alive and you can be described as 'living'.

However, are these attributes that you have the same as Allah's? No, because Allah's Attributes are only understood within the framework of '...There is nothing like Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11). We witness this in ourselves; man has a state of living and a state of death; the state of living is divided into two other states: the state of waking and the state of sleeping. In the state of waking, we see per the laws of vision which is ruled by the laws of light. Likewise, hearing is governed by laws concerned with sound and oscillating waves.

Nevertheless, man sleeps with closed eyes and he has dreams in which he sees different colours. So, what makes you perceive these colours while your

eyes are closed? Since humans have dreams in which they can see without eyes, then do not say that Allah *Glorified is He* sees us with eyes that are like ours. Indeed, He *Glorified is He* sees within the context of ‘...There is nothing like Him...’ (*ash-Shura*: 11). He *Glorified is He* is the All-Sustaining and He governs His slaves in both time and place when they are awake and when they are asleep.

To give you an example of our daily life, we find a man and his wife sleeping in the same bed. The man may see himself in his sleep facing enemies, while his wife sees herself surrounded by her joyful children and grandchildren. Then, they wake up and tell each other about what they have seen for more than an hour, even though the human brain is active for only seven seconds during sleep.⁽¹⁾

Thus, the company of others, time and place are absent during sleep. Having learned about these laws that govern man’s life, we must conclude that we cannot encompass the Attributes of the Creator of all laws, the True Lord *Glorified is He*. We must understand them within the framework of ‘...There is nothing like Him...’ (*ash-Shura*: 11).

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* then says:

قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ اتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَلَا يُطْعَمُ قُلْ إِنِّي
أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

Say, ‘Shall I take for myself a protector other than God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, who feeds but is not fed?’ Say, ‘I am commanded to be the first [of you] to devote myself [to Him].’ Do not be one of the idolaters [14] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 14)

The Arabic letter *hamza* that equals the letter ‘a’ in English in the phrase ‘*aghaira*’ translated here as ‘is it other’, is called the *hamza* of negation, just as we say in Arabic ‘*atasub*’ ‘*aback*’ translated here as ‘Do you insult your father?’ This *hamza* does not refer to a question as much as it indicates reproach and blame. ‘...Is it other than Allah I should take as a protector...’

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

(*al-An'am*: 14), i.e. the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* commands His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to reject the taking of other than Allah *Glorified is He* as a protector.

Indeed, taking Allah *Glorified is He* as a protector is a vital matter because the events occurring to man prove to him that he is weak and his circumstances are always changing. When feeling weak, man must seek refuge in the One Who is more powerful than him and Who does not change. The Power of the Protector —Allah *Glorified is He*—cannot become weaker, just as His Wealth cannot turn into poverty, and His Knowledge has nothing to do with ignorance. He is the One Who changes and is never changed. Therefore, it is Allah's Blessing towards His creation that He has made Himself a Protector for them since He *Glorified is He* controls the course of events.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* teaches His creation how to be wise, act properly, and put their trust in Him. He *Glorified is He* is the Ever-Living who does not die. We notice in this verse that the True Lord *Glorified is He* commands His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to convey His revelation to people. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed the revelation to the letter as stated in the inimitable Glorious Quran.

An example of this is the True Lord's statement, 'Say: "He is Allah the One."' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1). Here, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* honestly conveys to us the exact words of his Lord *Glorified is He* as it was sent down to him, beginning with the word 'Say'. We see the same thing in this verse, 'Say [O Muhammad], 'Is it other than Allah I should take as a protector...' *(al-An'am*: 14). He is the One Whose Attributes of Perfection are mentioned in the previous verses; the One Who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light. Allah *Glorified is He* controls everything reposing by night and day. This True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One worthy of worship.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to extract the answer from people instead of saying, 'I do not take other than Allah as a protector'. Allah *Glorified is He* commands His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask people, 'Say [O Muhammad],

“Is it other than Allah I should take as a protector...” (*al-An‘am*: 14). Thus, the question is raised by the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* as commanded by Allah *Glorified is He*. People are given freedom to come up with an answer which will eventually be the desired one.

When a man hears the like of this question, he must rack his brain and think carefully to find an answer to such a question. He will give no answer other than saying, ‘I do not have a protector except Allah *Glorified is He*’. A protector is the one who is always here to help you in your weakness and save you when crying out to him for help.

A man does not cry out to anyone for help unless he is afflicted with calamities. The distressed person thus rests assured that the powerful one who comes to their help will save and assist them. It is quite normal for a man to seek a protector in this life, while it is quite despicable for him to seek a protector other than Allah *Glorified is He*. We —the believers— take one another as protectors within the framework of Allah’s Protection in support of the True Lord’s statement, ‘The believers, both men and women, support each other. They order what is right and forbid what is wrong they keep up the prayers and pay the prescribed alms and they obey Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad]. Allah will give His Mercy to such people; Allah is Almighty and Wise.’ (*at-Tawba*: 71)

The believing men and women exchange love and assistance in accordance with the mutual contract of faith that is between them and the True Lord *Exalted and Glorified is He*. They command one another with the commands of the right path. They prevent one another from the unlawful that Allah has prohibited and they connect themselves to the True Lord by establishing the prayer. They carry out Allah’s right regarding their wealth by way of *zakat*. They obey Allah and follow the commands of His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. Hence, they are bestowed with Allah’s true promise of mercy and He is the One fully capable of taking care of them. He is Wise in maintaining them and He is Almighty; no one overcomes Him.

Therefore, you are seeking a protector in a moment of weakness, and a moment of adversity. A man is not created perfect, such that he is susceptible

to weakness and poverty, not always strong nor rich. You know that man is subject to changes, so we do not see a strong person whose strength is permanently established, or a rich person whose wealth is permanently established. Man is 'the son of changes'. Circumstances that are beyond his capacity befall him, and therefore he asks others who can help him. The believer also loves to be strong so that he can help others because the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* has distributed His gifts amongst His creation in the universe so that He can guarantee the permanence of the protection and its continuation. Thus, you are in need of the work of another man because you are weak in some aspects, but someone else is strong at it. The doctor needs the engineer, and the engineer needs the doctor. The doctor and the engineer need the farmer, and the farmer needs the work of the engineer and the doctor. The doctor, the engineer, and the farmer need the work of the lawyer.

This is how Allah distributes His gifts in the universe, and He did not allow for one man to possess all the gifts. Thus, society does not support itself out of courtesy and generosity, but out of need. Every man is the master of his corner of life, and the other corners are mastered by other human beings. Therefore, the True Lord says, '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. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32).

This is a declaration from Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* that He has distributed provision amongst humanity so that they can support one another and some would be made to work for others in fulfilling the needs of one another so that the matters of life follow smooth organization. In this distribution, there is mercy from the True Lord towards His creation. If all people were of equal intelligence, and all of them became geniuses, who would oversee regulating the streets? Who would work on and maintain buildings, or take care of and feed the animals, besides many other things without which life cannot be ordered.

Each one of us sees the man who digs wells for flowing streams and goes out the next morning saying, 'O Opener, O Omniscient, O All-Provider and O Bountiful'. He seeks a new well from the flowing streams so that he

can leave it until he has acquired nourishment for himself and his dependents. Each one of us is in need of others, and this is the meaning of, 'they may make use of one another for service.'

Therefore, taking a protector is a natural matter, and faith in Allah gives us the intelligence to choose a protector. It is upon the believing person to choose the protector that will be there when he needs him, and therefore he must choose the protection of Allah, not the protection of changing circumstances. Allah subjugates people to serve the believer, including his enemy. Therefore, the True Lord informs us on the tongue of His Messenger, 'Say: "Am I to take for my protector anyone but Allah."' (al-An'am: 14) Those who rebuke us for taking Allah as a protector and want us to take other than Him see in themselves an example. His hopes may be dashed, for the man from amongst them may take a man like him as a protector, and when he needs him he finds that he is sick, absent or his heart has changed towards him. However, the believer does choose Allah as his protector because He is the One who is never absent and will never change, and nor will He ever become weak. The Quran does not rebuke man for talking a protector from amongst human beings, but the True Lord indicates to us that He is the True Protector, and it is upon the believer to take his believing brothers as his protectors because it is a protection from Allah and unto Allah.

You, O Muslim, when you choose the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* as your protector, He is the One who will bring you all kinds of provision and prepare them and arrange them to be at your service. This is because Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, 'Say, "Is it other than Allah I should take as a protector, Creator of the heavens and the earth, while it is He who feeds and is not fed?"' (al-An'am: 14) Indeed, the True Lord created the heavens and the earth without using any prior example. He created this universe without using any previous model. When 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* wanted to confirm his miracle for his people, he brought some clay and formed it into the shape of a bird. Therefore, there is a prior example that he found and followed. 'Isa (Jesus) is a man from the creation. As for the Creator of the entire creation, He created the heavens and the earth without any prior example. You, O man, might not turn to the issue of the creation of the heavens

and the earth because you see them in every moment in a monotonous fashion, and you may think that it is an easy matter, but the True Lord says, 'The creation of the heavens and earth is greater than the creation of mankind, but most of the people do not know.' (*Ghafir*: 57)

Allah *the Exalted* vows that the creation of the heavens and the earth is a matter that is greater and finer than the creation of mankind but most of mankind does not know this. Then Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, 'And the heaven We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are [its] expander.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 47)

This refers to the creation of the seen and unseen universe because there are many celestial bodies and solar systems, and what is beyond that of this expansion of the universe that the intellect cannot grasp nor define. This baffling capacity is from Allah's power. We find the True Lord using the word Creator at one time meaning to put in order, but at another time to mean disorder. The example of putting something in order is the True Lord's saying, 'Creator of the heavens and the earth.' He created the heavens and the earth without any prior example and with a masterful efficiency.

The True Lord says in another place, 'When the sky breaks apart.' (*al-Infitar*: 1) The True Lord is drawing attention to the day of the greatest fright in which the sky will be split and in which the celestial bodies will fall. None of these things will be carrying out their task because Allah will cause them to dysfunction.

He also says: '[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 breaks?' (*al-Mulk*: 3) The True Lord is Capable of everything, and He is the creator of the seven heavens with precision, one over the other. The one looking cannot see any flaw in this creation, and let man look at the sky again and he will not find any flaw therein; no cracks or fissures.

The True Lord, with His complete power, gives everything attributes that make it suitable for carrying out what it was created for, so let no one thinks that he has exited from the power of his Creator— and He created the

heavens and the earth with complete fashioning and precision, and He is fully capable of splitting them and making them unsuitable at any time that He wills. An example is the sun being rolled up, the stars being blotted out and the mountains being pulverised to dust.

One of the scholars said, 'the word creator was not understood until a Bedouin came and said, "So-and-so is arguing with me over a well that I created (i.e. dug)."' The Bedouin is the one who began the digging of the well. Therefore, the Creator of the heavens of the earth is the One Who created them without any prior example. He says, 'Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?' (*al-Anbiya*: 30) This wise saying was not understood deeply by those before us, but man in these modern times has understood it after scientists discovered that the heavens and the earth were one entity, and the True Lord separated them by His Will; and He made from water every living thing.

Therefore, He is fully capable of everything, and nothing exits from the domain of His power. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* before granting us the creation of life, warned us against being deluded by this life. Therefore, He said, 'Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent. He who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed - and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving.' (*al-Mulk*: 1-2)

It is as if He is drawing man's attention to receive life, and to know that Allah *the Exalted* created death, so beware of assuming that life is that which gives you the power of motion, realisation and will in some monotony and eternity because there is death.

'Have you seen that which you emit? Is it you who creates it, or are We the Creator? We have decreed death among you, and We are not to be outdone. In that We will change your likenesses and produce you in that [form] which you do not know.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 58-61) Man does not see the semen that he discharges and which goes into the womb of his wife. No one can do so and observe it until it becomes an embryo and then a human being, but the True Lord is the Determiner and the Creator. He is fully capable of giving us life and determining when we will die, and no one

overcomes Him. Indeed, He changes our outward forms when He wants to, and He creates other than us and brings us into being in outward forms that we do not know. He is the All-Bestowal of life and He is the One Who removes it with death.

He says to us, 'And have you seen that [seed] which you sow? Is it you who makes it grow, or are We the grower? (*al-Waqi'a*: 63-64) Here the True Lord draws our attention towards the crops that we eat and the fruits that we harvest from the earth, and all we need to do is plant the seeds. He is the One who placed in the seed accumulated wonders. In the seed is that which nourishes it until it has a small root that can suck up its nutrients from the earth, and then it grows a stem and then the roots become firm and the stem is strengthened. All man needs to do is plant the seeds and sow the earth. Still, the True Lord respects man's work. He says, 'and have you seen that [seed] which you sow?'

Regarding water, the True Lord says, 'And have you seen the water that you drink? Is it you who brought it down from the clouds, or is it We Who bring it down? [If We willed, We could make it bitter, so why are you not grateful?]' (*al-Waqi'a*: 68-70) This fresh water that we drink is only sent down by Allah from rainy clouds. This process of causing rain is an objective of gathering. The water flowing in the rivers only came from the rain that has come down from the sky. The True Lord has sent the sun's rays to evaporate the seawater. It accumulates itself in a cloud and then Allah's command comes to blow cold winds and thus it falls as rain.

When we filter a cup of water in a laboratory, we bring a stove, a container, and some fuel. We place the water that we want to filter and it evaporates. Then we uncover the drops of vapour by means of a draught of cold air. The like of this process burdens us greatly in terms of physical and mental work to build this kind of device that allows us to filter a cup of water. Thus, what do we think of the rain that is sent down pouring in abundance? Indeed, we find that three quarters of the earth's surface is water. Allah *the Exalted* has spread it out over a vast area so that it can evaporate easily. Thus, if we sprinkle a glass of water over a vast surface in the coldest place, it will evaporate. This spreading of the surface area of water is what

facilitates the process of evaporation. The water vapour ascends the oceans and the sea until it reaches the upper layers of the atmosphere, and then it becomes visible in the form of small water drops that fall as rain in disparity from one region to another. He is also Fully Capable of removing the usefulness of this water. The True Lord says to us: 'And have you seen the fire that you ignite? Is it you who produced its tree, or are We the producer? We have made it a reminder and provision for the travellers.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 71-73) He reminds us that He is the One Who created the fire that we kindle. He brought the first source of fuel which is the wood that originally was dried green trees. In all of this, the True Lord's power is made manifest to us, so we glorify His Most Great name.

'So exalt the name of your Lord, the Most Great.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 74) Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* is transcendent above having any partners in the matters of creation and the universe. Thus, the True Lord addresses His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Say, "Is it other than Allah I should take as a protector?"' This question forces us to reflect on the matter of choosing a protector, to employ our thoughts and to know that taking a protector is a necessary matter within the human soul. However, who deserves to be taken as a protector? We find in the way the True Lord raises us what helps us to extract sound thoughts and rightly guided opinions when He says to us: 'Hence, place thy trust in the Living One who dies not.' (*al-Furqan*: 58)

We know that taking a protector from a human being will not last. Thus, you feel that you are alone in this universe, but when you rely on Allah, He is the Ever Living Who never dies. He is the, 'Creator of the heavens and the earth, while it is He who feeds and is not fed?' He is the one who feeds us from the underground wells of the earth that He willed for our nourishment. Why does the True Lord mention the issue of food here? Food is a type of sustenance which – as you know – is directly consumable and beneficial to us. If a man were in the desert, and all he had was a mountain of pure gold with no sip of water or a piece of bread, then the mountain of gold is worth nothing. The mountain of gold is indeed sustenance, but it does not benefit us directly. The provision that we benefit from directly is food, drink, and clothing. We need food and drink every day, and we need clothes. Therefore, direct provision is the basic essential of life.

The protector who gives victory must have abundant power to feed; the one who provides us with the power that is the basis of life. It is the capacity for man to continue on earth. The mother feeds her child and she is also fed by the food that her husband gives her. The True Lord alone is the One Who feeds all creation and no one feeds Him. When we trace every gift in this life, we find that each one goes back to Allah.

Accordingly, do not use your protector for the means but use him for the ends, because all means go back to Allah. The command comes from the True Lord to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Say, [O Muhammad], "Indeed, I have been commanded to be the first [among you] who submit [to Allah] and [was commanded], to not ever be of the polytheists."' (*al-An'am*: 14)

This command is coming from the supreme commander, and He is Allah. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say that this command is from him because he is a human being like us. Allah informed that our Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is the first to surrender unto Allah and the first to receive the honour of adhering to Islam. For example, every Muslim leader is an example for others such as Tariq ibn Ziyad who conquered Andalusia which was a vast kingdom. He descended from the ships and said to his soldiers, 'I have not commanded you to do anything I would be safe from. Rather, I am with you. Know that I, when the two armies meet, shall set myself against the tyrant of the people of Luzuriq (Roderick), and I will fight him if Allah so wills.' He did not command anything that he did not apply to himself. He applied it to himself first, and the bane of leadership is commanding something one does not apply.

Before that there was `Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* who governed himself and then governed the life of this world. He gathered his relatives first and said to them, 'I will lead the Muslims, and by the One in whose hand is my soul, whoever opposes me from amongst you, I will make him an exemplary punishment for the Muslims.' `Umar, *Allah be pleased with him*, wanted to govern his relatives first to provide a model for those entrusted with authority that they govern their relatives first, and to warn them against exploitations under his name so that the affairs amongst Muslims would be upright. Unfortunately, we see many people speaking of [idealistic practice

of] Islam and they want everyone else to be [true] Muslims while they do not apply the principles of Islam on themselves. The True Lord revealed the command to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Say, [O Muhammad], “Indeed, I have been commanded to be the first [among you] who submit [to Allah] and [was commanded], to not ever be of the polytheists.”’ (*al-An‘am*: 14)

The meaning of submission is that he is handing over the reins of his life to the One whose rule and justice he has confidence in, and He is the True Lord. When we were children, we handed over the reins of our affairs to those in charge of our upbringing, and we see fathers and mothers who are tired and burdened. We obey their commands until we reach adolescence and our personality grows within us. We find an adolescent who refuses, for example, to wear short trousers and instead wears long trousers, and he chooses what clothes to wear per the prevalent modern fashion. Then the young man begins to administer his own affairs.

The bane of our lives is that we neglect our children’s upbringing when they are very young. Then we come and say, ‘Come on! Let us raise the youth’ pretending to forget that youth is a phase filled with strength that can be used to the benefit of society. The time for a sound upbringing is early childhood. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* per the Lord’s words, is the first of the Muslims, and he received the command against associating partners with Allah.

Beware, O Muslims, of being arrogant towards the like of this command because Prophet Muhammad is the first one to be commanded to it by the True Lord. Beware, O Muslim, of finding any fault in receiving a command from your Creator because a fault may come to you when a command is issued to you from one of your equals, but if it is being directed from the True Lord, then it is a must that your soul is pleased with it and your heart finds tranquillity in it. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* used to exert himself when he came across an incident in which there was no ruling from Allah. He would give a ruling by himself, and if the ruling was correct the True Lord would reveal something from the Quran to confirm it. If the ruling needed some amendment, then the True Lord would reveal the

necessary amendment for the ruling, and the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would convey the True Lord's amendment of it without finding any fault in that. He would convey it with a smile, veracity and trust that prove He is conveying from Allah.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* favoured Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he did not amend a judgement out of respect for the Prophet's independent reasoning. He says: 'May Allah pardon you, [O Muhammad]; why did you give them permission [to remain behind]? You should not have until it was evident to you who were truthful and you knew [who were] the liars.' (*at-Tawba*: 43) The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* had given permission to some of the hypocrites to stay behind from fighting before their matter had been clarified so that he would know who amongst them was truthful in his excuse and who was lying. The pardon came from Allah because the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* did all he could to arrive at a judgement and the Messenger informed us of what Allah revealed.

The True Lord says:

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنَّ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾

Say, 'I fear the punishment of a dreadful Day if I disobey my Lord' [15] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 15)

He is the chosen Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* the one selected and infallible declaring that he fears Allah because the destiny of Allah is not possessed by anyone. No one can change Allah's destiny other than Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*. In the above verse, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* conditioned fear on disobeying Allah, but if he does not disobey his Lord, he has no reason to fear. The 'if' conditions fear on disobedience which would never come from the infallible Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because he does not disobey Allah.

The True Lord wanted to clarify for us that the infallible one does not disobey Allah, but this statement comes on the tongue of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for us to know that there is a gruesome punishment with which Allah threatens those who disobey Him. It is a punishment that

harasses the disobedient until it comes to him. This punishment has a particularity of an attraction between it and the disobedient one, just like a magnet's attraction for something else made of metal. For man to be saved from this punishment, he needs the one who will spare him from this severe kind of punishment. Then the True Lord says:

مَنْ يُصْرِفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ ۚ وَذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٦﴾

God will have been truly merciful to whoever is spared on that Day: that is the clearest triumph [16] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 16)

It is as if the one who is not spared from this punishment is the one who will be attracted by the force of this punishment because the fire of hell attracts and drags towards itself those who will be punished. The True Lord says: 'And for those who disbelieved in their Lord is the punishment of Hell, and wretched is the destination. When they are thrown into it, they hear from it a [dreadful] inhaling while it boils up.' (*al-Mulk*: 6-7) Those who disbelieve in Allah have a punishment that begins with hearing hell inhaling, while it is boiling. Inhaling, as you know, is a force that attracts and draws air into the nose and chest. So, what do we think about the force of Hell inhaling as it draws in and attracts those whom it has been commanded to punish? This fire itself responds to the True Lord questioning it when it hears His statement, 'On the Day We will say to Hell, "Have you been filled?"' and it will say, "Are there some more."'" (*Qaf*: 30)

Therefore, the power of punishment that Allah has given it is a duty for Hell which prompts it and pushes it to ask for more disbelievers to punish. Allah *Glorified and Exalted* created everything to perform a duty, and the duty of the fire is to comply with the True Lord's command when He commands it to carry out its task. Therefore, it is prompted to demand those who will receive punishment. The fire never violates the command of Allah and His decree. If the True Lord spares one of His servants from punishment, then the fire obeys that command. 'He from whom it is averted that Day - [Allah] has granted him mercy.' (*al-An'am*: 16) He is the doer of whatever He wills. If He reckons us with justice, then every single one of us will be touched by some of hell's punishment, but it is Allah's mercy that prevents the fire from

touching the believers. This is because Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* pardons much and because the fire inhales everyone who is destined for punishment. We know that inhaling is quicker than exhaling, and inhaling in life is for air.

The reason why inhaling is quicker than exhaling is that the former is tasked to prolong the primary life, which is to provide the body with air. Man, as you know, can only endure without air for the shortest amount of time possible, and it is from Allah's mercy that He has not allowed anyone to own air. This inhaling that gives life on earth also exists in the Hereafter, and it is attributed to the fire. It inhales in order to swallow up the disobedient. In doing so, it carries out the task it has been assigned with. We also know that the fire carries out its task in fury, in accordance with what Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* has said: 'It almost bursts with rage.' (*al-Mulk*: 8)

Does the fire carry out its task without pleasure? Does the fire differ from all of Allah's creations that carry out their tasks in happiness and harmony? The fire bursts with fury because the disbeliever from amongst these people did not know the value of faith, and the fire has feelings like all other created beings. The entire universe has feelings. The universe – as an example – rejoiced at the birth of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The earth, sky, stars, trees and the entire universe rejoiced at the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. This is because all these creations which are subjugated to man glorify Allah and obey Him by their nature just like the bringer of glad tidings, guides man to the Straight Path to make him obedient. Those creatures rejoice at the coming of this bringer of glad tidings.

We know that the place in which man exists, this universe, rejoices when those within it are obedient. This place also grieves when man is disobedient. The place cries out, i.e. any place, upon which there is a disobedient person. We can see this clearly in the True Lord's words regarding the people of Pharaoh, 'How much they left behind of gardens and springs, And crops and noble sites! And comfort wherein they were amused. Thus And We caused to inherit it another people. And the heaven and earth wept not for them, nor were they reprieved.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 25-29)

The land upon which Pharaoh and his people lived had feelings; the gardens, rivers, water-runnels and all other blessings that man is blessed

with, have feelings and sentiments. They feel angry and upset, and they cry out when those who disbelieve in Allah's blessings live within them. This is why the sky and the earth do not cry over the disappearance and exemplary punishment of these disobedient disbelievers and idolaters, while they cry when a believer departs from them. We have in the statement of 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* a clarification of this. 'Ali, *Allah be pleased with him*, said, 'When a believer dies, two places cry over him; a place in the sky and another on Earth. As for the place in the sky, it is the points of ascent of his good actions while the place on earth, it is the place where he prayed.'

This is also evident in a Hadith: 'When one of you dies he is shown his place in the early morning and in the evening. If he is from the people of paradise, he is from the people of paradise; and if he is from the people of the fire, He is from the people of the fire. It is said to him, "This is your place until Allah resurrects you to stand before Him on the Day of Resurrection."'"⁽¹⁾

Therefore, the place in the sky where the deeds of man ascend grieves because there is a loss of righteous action that was passing through it. A man's place of prayer loses the man's prostration that was done out of humility before Allah. However, all creations that have been created by Allah have feelings, and everything in the universe carries out its task per the law of setting in motion and subjugation, not the law of options. Man is the only one who lives per the law of option in some of his states because he is capable of obedience as well as disobedience. This is why when we see prostration to Allah in the Quran, we indeed hear the True Lord's statement, 'Do you not see that to Allah prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the moving creatures and many of the people? But upon many the punishment has been justified. And he whom Allah humiliates - for him there is no bestower of honor. Indeed, Allah does what He wills.' (*al-Hajj*: 18)

Therefore, all creations prostrate to Him except for certain individuals amongst mankind. Many of them prostrate to Allah and many of them deserve punishment because they do not obey the True Lord. Whoever disobeys the

(1) *Al-Bukhari, Muslim, At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah*

way of Allah is not a believer, and Allah banishes him from His Mercy, and whomever Allah humiliates will never have any honouring. The universe unanimously prostrates to Allah except for man. Amongst mankind, there are those who are righteous and act in harmony with the submission of the universe to Allah, and the universe rejoices because of them. On the contrary, there, too, are those whom the universe is angry with because they disobey Allah.

The True Lord says about those whom He spares from punishment due to the excess of His Mercy towards His servants because they obeyed Him; and at times their disobedience overwhelmed them, but they repented from it: 'He from whom it is averted that Day - [Allah] has granted him mercy. And that is the clear attainment.' (*al-An'am*: 16) We know that this particular attainment is the peek. Attainment of this world is like success or wealth besides other things that are liable to perish. It is contingent because it leaves man and man leaves it, but the attainment of the Hereafter is the lasting triumph that never ends.

This is the difference between the blessings of this life and the blessings of the Hereafter. Man lives in luxury in this life per his conception of luxury. For example, we find a peasant imagining luxury. For him it is an outdoor stone bench in front of his house that he sits on, and several jugs that he fills with clean water. If the peasant was to move to the city, he would imagine luxury to be a home that has splendid furniture and electronic appliances such as a refrigerator and other things. Therefore, the possibilities of luxury are different per how man imagines it. As for the felicity of the Hereafter, it is a felicity that man does not relinquish and it does not relinquish man. It is a felicity that the Infinitely Giving Creator has made. Indeed, in paradise there is that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and what has not occurred to the heart of any human being. Therefore, the triumph of the Hereafter's felicity is the manifest triumph.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* encompasses everything with knowledge and omnipotence, and says:

وَأِنْ يَمَسُّكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ
وَأِنْ يَمَسُّكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾

If God touches you [Prophet] with affliction, no one can remove it except Him, and if He touches you with good, He has power over all things [17] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 17)

Adversity is what afflicts a living being and disrupts the stability of his life. When man lives without any grievance or sickness and he feels completely healthy, he knows that he is of sound health. This is because he does not feel any pain in his eyes or any restriction in his breathing or anything else, but when one of the organs of his body causes him pain, he puts his hand on it, grieves and thinks about going to the doctor. Therefore, soundness of health in relation to man is the regular work of every organ in a way that does not attract one's attention.

The True Lord diverts the attention of those who possess blessings when they see a man from amongst them who has lost some blessing. When you walk in the street and you see a man who has lost a leg you say, 'Praise be to Allah' because both of your legs are sound. It is as if you do not realize Allah's blessing towards you until you see someone else who has been deprived of it. This makes us realize how pain and harm impart on us awareness of blessings. Furthermore, disturbances could afflict man's life so that he knows he lacks many of Allah's blessings, and thus he says regarding his fate, 'O Reliever of worries! O Lord!' Therefore, we find man saying 'O Lord!' whenever harm comes to him, and he takes refuge in Allah. Indeed, Allah has said about man: 'And when affliction touches man, he calls upon Us, whether lying on his side, sitting or standing; but when We remove from him his affliction, he continues [in disobedience] as if he had never called upon Us to [remove] an affliction that touched him. Thus, is made pleasing to the transgressors that which they have been doing.' (*Yunus*: 12)

When man senses weakness, if he is afflicted with some adversity, he does not tire of supplicating to Allah regardless of whether man is reclining, sitting, or standing. When the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* removes the harm from him, he may depart from Allah's side, and resume disobeying Allah as if

he had not supplicated to Allah to remove the harm. This is the behaviour of those who waste their own selves by disobeying Allah. The soul or Satan, after the harm has been removed, makes it seem good for the disobedient to plunge deeper and deeper into the wells of disobedience and the mire of depravity.

Man may attribute the removal of harm to other than Allah, and attribute the uncovering of the harm to the skilfulness of the doctor whom he consulted forgetting that the skilfulness of the doctor is one of Allah's blessings. Or he may attribute the alleviation of distress to the wealth or knowledge that Allah has given him forgetting that Allah is the Bestower of everything. This is identical to what Qarun (Korah) did when he thought that his wealth was the result of his exertion, toil, work and skilfulness forgetting that the True Lord is the Original Cause of all causes, harmful or beneficial. He is the One Who causes harm just as He causes benefit.

Harm turns man's attention to the blessings of the True Lord in this life. When man is content and patient, Allah removes the harm from him, because harm does not continue for man unless he receives it with anger and lack of contentment with Allah's decree. The True Lord does not cease any divine decree in the creation unless the creation is content with what Allah has decreed. The one who does not accept afflictions is the one who will have his afflictions continue. As for the one who wants Allah to remove his affliction, let him then accept the divine decree.

The True Lord gives us examples of this matter. There is Ibrahim (Abraham) who received the command to slaughter his only son. This command came to him in a way that a non-believer in Allah's decree might see as severe, but it was obligatory for Ibrahim (Abraham) to slaughter his son by himself; and this is a test at a very high level. Ibrahim (Abraham), the friend of the Most-Merciful, has not looked for an excuse to flee from the test Allah had given him, nor did he say, 'It was only a dream, not revelation'. But it was true, and the command came to him with the easiest of means of inspiration, the dream, yet with the most difficult commandment which is to slaughter his son. We see the greatness of being a prophet in how the True Lord's Commands are received. Allah inspired to him to allow his son Ismail (Ishmael) to share him in receiving the reward of being content with the divine decree, 'And

when he reached with him [the age of] exertion, he said, "O my son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I [must] sacrifice you, so see what you think." He said, "O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah wills, of the steadfast.'" (*as-Saffat*: 102)

Ismail (Ishmael) had become old enough to participate with his father in the demands of life when the command came to Ibrahim (Abraham) in his sleep to slaughter his son. Ismail's (Ishmael's) heart was filled with contentment with Allah's decree, and he did not occupy himself with resentment towards his father, nor did he resist or struggle. Rather, He said, 'O my father, do as you are commanded.' (*as-Saffat*: 102) The two of them took the command of Allah with acceptance and contentment, and therefore the True Lord says about both: 'And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead, We called to him, "O Ibrahim (Abraham). You have fulfilled the vision." Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good. Indeed, this was the clear trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.' (*as-Saffat*: 103-107)

The two of them took part in accepting Allah's decree, and both surrendered to the command. Ibrahim (Abraham) surrendered as the doer and Ismail (Ishmael) surrendered as the one receiving the action. Allah knew of their sincerity in receiving Allah's Command, and here the True Lord called Ibrahim (Abraham), 'You and Ismail (Ishmael) have responded to the divine decree and this obedience has credited your account. This is why benevolence shall come to you and to your son, and that is by removing the test'. Then the ransom came with a tremendous sacrifice because it came by Allah's Command. The True Lord did not stop there, but rather, he gave Ibrahim (Abraham) the good news of another son to be born: 'And We gave him good tidings of Isaac (Ishaq), a prophet from among the righteous.' (*as-Saffat*: 112)

Allah indeed removed the affliction from Ibrahim (Abraham) and gave him goodness which was another son. Thus, we, as human beings, prolong the time of affliction because of our lack of acceptance to it. However, if an affliction befalls man without any cause on his part, but he is pleased with his Lord, then the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* removes that affliction from him. If you see a man whose test is being prolonged, then know that he has lost contentment.

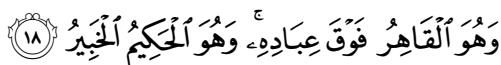
We notice that the True Lord says here, 'And if Allah should touch you with adversity, there is no remover of it except Him. And if He touches you with good - then He is over all things competent.' (*al-An'am*: 17) Allah knows that no servant can endure the True Lord harming him; for the True Lord's Strength is infinite and therefore, one is only *touched* with harm, and likewise with goodness. In this world, man does not obtain only a touch of goodness, as all goodness is stored away for him in the Hereafter. We know about the goodness of this world that either it will leave man or man will leave it. As for all goodness, it is in the Hereafter.

Whatever progress in creativity and invention man makes, he will never arrive at all the goodness that is found in the Hereafter. This is because the goodness of this life requires production and effort from human beings. As for the goodness in the Hereafter, it is per the Greatest Giver, and He is Allah. No one removes harm except Allah, and the sick person is not cured by merely going to the doctor. Rather, the doctor treats with the skilfulness that Allah has granted him, and the one who cures is Allah. 'And when I am ill, it is He who cures me.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 80)

This is because the True Lord created the illness and He created the medicine. He made doctors to be merely bridges from the illness to the medicine and then to the cure. Allah brings the means into existence so that His servants can rejoice and be happy, and thus He made skills a type of those means. If not, the matter is in His Hands *Glorified and Exalted is He*. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Treat one another, O servants of Allah, for indeed Allah did not create an illness except that He created a treatment for it, except for one illness: old age.'⁽¹⁾

We see that the distinguished doctor always states that the cure came with him and not because of him, and he acknowledges that Allah ennobled him by making the cure come at the time of his treatment. Thus, the True Lord is the One Who removes the harm, and He is the One capable of granting you and touching you with goodness, and His power has no limits. The True Lord says after that:

(1) Narrated by Ahmad, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nisa'i, Ibn Majah, Ibn Hibban and Al-Hakim from Usama ibn Sharik



**He is the Supreme Master over His creatures, the All
Wise, the All Aware [18] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 18)**

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* has arranged the universe with causes and effects, and everything in existence is a medium between one thing and another. The earth is a medium for receiving plants. A father is a medium between his own father and the grandson, and we all know that the True Lord is over His servants, He is Dominant with His Power. He directs the universe with wisdom and encompassing knowledge, and He knows everything that is hidden and manifest. He says: 'Say, "He is the [one] able to send upon you affliction from above you or from beneath your feet or to confuse you [so you become] sects and make you taste the violence of one another." Look how We diversify the signs that they might understand.' (*al-An'am*: 65)

He has the absolute power to send punishment from the sky or from the depths of the earth. He can place enmity between the servants so that they fight one another to repel one another so that the earth is not ruined. 'And if it were not for Allah repelling [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted.' (*al-Baqara*: 251)

Beware of thinking that when the True Lord allows the creation to possess means that they own those means. No. The True Lord wanted to arrange the duties of the universe. That is why when we see someone being oppressive in the universe, we then find another oppressor disciplining the first oppressor. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* does not discipline the evil person at the hands of a good man, but rather, he disciplines him by way of another evil person worse than him: 'And thus will We make some of the wrongdoers' allies of others for what they used to earn.' (*al-An'am*: 129) It is because He frees the oppressed from the people of piety of having any role in disciplining the oppressor. Rather, Allah avenges the oppressor by way of another oppressor like him or stronger than him. This is what we notice throughout history, recently and in the distant past. When the righteous servant gains power over those who have done evil to him, he says what Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* said when he entered Mecca, 'O Quraysh! What do you

think I should do to you?' They said, "Good; the brother of a noble man and the nephew of a noble man." He said, 'Go, for you are free.'⁽¹⁾

When Allah wants to avenge an evil person, He sends to him another evil person like him to crush his neck and cut off his nose, or he humiliates him so that corruption does not spread further and prevail. Allah is Dominant over His servants, yet it is dominance with wisdom and knowledge, not that of superiority, tyranny and control. To clarify this point, Allah may decree for one of His servants that his son breaks his arm. Then the man takes his son to a doctor who is not experienced to place a splint on the boy's arm, and he repairs the bones in the light of this splint in the wrong place. Then the man takes his son to a skilled doctor who breaks the boy's hand again so that he can put the bones back in their correct place. This breaking was done to straighten the bones and put them in the right place. The servants can never infuriate Allah, but the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted* takes justice for the one who is infuriated. We know that man chooses between faith and disbelief. If he disbelieves and disobeys, then he has nothing in the Hereafter but punishment. If not, Allah decrees for him an illness he is unable to rebel because He is Dominant over His servants. And the proof is that He controls things in which the servants have no choice. As long as man is governed by two brackets and he has no say when he is born and when he dies why then does he rebel against Allah's commands? The True Lord says after that:

قُلْ أَى شَىْءٍ أَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً قُلْ اللَّهُ شَهِيدٌ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ أَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهَةً أُخْرَى قُلْ لَا أَشْهَدُ قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌُ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّى بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

Say, 'What counts most as a witness?' Say, 'God is witness between you and me. This Quran was revealed for me to warn you [people] and everyone it reaches. Do you really bear witness that there are other gods beside God?' Say, 'I myself do not bear witness [to any such thing].' Say, 'He is only one God, and I disown whatever you join with Him' [19] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 19)

The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* differed with the people who opposed him, and differing requires wisdom and a clear proof. The

(1) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in his (Sunnan) [1/118] and in (Tarikh At-Tabari) [3/61]

witnesses are one of the clear proofs, so what do we think when the witness is Allah? He is the witness, the Arbiter and the Executer Who makes no deception. His rule is void of any oppression, and His will does not oppress a servant even equal to an atom's weight. Therefore, there is no witnessing that is greater than the True Lord's witnessing that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is sent by Him. If Allah had wanted, he would have made everyone believers, but He wanted man to have choice. The compassion of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is what made him hope that they would believe, but the True Lord says to His Messenger: 'Perhaps, [O Muhammad], you would kill yourself with grief that they will not be believers. If We willed, We could send down to them from the sky a sign for which their necks would remain humbled.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3-4) The True Lord commands His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to be compassionate towards himself first and not to kill himself out of grief because of their stubbornness and lack of faith. If the True Lord had wanted to make them all believers, He would have sent down a sign, for the duty of a messenger is only to convey the message. If He had wanted, the True Lord would have coerced the entire creation to have faith in Him just as He has subjugated the entire universe to serve man and the universe to glorify and praise Allah. However, He left the creation to choose so that their faith would confirm the attribute of Allah being loved; because voluntary faith is that which confirms this quality of being loved. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is only a warner and a giver of glad tidings with this Quran that has been sent down to him with revelation.

Given this setting of witnessing, warning serves just right because witnessing exists when there is a dispute. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called to faith, but those who oppose him call to disbelief and idolatry. Allah's witnessing is greater than any other witnessing. This is why the True Lord decides here that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* should warn with the Quran. This address is directed to inform the contemporaries of Allah's Messenger as well as whoever heard of anything of the Quran, because it is as if he has seen the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and received the conveyance from him. He indeed said, '...and whomever it reaches.' (*al-An'am*: 19) This means he warns you with it and warns whoever from humanity that the Quran reaches.

On the tongue of His Messenger, the True Lord directs a disapproving question to those who resist, saying, 'Do you [truly] testify that with Allah there are other deities?' (*al-An'am*: 19) It is a question from a questioner who is confident that whoever hears his question must negate the existence of another god besides Him. It is a question that extracts confirmation from the one who hears it. An example of this is what the True Lord put to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* regarding a matter that had taken place in the year of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* where He says, 'Have you not seen, [O Muhammad], how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1)

We know that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did not see what happened in the Year of the Elephant because it was the year of his birth, but when the True Lord informs him about it, one should conclude it is being conveyed from Allah, which makes the information more superior to seeing with the eyes and more reliable and certain. Here we have the disapproving question: 'Do you [truly] testify that with Allah there are other deities?' (*al-An'am*: 19) When this question incapacitated them in certain phases of the mission, some of them said, 'We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah.' (*az-Zumar*: 3) It is as if finally, they are acknowledging that the one they are drawing near to is Allah, but the True Lord severs the matter of idolatry and says on the tongue of His Messenger, 'Say, "I will not testify [with you]." Say, "Indeed, He is but one God, and indeed, I am free of what you associate [with Him]."' (*al-An'am*: 19) The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* does not bear witness to any god but Allah, and he presented them the disapproving question so that they might reflect and be guided to the correct answer that the True Lord stated succinctly for His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Indeed, He is but one God, and indeed, I am free of what you associate [with Him].' (*al-An'am*: 19)

The speech here is directed towards the group that opposes the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from amongst the idol-worshippers who are disbelievers in the Message of Allah's Messenger. The other portion is a portion from the people of the Book. These are the people who neglected the book that had been sent down to them. They no longer had the spirit of faith

used to repel the disobedient from disobedience, and thus corruption had spread in the universe. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because the disobedient did not find anyone to repel them. In that time, the reproachful self was hidden from society, and the self that commands to evil was predominant.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* did not leave human beings without messengers, for indeed there has been a messenger sent to every nation, who in return, prophesied and informed of the messenger that would follow him so that the people would be prepared to receive a warner and a giver of glad tidings. This is why all messages were informing of messengers to come so that they would not think that a pretender had violated the sanctity of their religion. Also, it is because Islam came as a universal religion, not only Muhammad's name was prophesized by the previous books, but also his exalted qualities and characteristics were clearly described therein.

Those who read about these qualities, had they removed themselves from temporal authority and immediately believed in the Message of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as 'Abdullah ibn Salam did when he said, 'When I saw him, I knew him as I know my own son, and my knowledge of Muhammad is stronger', these people forgot that they are the ones who had been given victory by Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* without them knowing. They used to seek victory through him over the tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj. They used to threaten them, 'It is about time a prophet will come from amongst you, whom we will believe in, follow and we and him will kill you [in the same manner] as 'Ad and Iram were killed.' Al-Aws and Al- Khazraj rushed to believe in Allah's Messenger saying, 'Maybe this is the prophet that the Jews threatened us with. Let us believe in him first.'

Therefore, it was no surprise the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called to this religion. Everyone who had any connection to one of the Divine Books knew of his coming, mission, and his description. They knew that he was the seal of Prophets after which revelation from heaven to earth shall come to an end.

Allah *the Exalted* then says:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ، كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمُ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

**Those to whom We have given the Scripture know this as well
as they know their own sons. Those who have lost their souls
will not believe [20] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 20)**

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was known in advance by the people of the Book just as they know their own children, but some of them preferred temporal authority over faith and thus they lost their own selves. Loss, as we know, is the loss of capital or its decrease. They lost their own selves because they should have strived to fix the spirits that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to rectify. By doing so, they denied their souls any good, by preferring the authority of this life of this fleeting world to faith in Allah, which is a massive loss.

Allah teaches us that faith is only an advantage for one's self. One should not think that saying 'there is no god worthy of worship but Allah' is a support for Allah's throne. No, it is just for you because there is no god but He who created the universe and the creation with the attributes of Perfection, Power, Knowledge, and Wisdom. Recognising the Divinity of Allah alone does not increase Allah's Perfection, but it benefits the servants who have believed, and thus they are proficient in receiving the command to build this universe. Understanding this facilitates the movement of life in the light of Allah's way, and those believers will be in harmony with the entire universe that glorifies Allah.

'Those to whom We have given the Scripture recognize it as they recognize their [own] children. Those who will lose themselves [in the Hereafter] do not believe.' (*al-An'am*: 20) He informs the people of Mecca that the call to faith that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* called to them, did not come as a surprise to the universe. Rather, it is a cry that was given as glad tidings on the tongue of a messenger. The people of Mecca had distanced themselves from their connection to the messengers and prophets, and it had been a while since a messenger had come to them; their neighbours were the people of a Book in Medina who knew such reality of which their messengers had brought affirming the covenant that Allah had

taken from them. It is because we know that when the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* created the creation and settled them in the earth, He wanted them to be gifted with power from His Power, to be wealthy from His Wealth, to have knowledge from His perfect Knowledge, to have wisdom from His absolute Wisdom, to have mercy from His complete Mercy, to be dominant from His Dominance because the universe cannot be sound unless these complementary factors exist, even if they are contradictory because every attribute has a parameter within which it is active.

For example, and Allah is beyond compare, when we prefer compassion when treating our children, we are spoiling them because a good father must be firm with them when raising them. Therefore, it is not possible for the master over creation to only be merciful. He also must be dominant because there may be a situation that requires dominance. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* does not want His creation to have a single type of nature, but rather, He wants to make them to react differently depending on situations. In a situation that requires mercy, they are to be merciful, and in a situation that requires severity and harshness, they are to be severe. The True Lord says about the believers: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] pleasure.’ (*al-Fath*: 29)

The above verse shows the nature of the believers. Indeed, Allah *the Exalted* did not make severity their dominant nature because situations may require mercy. Severity, however, is required to confront the people of falsehood. The True Lord did not make gentleness their dominant nature, but gentleness is required between them because every one of them hopes for Allah’s mercy and His grace. This is why the True Lord also says about the believers: ‘Humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 54)

The True Lord did not make the believer humble in an absolute sense, just as He did not make him powerful in an absolute sense, but He made him humble, gracious, and magnanimous towards his believing brother, while He made him powerful towards the disbelievers who deny Allah.

Therefore, He wants His creation to follow the nature of the True Lord, and this is why the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says in what has been narrated by 'Ammar ibn Yasser *Allah be pleased with him*, 'The best of manners is that of Allah, the Most Great.'⁽¹⁾ And it is related, 'Be like Allah in your manners.'

As long as the True Lord wants the creation to inhabit this universe, then He must secure for them a sound way that is based on 'Do!' and 'Do not do!' If we follow the way of Allah, then we are taking what we can call in contemporary parlance 'the law of maintenance.' So, let us do what Allah tells us to do, and let us leave what Allah has told us not to do so that we can carry out our tasks in the way that Allah wants us to do so.

Significantly, corruption emerges when man does what he is ordered not to do, and conversely refrains from doing what he must do. If Allah has asked that we establish the prayer, how can we refrain from praying? If Allah has enacted upon us not to drink wine, then how can we drink it? The imbalance of faith that takes place in the universe is exclusively the result of this conflict between the commands and the prohibitions. Apart from the boundaries of these two categories, Allah has left us the choice, as it is permissible to do or not to do it because the universe will not be corrupted by anything from it.

If you consider carefully Allah's method in His command and prohibitions, you will find that the True Lord has not put an end to your freedom, nor has He put an end to your choice. He has set limits for you whose purpose is to fight corruption in the universe. As for that which does not lead to corruption, it is a matter a personal choice. The True Lord has provided every human being with this way from Adam *peace and blessings be upon him* until the establishment of the Hour, and He has taken it upon Himself the promise not to punish a nation that has not been sent a messenger, and therefore, there was a successive procession of messengers. Why? Because heedlessness holds sway over man, for man may forget sometimes what restricts his movement, and he may forget again until he becomes heedless. The True Lord sent a messenger for

(1) Narrated by At-Tabarani in (*Al-Kabir*) and (*A-Awsat*)

every period of time to draw attention to the law preserving mankind, until Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came. Allah has entrusted the nation of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be the one that conveys Allah's way until the Hour is established. Therefore, He took a covenant from the prophets that they would inform of the final Prophet's Message. 'And [recall, O People of the Scripture], when Allah took the covenant of the prophets, [saying], "Whatever I give you of the Scripture and wisdom and then there comes to you a messenger confirming what is with you, you [must] believe in him and support him." [Allah] said, "Have you acknowledged and taken upon that My commitment?" They said, "We have acknowledged it." He said, "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses."' (Al-Imran: 81)

Therefore, Allah indeed took the pledge from every prophet that they would tell their people to believe in the Message of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* whose call corresponds with their call. The True Lord took confirmation from every prophet that he would do so, and the prophets bore witness and Allah, too, bore witness upon them. They conveyed that to their people. Thus, the support of the final Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* is present in every message that preceded Islam. It was obligatory for every messenger to give a clarification of this pledge to his people, and take from them a pledge to support the Messenger that is coming to them. They informed them that it was from the completion of faith that they would assist that Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* if they were to be present during his time.

The True Lord is singling out the people of the Book here, to whom the Torah and the Bible were sent down, and they are the adherents of the two great religions that preceded Islam, 'Those to whom We gave the Scripture know it as they know their own children. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth while they know [it].' (al-Baqara: 146)

Thus, if the disbelievers of Quraysh have not had a messenger for a long time, they can ask the people of the Book. Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj tribes heard from the people of the Book that there would be an upcoming prophet and they would believe and follow him, and kill the Arabs with him just as 'Ad and Iram were killed. Therefore, the cry of faith on the tongue of the

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not a surprise for the universe, even though it was concealed by those who disbelieved from the people of the Book. They are the ones about whom the True Lord said: 'And when there came to them a Book from Allah confirming that which was with them - although before they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved - but [then] when there came to them that which they recognized, they disbelieved in it; so the curse of Allah will be upon the disbelievers.' (*al-Baqara*: 89)

The bane that leads to denial of this conveyance from Allah befell some of the people of the Book, and they chose even though they had been informed by Allah, temporal authority because they saw therein fame, fortune, and felicity. Their ranks included the judges to whom the people turned to know the ruling in matters related to death. Likewise, they took charitable donations and they had become used to a life of leadership and felicity. The new call, if they adopted it, would strip them of this leadership even though they had been given glad tiding of this before. When the call came, it shook their temporal authority, and therefore they became enemies.

Therefore, the bane is to dress the temporal authority the guise of a Divine authority. When we investigate the history of religions, we find that the temporal authority of religions which preceded Islam is the authority that burdened the universe because the True Lord, when He created the universe, concealed within it secrets that work to serve man even if man is not aware of them. Man's scientific endeavours have led to these secrets, and He reveals the laws according to which we act. Examples of this would include the law of gravity and the law of negative and positive. All these laws are present in the universe, just as Allah has created the earth to take a spherical shape, and just as He has made the sun to be the source of heat and warmth as well as light and illumination.

Scientists utilize these preliminary steps so that they can discover the laws of these celestial bodies and the laws of this universe. When an intelligent scientist discovers some law, he says, 'I have discovered such and such'. This is a precise natural expression. He never says, 'I originated such and such'. This is because he knows that what he has discovered was already present in

the universe, but he was not aware of it. Man's lack of awareness of a law that is present in the universe does not prevent benefit from reaching man even though being aware of the law increases the possibility of benefiting from it.

Thus, man enjoys the existence of the sun before becoming aware of its energy. However, when scientists specialised in studying the sun, they realised that man could benefit from this energy in a greater way than the traditional way. Therefore, some cities began to light their streets with solar energy. Some buildings began to warm their apartments with solar energy and to heat water as well with this energy. This discovery has not prevented the uneducated or the Bedouin in the desert from benefitting from the sun's light. The same goes for electricity and electrical home appliances that an ignorant person can benefit from just as much as an educated person would. It is true that an uneducated person does not know what happens in the factories that produce televisions, but he still benefits from watching the television. The television is nothing other than a transformational material of all the scientific laws that man has discovered and applied to manufacture this device that man benefits from.

For every secret of the universe, there is a birth just like the birth of man. If the appointed time for a secret's birth comes, but no one is searching for it, Allah *Glorified is He* unveils it coincidentally for any human being. We often hear that a scientist was doing research in some field, but he discovered a secret different from the target of his research. The True Lord says in verse of *Al-Kursi*: 'And they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills.' (*al-Baqara*: 255)

We cannot attain knowledge of the secrets of the universe unless Allah grants permission, and there are tens of thousands of examples of this, beginning with the Archimedes Screw upon which the propulsion of submarines and steamers is based, to the law of the earth's gravity that was discovered by Newton when an apple coincidentally fell in front of him, to the discovery of penicillin and other secrets of this universe. If there were sciences that had a marked inception, there are others who do not have any. The True Lord says: '[He is] Knower of the unseen and He does not disclose His [knowledge of the]

unseen to anyone. Except whom He has approved of messengers, and indeed, He sends before each messenger and behind him observers.' (*al-Jinn*: 26-27)

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* is the Knower of the unseen which is not manifested to anyone except a messenger whom the True Lord chooses to inform of some of the unseen. He protects safeguards and preserves him with the angels to intervene between him and the whisperings of the devils and their causing confusion so that he can convey what has been revealed to him. When the True Lord decides a matter, no one has any say therein, for indeed He sends a messenger with it to the creation to guide them with commands and prohibitions. This matter is not up for discussion but rather, it comes with permission from Allah so that our desires do not contradict one another. He knew that desires amongst human beings could easily contradict one another, so He sent messengers with the proper way to straighten the affairs of human beings.

The mental activities by which a human arrives at secrets contained therein are a luxury of life. They are secrets that are the result of experience and working in the laboratory whose production is not subjective. Thus, you do not find a Russian chemistry and another that is American. This is why we see countries competing, each one trying to steal what the other one has by means of spies. As for the social setting, countries establish barriers barring principles. Thus the West does not tolerate the entry of social theories from the east, and the East does not tolerate the opposite taking place. This matter differs in scientific research. Each side tries to take possession of the laws of scientific research into the secrets of the universe, and if they are unable, they try to take it from someone else.

The True Lord teaches us to explore all the signs of the universe without turning away from them. He says to us: 'And how many a sign within the heavens and earth do they pass over while they, therefrom, are turning away.' (*Yusuf*: 105) He is turning our attention to the fact that every sign and every phenomenon require from us that we consider them with wisdom and close examination because we might extract what will make life easier for us. An example of this is steam power which was discovered by a man, while it was developed by someone else until this steam power came to serve all humanity.

Likewise, the one who invented the wheel helped humanity because his invention is now used to transport things and reduce journey times. All of this only came about due to reflecting on Allah's signs in the universe with close examination. The True Lord has indeed made research into the signs of the universe something well known amongst both believers and disbelievers, and it is the right of whoever looks for His secrets. This is the case with science. As for the case with religion, the matter is different because information in the case of religion comes from Allah by way of a messenger. As for research into the universe and its scientific secrets, the True Lord says regarding it: 'Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colours? And in the mountains are tracts, white and red of varying shades and [some] extremely black. And among people, and moving creatures and grazing livestock are various colours similarly. Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving.' (*Fatir*: 27-28)

O man, indeed the True Lord is turning your attention to the fact that He sent water down from the sky, and, thus plants, emerge and grow out of the earth that bear fruits of different colours and tastes. He made the mountains in different shapes and colours, some of them are weak, and some are strong. The colour of one mountain differs from another depending on the amount of subterranean material that it contains. All these mountains are from one source, but their branches differ widely to serve man.

The True Lord has indeed created grazing livestock with differing colours, shapes and sizes, and likewise people differ in colour and shape. The scholars are the ones who contemplate this and they fear Allah, the All Knowing Maker. Therefore, the matter of religion is decided by the True Lord, and the messengers convey from Allah, and likewise the people who have knowledge of the religion, who convey from Allah but they do not represent Allah because some human beings may mix their own desires with Allah's words and say, 'Indeed this is Allah's speech'. This is a shameless mistake and an enormous sin.

Indeed, what happened in the Middle Ages –for example– was a confusion of scientific research and what the methodology the True Lord had sent down. When a scientist like Galileo came along to research the nature of

celestial bodies, they wanted to burn him at the stake. When another scientist wanted to speak out about the nature of the earth, he hindered his freedom. When the Church governed the Western world in this manner, the entire world lagged and lived in ages of darkness. When these people encountered Muslims, they were freed from the superstitious stories of the Middle Ages. They learned the freedom of scientific research from the Arabs, and Europe advanced with that scientific method that Islam had brought and Muslim scientists cultivated.

The reason for Europe's past backwardness and ignorance was the clergymen and religion. Moreover, the Europeans avoiding religion was because of their knowledge that the clergy hated life and the advancement of civilisation, and this was to protect their influence and their temporal and spiritual authority. Some of the people of Europe wanted to take all religions to task because of the crimes of the clergy. Those who impute religion, all religion, forget that the clergy lied and claimed these things in the name of Christianity, and attributed them to it, but the Messiah did not say of this to them. However, it was the clergy that ruined life with their temporal authority, and the result was that some people took the corruption of the Church's authority as proof for the corruption of religion.

To these people I say, 'Religion does not interfere in any of the matters of scientific life and it never corrupts it'. Rather, you find that the True Lord has commanded us to research into His signs. Here is Allah's Messenger commanding us to do research into the affairs of this life under the light of experience. Allah wanted to differentiate between empirical knowledge and religion, and He wanted to protect His religion from the interference of any group saying it represents Allah and mixing their desires with the task of conveyance.

An example of this is what the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said regarding pollinating date palms. We know that a date palm is pollinated when we take the spandex of the male and use it to pollinate the female of the date palm, and then the fruit emerges as ripe. If that does not happen, the date palm produces fruit that is not ripe. The secret behind the date palm producing fruit that is not ripe is that the pollination may be done by means of the wind transferring a few pollen seeds. However, it is manual

pollination of the date palm that increases the quality of the fruits. Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* once said something to the Companions that could only be understood to mean that they pollinate the date palm, and what happened thus was that the date palm did not produce the expected fruits. They were unripe fruits. At that point, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* relied on the True Lord's words: 'And We have sent the fertilizing winds.' (*al-Hijr: 22*) These are true, accurate and wise words, and we find their effects in the clouds that turn into rain because of the positive encountering the negative. We find it in most plants, such as wheat, fruit, corn, and others. The spadix of the male is transferred by means of the wind to the components of the female in plants that are close to each other and they pollinate them, and likewise the wind transfers the light pollen. When pollen is heavy, it sometimes requires some effort on behalf of man to transfer the cells of the male to the cells of the female. An example of this is the date palm. This is why, when the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* learned of how low the date palm had produced in the year in which some of the companions did not pollinate their date palms, He said to them, 'You know more about the affairs of your life in this world.'⁽¹⁾

With this, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* settled the matter and the people of religion did not interfere again in any matter that requires practical experience for life to be benefitted. This is why it is said that Islam is a religion of science because it offers the men of science the opportunity to be released into reflecting on Allah's signs in this universe. Indeed, it calls them and commands them to discover the secrets of this universe. As for matters of human behaviour and social policy, the True Lord has sent down a way that prevents the control of some people over others and that keeps human behaviour in check with the teaching of this methodology of faith.

The methodology of faith indeed came with all the messages, and the final Message was that of Muhammad the son of `Abdullah. The good news of his coming was present in the Torah and the Bible. The True Lord says: 'Those to whom We gave the Scripture know it as they know their own

(1) Narrated by Muslim from Anas and `Aisha

children.' Does the action of the people of the Book require this knowledge? No; because some of them feared that their temporal authority would be taken from them, and the greatest example of this is 'Abdullah ibn 'Ubay who was the chief of hypocrisy in Islam, the one who was preparing himself to become the ruler of Medina before Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* arrived there. There were also those from the people of the Book who acted per this prophecy; an example being 'Abdullah ibn Salam. The Quran does not oppress anyone but rather, it says about some of the people of the Book: 'And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of what they have recognized of the truth. They say, "Our Lord, we have believed, so register us among the witnesses."' (al-Ma'ida: 83)

Therefore, the True Lord did not oppress those who believed from the people of the Book when they found that the way of Islam conformed with what had already come to them. However, some of the people of the Book disbelieved and showed enmity towards Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* out of fear that they would lose their temporal authority. When we look at history we find that temporal authority did, at one time, belong to the people of religion, such as what happened in Europe, but the men of religion took advantage of the people and the clergy sowed corruption on earth. The public rebelled against them and stopped obeying them to make their own laws. Because they were governing per their desires, as opposed to the revealed legislation, the law used to change amongst the men of religion regarding a single matter depending on the personality of whoever committed this matter. Whoever paid them was granted forgiveness, and whoever did not pay them was destined for punishment. They took the paltry pleasures of this world and they did not implement what Allah had commanded, so the people stopped recognising their authority.

Hence, some people do not recognise the message of Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* the glad tidings of whom had come to them and they knew him clearly and his description, but they denied him because he strips them of the benefits of wealth and authority that they had acquired. Thus, they squandered their own selves and remained in disbelief. The True

Lord says about them, ‘Those who will lose themselves [in the Hereafter] do not believe.’ They lost their own selves because they sold Allah’s signs for a paltry price, and the loss of the self is greater than the loss of wealth because the loss of wealth does not have to be permanent. Man can reacquire it after losing it. However, the loss of the self is a very weighty matter, indeed. We know that the transaction of faith does not detach the actions of this life from the reckoning of the Hereafter. The true believer is the one who connects this life to the Hereafter. However, some of the people of the Book loved this life more than the Hereafter. They distinguished between the two and took a paltry fortune of this world and lost the Hereafter. After that the True Lord says:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِآيَاتِهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

Who does greater wrong than someone who fabricates a lie against God or denies His revelation? Those who do such wrong will not prosper [21] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 21)

They attributed a lie to Allah when they did that; they had forgotten a portion of what they had been reminded of, and they had concealed some of the book that had been sent down to them. They had distorted the verses that had come down to them and had come with their own statements and attributed them to Allah. This is why we find the True Lord saying about them: ‘So woe to those who write the ‘scripture’ with their own hands, then say, “This is from Allah,” to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn.’ (*al-Baqara*: 79) The True Lord is threatening them with punishment because they have sold the religion in return for a paltry gain in this life, and they lied unto Allah and attributed to Him what He had not sent down. Therefore, woe to them, because they have descended to the lowest levels of oppression and deliberately denied everything that is required of them which is to have faith in Allah, the revealed books and the messengers.

Attributing a lie is a deliberate lie with the purpose of attributing to Allah what He has not said, and they indeed did that. This is why the oppressors are not successful, whether they oppress people by taking their wealth or by doing

evil to them; or they oppress their own selves by associating partners with Allah which is the greatest oppression. Allah says: 'Indeed, most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity.' (*Luqman*: 13) After that the True Lord says:

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا آيُنُ شُرَكَاءُكُمْ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

When We gather them all together and say to the polytheists, 'Where are those you claimed were partners with God?' in their utter dismay [22] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 22)

The True Lord is reminding us of the Day of Gathering, the day when Allah will ask those who associated partners with Him, denied, and attributed lies to Allah, 'Where are those whom you worshipped and whom you took as gods besides Me'? Indeed, Allah will never leave man with no purpose. Rather, every action that man does in this life is recorded and he will be asked about it on the Day of Resurrection. Allah will ask the idolaters about those whom they deceitfully worshipped besides Him, 'Where are these gods that the disbelievers worshipped besides Allah? Why do they not step forward to save their worshippers from the punishment that Allah is warming up for them'? Allah *the Exalted* will scold the disbelievers sharply. He will gather them along with the idols and statues that they worshipped, and this is the peak of humiliation for them and for these gods.

The True Lord says after that:

ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُنْ فِتْنَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا وَاللَّهِ رَبَّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

They will only say, 'By God, our Lord, we have not set up partners beside Him!' [23] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 23)

The True Lord gathers the idolaters with their gods that they took as partners besides Allah and He asks them about these gods and they say, 'By Allah, our Lord, we were not those who associated.' (*al-An'am*: 23) Outwardly they defend themselves but inwardly they are aware of the full reality which is that all sovereignty belongs to Allah, and on the Last Day, Allah has no partners. This is because man has no choice on the Last Day, but when man had a choice in this life, he could choose to either believe or disbelieve.

Choosing to have faith in this life is what the reckoning of the Last Day is based on. As for having faith under compulsion in the Last Day, there is no reward for it other than hell for the one who disbelieved or associated partners with Allah in this life. Had Allah wanted all of us to have faith under compulsion in this life, He would have forced us to obey Him as He did with the angels and the rest of His creation. The True Lord *the Exalted* subjugated all species of existence apart from man, and the subjugation of the species was to affirm His power, but man was honoured by being given the choice to go to Allah in love.

The True Lord surprises those who associate partners with Him on the Day of Resurrection because there is no Deity but Him, and they try to lie so as to escape punishment. They say, ‘...we were not those who associated.’ (*al-An‘am*: 23). They indeed lied to Allah through their actions in life and they want to lie against Allah on the Last Day with their words. But Allah is All Knowing of what the hearts conceal and how they were behaving in this life. In the Hereafter, He will clarify their actions for them and deal them a painful punishment.

When the True Lord says, ‘Where are your ‘partners’?’ It is Allah, the All Knowing who is asking the question. The objective is not to acquire knowledge but rather to obtain affirmation from the one being questioned. In our daily lives, we may see a question from a student to his teacher so that the student can know what he was ignorant of, and we see the question being returned at times by the teacher to the student; but this is not so that the teacher can know what he did not know. Rather, it is for the student to affirm what he knows and learned from his teacher. Thus, if the True Lord *the Exalted* asks His creation a question, is He asking them to know something? Allah forbids that should be the case. The True Lord only asks His servants for the purpose of affirmation. Affirmation here also involves reproach since it is a question that has no answer. We seek refuge in Allah that He should have any partners. When the True Lord *the Exalted* says, ‘Where are your ‘partners’?’ the meaning is that it is impossible for Him to have any partners. Allah asks them this question to censure and reproache them for associating with Allah that which does not exist. They associated partners with Allah in this life to free themselves from the requirements of faith, and here they are in the


tremendous gathering place realizing the extent of their lying in this life. There is no dominion for anyone besides Allah, and none is to be truly worshipped but Him. Thus, they articulate what they are witnessing, 'We were not those who associated.'

Someone might say, 'but in another place in the Quran, we find Allah saying with regards to these people, 'Woe, that Day, to the deniers. This is a Day they will not speak; nor will it be permitted for them to make an excuse.' (*al-Mursalat*: 34-36)

They, on the day of the greatest horror, know that they denied in this life, and they will not utter anything that will benefit them. The True Lord will not allow them to offer any excuse or apology. In reality, they do not utter anything that will save them from the punishment that awaits them, and they will fall into profound bewilderment and confusion. Indeed, from amongst these people who deny Allah and the Last Day are those who made something that human beings benefited from, or the lives of people were enhanced because of it, and they think that this act will save them. These people may take their prosperity and their reward from the people whose sake they worked for and from humanity's honouring of them. However, they will receive the punishment on the Last Day because they associated partners with Allah. The True Lord was not in their thoughts for a single moment when they brought forward whatever inventions they had invented, the True Lord says, 'But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing, but finds Allah before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allah is swift in account.' (*an-Nur*: 39) This is how we know that the True Lord rewards the deeds of the disbelievers and idolaters with His justice in this life by way of wealth and fame, but their actions are of no benefit in the Hereafter. Their actions are like the shining glitter that happens as a result of the sun's rays falling on a vast stretch of land in the desert, and the thirsty person thinks that it is water, but as he gets closer to it he finds that it has no benefit. Likewise, the disbelievers and idolaters will find that their deeds are worth nothing on the Day of Resurrection. The idolater from amongst these people will know the reality of his idolatry on the Day of Resurrection, and he will only find the One, the Unique the

All-Dominant in front of him. This is why each one of them will say, 'By Allah, we were not those who associated'. The idolater from amongst these people denies his idolatry, and this denial is a type of lying.

Idolaters lie, and the True Lord says about them, 'On the Day Allah will resurrect them all, and they will swear to Him as they swear to you and think that they are [standing] on something. Unquestionably, it is they who are the liars.' (*al-Mujadala*: 18) When the True Lord revives them on the Day of Resurrection, they will swear to Him that they were believers just as they used to swear in this life, but Allah describes them as liars. They could deceive human beings in this life with false oaths, but what about Allah who cannot be deceived by anyone? This is how we see that the test of these people is a great test, 'Then there will be no [excuse upon] examination except they will say, "By Allah, our Lord, we were not those who associated."' (*al-An'am*: 23) After that the True Lord says to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*:


 أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ

**See how they lie against themselves and how those they
invented have deserted them [24] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 24)**

The True Lord turns His Messenger's attention accurately towards the process that will take place on the Day of Resurrection, and when Allah will inform of some matter and we will verify that it became a reality as if we were seeing it literally and indisputably in front of us. He affirms that they have lied to themselves. We know that all actions are stripped of their temporality when they are attributed to Allah. For Allah time is one stream with no past, present, or future. An example of this is the True Lord's statement: 'The command of Allah is coming, so be not impatient for it. Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him.' (*an-Nahl*: 1)

It is not appropriate for someone to say, 'How can the True Lord say that His matter has come to pass and this is in the past tense, and then He forbids the servants from hastening it, but man does not hasten something unless it has not happened'. It is not appropriate for someone to say this because the speaker is the Sublime Power and nothing hinders Him from

doing what He wants. As for us, the servants, we do not dare say about an action that we will do tomorrow that we have done it, and this is because tomorrow may never come, or tomorrow may come, but we might not be able to do anything that we promised to do or our means could change. With the understanding that circumstances have become facilitated, then what power does a servant from amongst us have over anything without Allah willing it? We, the believers, know this, and it is upon us to say as Allah has taught us, 'And never say of anything, "Indeed, I will do that tomorrow", except [when adding], "If Allah wills."' And remember your Lord when you forget [it] and say, "Perhaps my Lord will guide me to what is nearer than this to right conduct.'" (*al-Kahf*: 23-24)

In this way, the man from amongst us guarantees that he has left the circle of lying. When Allah says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Behold', and it is for a matter the time for beholding it has not come, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* believes His Lord as if he had already seen this matter. Indeed, the True Lord describes these people as having 'lied to themselves'. Their lie that will take place on the Day of Resurrection is an actual, real matter. Man may lie for his own benefit in this life, but lying in front of Allah will count against man and not for him.

The True Lord continues, 'And lost from them will be what they used to invent.' (*al-An'am*: 24) The meaning of this is that on the Last Day they look for those whom they associated as partners with Allah, but they are not able to specify these partners because they said in front of Allah, 'By Allah, we were not those who associated.' (*al-An'am*: 23) These partners being absent from them is what clarifies and explains Allah's statement, 'And lost from them will be what they used to invent.' (*al-An'am*: 24) For the meaning of 'lost' is to be absent. Did they not say beforehand, 'And they say, "When we are lost within the earth, will we indeed be [recreated] in a new creation?"' Rather, they are, in [the matter of] the meeting with their Lord, disbelievers.' (*as-Sajda*: 10)

They are like those who deny the resurrection, asking themselves in bewilderment, 'If they are concealed in the earth and mixed with its components, can their Lord resurrect them as new'? It is because they do not believe that the One Who brought them into being the first time can bring them back a second

time. When Allah asks them, 'Where, now, are your partners', they lie and deny that they ever associated partners with Him. These partners now have forsaken them. Man worships the god that will benefit him on the Day of Gathering, and when these gods are absent on the Day of Gathering, this exposes the forsaking of these gods, and their absence at the time when they are most needed. Nothing remains but the countenance of Allah, who holds to account those who associate partners with Him.

There are those who do not know the path to their objective and can also be misguided, but here we have those who are misguided while knowing that path that leads to their objective and this is disbelief. When the True Lord talks about those who have disbelieved, He describes them as having already, most obviously, gone astray because the path to guidance was in front of them, but they did not take it, and this is the peak of misguidance. Man may be a believer but the essentials of faith within him are weak, so he disobeys his Lord. The True Lord says about the likes of this person: 'Whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error.' (*al-'Ahzab*: 36)

It is misguidance lesser in effect than the absolute misguidance and disbelief. But what about the one who is misguided because he does not know the path of guidance? This is what is apparent to us in the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when the True Lord said to him and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* 'Go to Pharaoh and say, "We are the messengers of the Lord of the worlds." Commanded and say, "Send with us the Children of Israel."' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 16-17) The True Lord issued the command to Musa (Musa (Moses)) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* to go to Pharaoh so that he can send the Children of Israel with them, but what about Pharaoh's position? What did Pharaoh say? 'Pharaoh said, "Did we not raise you among us as a child, and you remained among us for years of your life? And then you did your deed which you did, and you were of the ungrateful."' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 18-19)

Pharaoh wants to remind Musa (Moses) of the former's favour on the latter's. He reminds him that he raised him in his palace and despite that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did not respect it and he killed a man from amongst Pharaoh's people. In Pharaoh's opinion, that was a form of ingratitude for his favours. Yet, here he was, a second time, transgressing

against Pharaoh's divinity by inviting him to have faith in The True God whom Pharaoh could not imagine, and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* gleaned the essential mistake in his behaviour at that moment. The mistake was not ingratitude to Pharaoh but rather the mistake was the killing, for He says, '[Musa (Moses)] said, "I did it, then, while I was one of those astray."' (*ash-Shu'ara':* 20). This is how we know that Musa (Moses), in the moment that he killed a man who was his enemy, did not have with him the path of guidance. Rather, his straying from the right path was due to his lack of knowledge that there was another path to guidance. Here the True Lord addresses His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'And He found you lost and guided [you].' (*ad-Duha:* 7)

O Prophet Muhammad, you did not have a clear path towards guidance before you assumed prophethood, and the meaning of *lost* here is not deviation but rather, it means that before revelation was sent down, he did not know which path he was supposed to take. *Lost* can also be forgetfulness, and as long as man has forgotten reality, he is lost. An example is the True Lord's statement: 'So that if one of the women lost [memory of the testimony], then the other can remind her.' (*al-Baqara:* 282). Here the True Lord establishes that the testimony of a woman requires a guarantee, and that is done by confirming it with another woman's testimony. Because of the way a woman is created, she is not able to poke her nose into all the details of what she sees. Rather, she hears things superficially and therefore she does not get the complete picture. When the testimony of one woman is supported by the testimony of another woman, then each of the women reminds one another of whatever details may have been missed. This is because the mentality of a woman and the way she is created are based on preservation and being on guard in a society that contains dispute.

When the True Lord describes these idolaters on the Day of Resurrection He says: 'And lost from them will be what they used to invent.' (*al-An'am:* 24). Those whom they were lying about and claiming that they were partners besides Allah have deserted them, and the idolaters are the ones who are censured and taken to account for assuming partners. It may be that some of them have assumed a partner for Allah, but this partner has no sin in the matter, such as some of them assuming 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* to be a

partner besides Allah, and 'Isa (Jesus) is far removed from associating partners with Allah or making himself a partner in divinity. The True Lord has said, 'And [beware the Day] when Allah will say, "O 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), did you say to the people, "Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?" He will say, "Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen."' (al-Ma'ida: 116)

The idols themselves that the idolaters took as lords say, 'They worshipped us and we are more worshipping of Allah than those who stand praying at night. Therefore, the offense is thus committed by those who have associated partners with Allah, not the rocks that worship Allah and glorify Him because they are subjugated and prepared for what they have been created for. One of the poets imagined a dialogue taking place between the cave of Thawr and the cave of Hira'. The cave of Thawr says:

How we envied Hira' when the spirit came down

Trustworthy, assailing you with lights

When the True Lord permitted the emigration, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* hid himself in the cave of Thawr, and the other rocks said:

Thus, Hira' and Thawr became equals

Because of them the rocks were interceded for

They worshipped us and we are more worshipful of Allah

Than those who stand in the early morning

They took out silence as evidence against us

So for them we came to be fuel for the fire

Indeed, they have committed a crime of ignorance as they did

To the son of Maryam (Mary) and the disciples

The one who transgressed the bounds has his punishment and the one who is transgressed against

Therein is saved by the mercy of the All-Forgiving

Therefore, here are the rocks saying that they are free from associating partners with Allah, and that they are more worshipping of Allah than those who stand praying at night. The obvious silence of the rocks has been taken by some to be evidence that the rocks are pleased with being worshipped, but these same rocks will become the rocks of hell, prepared for those who disbelieved in Allah. The crime committed by the servants against the rocks is like the crime done to 'Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary). Those who exceed the bounds in worshipping rocks or human beings will be punished. As for rocks and human beings who have no sin in these matters, they only desire Allah's forgiveness and mercy.

The True Lord says after that:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كُلاًّ
آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءُوكَ يُجَادِلُونَكَ يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

Among them are some who [appear to] listen to you, but we have placed covers over their hearts – so they do not understand the Quran – and deafness in their ears. Even if they saw every sign they would not believe in them. So, when they come to you, they argue with you: the disbelievers say, ‘These are nothing but ancient fables’ [25] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 25)

Indeed, from amongst these people are those who listen to the Quran without the objective of understanding and being guided by it. Rather, it is with the objective of seeking all possible means to attack it. It is as if their hearts are locked from the ability to understand and properly derive the means to guidance. They argue with the objective of affirming their disbelief; not with a pure intention to know the horizons of the True Lord's signs and to arrive at the straight path.

We know that this entire chapter came to confront the issue of idols, statues, and associating partners with Allah. We know that the miracle that came with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Quran, and it is a miracle of speech. It is different from the visual miracles that were witnessed by the contemporaries of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* such as the

parting of the sea with the staff, or seeing the staff become a snake which snatched everything that the magicians had thrown down or the miracle of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* curing the blind and the leper. These are all visual miracles that are limited to a specific time. As for the miracle of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it is a miracle that is heard repeatedly.

Indeed, hearing is the first tool of realisation of the human soul. It is the first instrument of realisation that alerts man. It is the only instrument of realisation that accompanies the time of sleep and carries out its task because its design includes the capacity to continue functioning during the time of sleep. We know that when the True Lord wanted to maintain the people of the Cave for a period of three hundred and nine years, He veiled their ears so that they would be in a deep slumber, as they were in a cave in a mountain, and the mountain was in a desert with winds, hurricanes and tornadoes blowing against it. Had their ears been in their normal state, they would not have been able to sleep peacefully as Allah had wanted them to; and this is why He veiled their ears. Allah *Exalted is He* said, 'So We cast [a cover of sleep] over their ears within the cave for several years.' (*al-Kahf*: 11)

Therefore, the miracle of Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* came in an auditory fashion, but it can also be read, and when man receives a statement he receives it by hearing, and afterwards he can read this statement and tries to understand it. No one knows how to read unless they have heard the sounds of the letters first and then seen them afterwards. His miracle is distinguished by the master of evidences amongst the means of human realisation, which is hearing. The True Lord says, 'And among them are those who listen to you.'

Indeed, there is a difference between hearing and listening. The one who hears is the one who hears unintentionally, while the one who listens hears intentionally. The one who hears without intention does not have a choice but to hear, unless his ears are blocked. As for the one listening, he is the one who intends to hear. They were listening to the Quran not with the objective of unveiling the horizons of guidance but with the objective of persisting in disbelief, and with the intention of launching attacks against the Quran.

The True Lord says, '...but We have placed over their hearts coverings, lest they understand it, and in their ears deafness...' (*al-An'am*: 24). As if,

because of their choice to disbelieve, Allah has prevented them from understanding the Quran, and we know that all the contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard him; some believed and some persisted in disbelief. We know that for every action there is a receiver, and it is possible for the receiver to believe and with that the action has produced its benefit. Also, the receiver could persist with his previous position and thus not believe, and here in this case the action does not produce its benefit. The doer is one and the same, but the receiver differs. Some of the disbelievers heard the Quran and then left without faith, 'And among them, [O Muhammad], are those who listen to you, until when they depart from you, they say to those who were given knowledge, "What has he said just now?" Those are the ones of whom Allah has sealed over their hearts and who have followed their [own] desires.' (*Muhammad*: 16)

They are like the disbelievers who listen to the Quran and then leave so that they can mockingly say to the believers who have come to know and believed, 'What speech is this that Muhammad is saying'? These mockers are the ones whose hearts Allah has sealed with disbelief, and they leave guidance and head for misguidance. The one speaking with Allah's speech is the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* conveying from Allah. The one hearing differs. There is the hearer who believes and is affected by what he hears, and there is the hearer who disbelieves because his ears cannot translate what he has heard into awareness and realisation. But the Quran is for those who have believed that it is guidance and a cure. As for those who do not believe in it, their ears are deaf to understanding with no insight, and this is why they do not understand anything Allah revealed. You find the soul of the believer to be far-sighted because it knows what is in the Quran. As for the one who wants to be a tyrant on the earth, he does not want to make himself adhere to the way.

To recognise the difference between these two types of humans, we find the believer contemplating about the universe and thus, realising that it must have a wise Maker. As for the disbeliever, his insight is blind from seeing this. When the believer listens to a statement from the Creator of the universe, he listens attentively while the disbeliever runs away from it.

The leaders of Quraysh such as Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan, An-Nadar ibn al-Harith, Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira, `Utba ibn Rabi`a, Shayba ibn Rabi`a and Harb ibn Umayya, gathered, and one of them asked An-Nadar, 'O Nadar! What is the story behind the speech that Muhammad says?' An-Nadr was a narrator of stories that he gathered from all over the land, for he had travelled to the lands of Persia and Byzantium and traversed the length and breadth of the Arabian Peninsula. He said, 'By Allah, I do not know what Muhammad is saying except that he says the fables of ancient times.'

An-Nadr, Abu Sufyan and Abu Jahl engaged in an argument with Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* Muhammad. This argument reflects a lack of understanding of the signs that the Quran has brought. Allah did not put deafness in their ears forcibly, but rather, primarily, because of their disbelief, and Allah sealed their hearts because of their disbelief. The disease of disbelief settled in their hearts and they preferred it to faith, so Allah worsens their disease. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says about them: 'And if they should see every sign, they will not believe in it. Even when they come to you arguing with you, those who disbelieve say, "This is not but fables of the former generations."' (al-An'am: 25)

Fables are something that are written down and addressed as something wondrous and fictional. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is exposing them in front of themselves, and they are trying to find a flaw in the Quran, but they will not be able to find it. Allah *Glorified is He* says the final word about them: 'And they said, "Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?"' (az-Zukhruf: 31).

They know the greatness of the Quran; so how can they say that it is the fables of ancient times? They were amongst those who were astonished by the grandeur of the Noble Quran's style even though they were an oratory nation. But they also know that the requirements of the Quran are difficult for their egos to bear. In addition, they wanted to remain in a position of leadership, might, and subjection over others, while the Quran came to establish equality between all human beings in front of the True Lord, the One and the Unique.

By the Will of Allah, compelling events came about to be a cause for faith, such as what happened with `Umar ibn A-Khattab when he learned that his sister (Fatima bint Al-Khattab) had accepted Islam. He went to her, beat her and made her bleed. The flow of blood evoked within him his brotherly compassion and it put an end to his stubborn conceit. Then he wanted to read the page which contained some verses from the Quran but his sister told him to purify himself. He did so and then sat and listened. After he forwent conceit and stubbornness, and by purifying himself, his ears became ready to understand what was in the Quran. Then he went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and declared his faith in Allah as his Lord, and in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his final Message.

After that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَإِنْ يُهْلِكُونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

And tell others not to listen [to the Quran], while they themselves keep away from it. But they ruin no one but themselves, though they fail to realize this [26] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 26)

The disbeliever from amongst these people only turns away from what Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* requires. He not only does not want to be guided but also bars others from faith, so it is as if he has committed two crimes: the crime of his own disbelief and the crime of barring others from faith.

Quraysh were indeed certain that whoever heard the Quran, would be guided by it, and for that reason, they advised one another against hearing the Quran. If they were to hear it, they had to distort it or make some noise that would come between the one hearing the Quran and him reflecting on it. 'And those who disbelieve say, "Do not listen to this Quran and speak noisily during [the recitation of] it that perhaps you will overcome."' (*Fussilat*: 26)

They were certain that the Quran would overwhelm them with proof and silence them with clear evidences. Had they listened to it, they would have found a sweetness and an elegance therein that would remove all stubbornness and denial from their hearts. Because of this, it is as if they are bearing witness that the Quran affects the natural disposition of man, without disregarding they

have a gift for Arabic rhetoric. Nevertheless, the disbelievers persisted in their stubborn opposition despite their deep love for the style, eloquence, and rendering of the Quran. They were not content with their own misguidance, so they wanted to misguide others, which would double their sins to the addition of the sins of those they are misguiding. This had not affected, at the slightest, the progress of the call nor on the proclamation of faith coming from Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is because the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives him victory despite all this; for Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘And Our word has already preceded for Our servants, the messengers. That indeed, they would be those given victory. And that indeed, Our soldiers will be those who overcome.’ (*as-Saffat*: 171-173) When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘And they prevent [others] from him and are [themselves] remote from him. And they do not destroy except themselves, but they perceive [it] not.’ (*al-An‘am*: 26) We know that the purport of this statement is that they oppose the call of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because it would strip them of their temporal authority with its grandeur, tyranny and exploitation of the weak. This is why they stood in denial towards it and disbelieved in it.

Since they took this position towards the call, they were never going to have faith, and because they turned away and distanced themselves from the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they had indeed lost. The others, however, had not turned away but sought refuge in Allah, Who gave them refuge.

These stubborn deniers of the call of Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* stood in front of his call and barred and forbade people from following it because this call would strip them of their temporal authority with its grandeur, tyranny and exploitation of the weak by subjugating them to serve them and exerting their authority over them. This, primarily, is what prompted them to prevent others and forbid them from following Islam. Secondly, they themselves turned away and distanced themselves from following the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, it was for their own benefit, primarily, that they forbid others before turning away themselves because had the people believed in Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*, while they alone remained in disbelief, would they have benefitted at all from this

process? They would not have benefitted, so, their desire was for no one to believe in Allah's Messenger so that their authority would remain.

The Quranic rendering came expressing the subtlest details of this state, saying, '...and they prevent [others] from him.' (*al-An'am*: 26) The beginning was to forbid others from having faith in the Message of Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Then, they distanced themselves from Allah's Messenger, and thus, their fate became such that they would remain in their disbelief, and the loss was theirs. Meanwhile, other people believed.

This is how we see that the Quranic rendering always expresses psychological states with the most accurate of expressions, for the True Lord's saying: 'And they prevent [others] from him...' (*al-An'am*: 26), is a logical statement expressing the position of those who oppose Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. As for The True Lord's saying, '...and are [themselves] remote from him...' (*al-An'am*: 26), this is an illustration of what they have done to themselves after preventing others from following Muhammad's call and the final Message. Given this picture, they are committing two sins. The first is the misguiding of others and the second is their own misguidance. Because of this, the True Lord's following statement applies to them: 'That they may bear their own burdens in full on the Day of Resurrection and some of the burdens of those whom they misguide without knowledge. Unquestionably, evil is that which they bear.' (*an-Nahl*: 25)

No one should say, 'This verse contradicts the True Lord's *Glorified is He* statement,' 'And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another.' (*al-Isra'*: 15). This is because the two crimes; their crime and the crime of them misguiding others, is because of their action.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* continues, '...and they do not destroy except themselves, but they perceive [it] not.' (*al-An'am*: 26) We see that the one who stands in opposition to goodness and the True Lord's call is only doing so with the intention of benefitting himself and acquiring this life for his own sake, but they will never achieve that. Why? Because Allah *Glorified is He* is Dominant over His affairs: 'And Our word has already preceded for Our servants, the messengers. That indeed, they would be those given victory. And that indeed, Our soldiers will be those who overcome.' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* never allows His hosts to be defeated. He will certainly destroy the enemies of His call because of their disbelief and their barring of others from Allah's path. They are the ones who destroy themselves by themselves, and the Islamic call to faith shall remain in the ascent. They will see the lands of disbelief decreasing day by day. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'Have they not seen that We set upon the land, reducing it from its borders?' (*ar-Ra'd*: 41)

The lands of disbelief decrease, and when Allah judges, there is no power that can repel His judgement. Therefore, the Quran amply explains this matter towards the end of its revelatory order and teaches us to cut off every relation that we have with the disbelievers. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Say, "O disbelievers, I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship."' (*al-Kafirun*: 1-5)

This is how we see that cutting relations is a required matter between two groups; one group sees that it is upon truth, while the second group is upon falsehood. The cutting of relations can be a temporary matter and circumstances and situations may put pressure on people to resume earthly relations once again, but cutting relations must be supported by a matter of creed, and there should be no dissimulation. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says it twice: 'I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship. Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship. Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship.' (*al-Kafirun*: 1-5)

The believer sees both the present and the future, and he is fully aware of the impossibility of him worshipping what the disbelievers worship as well as the impossibility of the disbelievers worshipping what he worships.

Someone might say that the Quran, in its revelatory order, must not contradict reality, but we see in His *Glorified is He* statement, 'I do not worship what you worship. Nor are you worshippers of what I worship.' is repeated twice, which thereby closes the door in front of the disbelievers so that they will not believe even though some of them did enter Allah's religion. We say that indeed it is not a contradiction because the True Lord *Glorified is He* did

not close the door in front of the disbelievers whom Allah willed to believe, and the evidence is that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* said: 'When the victory of Allah has come and the conquest. And you see the people entering the religion of Allah in multitudes. Then exalt Him with the praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is ever accepting of repentance.' (*an-Nasr*: 1-3)

Therefore, the matter does not freeze at that point because the camp of faith will expand and it will confront the camp of the disbelievers, and the people will enter the religion of Allah in crowds. But there are those whom Allah has decreed to never believe so that they will remain upon their disbelief and enter the Fire. He *Glorified is He* says after that: 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined and ruined is he. His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained. He will [enter to burn in a Fire of [blazing] flame; and his wife as well - the carrier of firewood. Around her neck is a rope of [twisted] fibre.' (*al-Masad*: 1-5). Abu Lahab, and those of his kind, will enter the Fire and he will never enter Allah's religion.

The True Lord's statement *Glorified is He* then comes: 'And you see the people entering the religion of Allah in multitudes.' This statement opens the door of hope because 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab, 'Amr ibn Al-'As and 'Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl entered Islam. The chapter of Al-Masad came after the chapter of *An-Nasr* in the order of the Quran, as Allah had willed. This teaches us that there are people who will never enter paradise because they are like Abu Lahab and his wife, Umm Jamil. Following this is the chapter of *al-Ikhlās*: 'Say, "He is Allah, who is One. Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He begets not, nor was He begotten. Nor is there to Him any equivalent."' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-4) There is no god besides Allah that can nullify what Allah has judged, and no one can repel Allah's judgement. Therefore, whoever disbelieves and associates partners with Allah will be from those who have squandered themselves and destroyed themselves without perceiving it. After that, The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ وَقَفُوا عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوا يَلَيْسَٰنَا نُرَدُّ وَلَا نَكْذِبُ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنَا وَكُنْ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

If you could only see, when they are made to stand before the Fire, how they will say, 'If only we could be sent back, we would not reject the revelations of our Lord, but be among the believers' [27] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 27)

When we look at the True Lord's statement, 'If you could but see when they are made to stand before the Fire...' (*al-An'am*: 27), we do not find an apodosis in the way that we would find when you say, 'Had I seen so-and-so, I would have welcomed him', or 'Had I seen so-and-so, I would have punished him'. In both sentences there is an apodosis, but in this noble statement we do not find an apodosis, and this is part of the grandeur of the Quranic rendering. Thus, there are events which words cannot describe, and for that reason the True Lord *Glorified is He* omits them so that it fits the way every hearer sees it.

In our daily lives, we find a criminal in some land where his corruption and crimes are worsening amongst the population; killing, torture, theft, criminal attacks and no one is ever able to stop him. Then Allah enables the security forces to arrest him, and we see this denigrate turns from being a tyrant into a dastardly coward, almost kissing the hand of the police officer so that that he does not put the handcuffs on him. Someone sees this scene and he describes it to others by saying, 'If you could have seen the moment the police arrested this criminal...' This expression conveys all the meaning of humiliation imaginable. Therefore, the omission of the apodosis is beneficial so that every hearer can imagine the humiliation in whatever way he likes. This is because the witness, had he chosen to narrate what had happened in detail the moment the criminal was arrested, then he might have limited the humiliation to only what he saw, and this would have prevented those hearing from being able to imagine it and picture it. But if the witness suffices himself by saying, 'If you could have seen the moment the police arrested this criminal...' this statement generalises what was seen so that each person hearing can picture the humiliation in a way that suits the capacity of each person's imagination to picture things. This is how the Quran wanted to illustrate the horror of standing before the Fire, as the True

Lord *Glorified is He* used the word 'if' without any apodosis when He said: 'If you could but see when they are made to stand before the fire and will say, "Oh, would that we could be returned to life on earth and not deny the signs of our Lord and be among the believers."' (al-An'am: 27)

Some people wanted to find fault with the Quran's style, and some from amongst them would say, 'How can you say the Quran is the peak of oration, eloquent in its style, inimitable in its presentation and it says what it says about *az-zaqum* (a tree in hell)? Indeed, the Noble Quran says about this tree: 'Is Paradise a better accommodation or the tree of *zaqqum*? Indeed, We have made it a trial for the wrongdoers. Indeed, it is a tree issuing from the bottom of the Hellfire. The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of the devils.' (as-Saffat: 62-65)

Every tree needs water and air, and the life going through it is manifested in the greenness of the leaves, so how can this tree emerge from the Fire? Is there not an anomaly in that? Then the illustration of the tree goes on, and the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes its fruits with the True Lord's *Glorified is He* statement: 'The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of the devils. And indeed, they will eat from it and fill with it their bellies.' (as-Saffat: 65-66)

We have not seen the *zaqqum* tree, and we have not seen Satan's head. Those who try to find fault in the Quran say mockingly, 'Seeing as no human being has ever seen Satan's head, or the *zaqqum* tree, how can Allah compare the unknown to something else that is unknown'? They clamour and ask each other, 'How does the one hearing benefit from the comparison of something unknown with something else that is unknown'? We say in response to them 'Indeed the foolishness of your hearts and the loss of your natural gift for Arabic are what make you incapable of understanding the rhetoric spread across this statement'.

To give an example we say imagine a man sets up a competition for 'caricature' artists from around the world, and he asks each of them to draw a picture of Satan. When the day comes to decide the winner, you will find more than one picture of Satan, and the ugliest picture will win. Winning here will not be because of beauty but rather, it will be for how skilful someone is in illustrating ugliness. In this way, we would have in front of us

various illustrations of ugliness, so what do we think about the True Lord *Glorified is He* as He wanted to let the imagination unrestricted to picture the *zaqqum* tree and likewise Satan's head? With this rhetorical style, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to make known the benefit of demonstrating the ugliness of the tree's appearance from which the people of disbelief will eat.

The same notion is used here in the True Lord's statement, 'If you could but see when they are made to stand before the Fire', and what will happen to these people standing before the Fire is not mentioned here. Rather, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is content with expressing for us that we will see them standing in such a position because the Last Day is the day of recompense; either to Paradise or to the Fire. Paradise, as we know from the statement of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* contains that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and what has never occurred to the heart of any human being. We know that what the eye sees is limited, but the range of hearing is broader. This is because the ear hears what you witness and what others witness, while the eyes only see what they can see. The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not stop there, but rather He informs Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that paradise contains what has never occurred to the heart of any human being. In other words, Paradise contains things that language is incapable of expressing because language expresses people's imaginations of things. The meaning exists first, and later a term is coined to express it.

This is how we know that Paradise contains blessings that have no terms with which any meaning can be conveyed to the believer. Likewise, we also know that there is a punishment in the fire for which there are no terms that can express it. If the True Lord *Glorified is He* had said, 'If you could but see when they are made to stand before the Fire', we would have seen a matter that is dreadful, frightening and humiliating besides the other common terms that describe the severity of the punishment, but this will not be as effective as the verse puts it.

When we read 'made to stand,' we know that it contains a structure and a present existence, and there are those who have been made to stand before the fire. They are the ones who denied the fire in this life, but then they

found themselves amongst those whom Allah causes to stand before the fire, so that they can see the punishment that awaits them. In this way, the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes them stand before the fire that they denied in this life. They were informed of it in this life. A person, who believes in it, especially after it is conveyed by a truthful person, would make this knowledge of certainty. If man passes to the next stage of knowledge and sees a tangible representation of the information, then this is the eye of certainty. When the believer is informed by his Lord, he arrives at things with the knowledge of certainty from Allah because he believes his Lord. This is why 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* says, 'If the veil were to be lifted from me, I would not increase in certainty.' This is because he affirms what has been conveyed to him.

But what is it about the deniers? Man will see the knowledge of certainty on the Day of Resurrection when it becomes the eye of certainty. Both the believer and the disbeliever have a share in this. However, the disbeliever sees the Fire with the eye of certainty and they enter it so that he can be burned by it. Thus, he feels it and this is the 'true certainty'.

This is how we know that the fire is the 'eye of certainty', seen by both the believer and the disbeliever. The fire as the 'true certainty' is something that only the disbeliever suffers and is punished by. As for the believer in paradise, he feels the 'truth of certainty' because he abides therein and enjoys its blessings. Allah *Glorified is He* illustrates this in His statement: 'No! If you only knew with knowledge of certainty, you will surely see the Hellfire. Then you will surely see it with the eye of certainty.' (*at-Takathur*: 5-7) The truth of certainty is mentioned in His statement: 'And if the deceased was of those brought near to Allah. Then for him is rest and bounty and a garden of pleasure. And if he was of those of the right, then the angels will say, "Peace to you; you are from those of the right." But if he was of the deniers who were astray, then for him is an accommodation of scalding water and burning in Hellfire. Indeed, this is the true certainty.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 88-95)

What are these deniers going to do when they see the fire with the eye of certainty? They will fear having to suffer from it when they enter it. That is why they say, '...Oh, would that we could be returned to life on earth and not deny the signs of our Lord and be among the believers.' They will wish

that they could return to this life so they can have a fresh start and accept faith. In some cases, a wish is a request for something impossible to inform that the one requesting it would love for it to be so, as someone once said,

If only youth would come back one day

And I would tell him what old age has done

Or someone else's statement,

If only the celestial bodies would come down to me, I would arrange them

In necklaces of praise, as my words aren't enough to praise you

They say, '...would that we could be returned...' If they are saying this as a wish, then it is an impossible request, and it also includes a promise not to deny Allah's signs. Are they able to do this? No, because the Noble Quran has said in the following verse:

بَلْ بَدَا لَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُخْفُونَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَوْ رُدُّوا لَعَادُوا لِمَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

No! The truth they used to hide will become all too clear to them.

Even if they were brought back, they would only return to the very thing that was forbidden to them – they are such liars! [28]

(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 28)

They are requesting to be returned to this life but not to fulfil the promise in their impossible request because they will do what they did before: disbelief, denial and rejection. They seek refuge in this statement because of their excessive fear of what Allah has prepared for them, and this is after the disbelief and rejection they committed in this life is shown to them. It is said that the Day of Resurrection is 'the Day of Disgrace' because every person will find his book around his neck, and it will be said to him, 'Read your record. Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as a reckoner.' (*al-Isra'*: 14)

If we, in this life, record events with sounds and pictures, then what do we think about the True Lord *Glorified is He* recording us? Man will see a loathsome thing on the Day of Judgement in sound and picture, and he will see every action that he did in a way that he cannot deny. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified*

is He is clarifying for every servant, 'I will not reckon you but rather, I will leave you to reckon yourself'. Man will be surprised to see his limbs speak to testify against him; his hands will speak of what he did, his tongue will speak of what he said, his feet will relate where they were taken. Thus, these limbs that respond to the will of their owner in this life have a different position in the Hereafter. They will not carry out man's will on the Last Day but rather, the will of the One Who gave man his will 'To whom belongs all sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Prevailing.' (*Ghafir*: 16)

An example of this – and Allah is beyond compare– is that we find a squadron or combat regiment that has a commander who gives orders to the soldiers. If he gives them erroneous commands, they still carry them out. After the battle has finished, the supreme commander asks them what happened, and they respond by mentioning the series of erroneous commands that were issued by their immediate commander.

Therefore, one should beware of thinking that one's parts will always act per your power. Your control over something is a matter that Allah granted you. He can strip it away from you in this life whenever He wants. The Day of Resurrection will come and your control over your parts will come to an end. In this life, you can see illustrations of this control over the parts of the body being stripped, and this is to remind you of the power of the Sublime All-Giver. You see the one who does not see, and the one who has lost control over one limb or more of his limbs. This is a reminder from Allah that man's control over his limbs is only a matter that has been bestowed by Allah. The True Lord's statement *Glorified is He* about the disbelievers, 'But what they concealed before has [now] appeared to them...' exposes their deceit in this life. Then Allah responds to their prior wish that is filled with humiliation and misery, the wish to be returned to this life. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And even if they were returned, they would return to that which they were forbidden; and indeed, they are liars.' Thus, they are lying when they promise that they would believe if they were to be returned to this life, and the True Lord's next statement *Glorified is He* clarifies this:

وَقَالُوا إِن هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

**They say, 'There is nothing beyond our life in this world: we shall not be raised from the dead' [29]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 29)**

Throughout their lives, they had not taken faith as a result deduced from contemplating an organised and arranged universe that has been made perfect in its creation. They had not paid attention to this order, perfection, and arrangement that is present in human relationships, regardless of whether they are believers or non-believers; and we know that there are qualities that are commonly despised by all of mankind, believers, and non-believers alike. If a non-believer steals from his associate, is he not punished? Indeed, he receives a punishment from his society. In all societies, there are rewards and punishments, or rather there is a reward for the performance of good deeds, and faith does not prevent mankind from adopting anything that has to do with the performance of good deeds. As for those who are void of faith, events compel them to put laws in place to regulate reward and punishment.

We find that the criminalisation of whoever opposes goodness, beauty, and rectification of the universe is a matter that is inherent to man's natural disposition and it is necessary for man. They criminalise evil actions after events have bitten them and they do not turn to the heavenly way that came with reward and punishment for every action to protect the honour of man. On the Day of Resurrection, they will stand in humility and under compulsion to see what they have done: 'But what they concealed before has [now] appeared to them. And even if they were returned, they would return to that which they were forbidden; and indeed, they are liars.' (*al-An'am*: 28)

If they were to be returned to this life and given the choice again, they would still act as they had done before, and they would not say such a statement on the Last Day unless they were forced. Before that they were saying, 'And they say, "There is none but our worldly life, and we will not be resurrected."' (*al-An'am*: 29)

When they were in this life, they only believed in one life which was the worldly life. They did not pay attention to the fact that man enjoys life in

this world in proportion to how strong he is, and woe to the weak in relation to the strong. The strong only fears a law that may punish him, or he fears a god that will punish him for his sins, no matter how much he has hidden them. We find the believing judge always saying, 'If you hide things from being judged on earth, you cannot hide them from being judged in the sky'.

It is from the foolishness of the people of disbelief that they call life on earth 'worldly life,' whereas it is inferior. As long as they judge and know that it is inferior, then it must be countered by a higher life. All of this will happen to them when they stand before the fire, and the fire is one of the soldiers of the All-Compeller; so what do you think of them when they shall stand before the Creator of the fire and the Lord of all the worlds?! The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذْ وَقَفُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۖ قَالَ أَلَيْسَ هَٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ
وَرَبِّنَا ۚ قَالَ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

If you could only see, when they are made to stand before their Lord, how He will say, 'Is this not real?' They will say, 'Yes indeed, by our Lord.' He will say, 'Then taste the torment for having disbelieved' [30] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 30)

They, therefore, were scared and confused and they asked to be returned to this life because what they witnessed was a great horror; so what do you think about them standing before Allah? Indeed, it is a terrifying position. If the True Lord *Glorified is He* omitted the apodosis before when they were made to stand before the fire, then this situation is even more suited to omit the apodosis, so that the imagination is left unrestricted. It is certainly a greater horror.

Thus, we see them being reproached in the True Lord's statement to them, 'Is this not the truth?' They are surprised by the presence of Allah saying this to them, after witnessing the resurrection and standing before the Fire. Allah *Glorified is He* is not asking them a question but rather, He is affirming, and He willed for the affirmation to come from them. They affirm it because the situation requires no obstinacy.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* presents this matter in the form of negation so that no one supposes that there is any insinuation of the answer. The Lord's

verdict is issued, 'taste the punishments because you used to disbelieve.' Thus, they taste the punishment that they used to deny. Tasting the punishment is not from any kind of force or tyranny because Allah does not oppress in the slightest, but because they brought forth that which necessitates their punishment.

After that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا ۖ يَلْقَاءُ اللَّهَ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ السَّاعَةُ بَعْتَهُ قَالُوا يَحْسَرُنَا
عَلَىٰ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيهَا وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُونَ أَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلَىٰ ظُهُورِهِمْ ۚ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَزِينُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

Lost indeed are those who deny the meeting with their Lord until, when the Hour suddenly arrives, they say, 'Alas for us that we disregarded this!' They will bear their burdens on their backs. How terrible those burdens will be! [31] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 31)

Every capital needs work to increase it, but if the work has wasted the money, then this means that there is a double loss. The first loss is because the capital has gone, disappeared and been wasted. The second is because man's own effort has been wasted along with the capital.

Therefore, those who denied meeting Allah have indeed lost because they sold the longer lasting future for the short-lived present. Each one of us wants to benefit from his work and we try to give a little to take much.

For example, a farmer appropriates a specific amount from a large quantity of wheat, which is in his storehouse so that he can sow it in the earth after it has been cultivated. This means a small decrease in this farmer's storehouse, but it is a decrease for a future increase. When he places the seeds in the cultivated earth, we find the True Lord *Glorified is He* bringing forth vegetation for him that is doubled and multiplied many times over. In this way, the farmer sells that which is small, and in the present to take that which is great in the future.

This is how an intelligent person leads his life by weighing his steps carefully. If he wants to increase the benefits, then he must put in more effort. If he notices insufficient return, he would instantly cease that whichever is unproductive. Because the intelligent person does not like losing, we always

find him weighing things and comparing between the effort he expends and what he will get in return. As for those who have disbelieved in meeting Allah, they have indeed squandered their own selves, because they did not compare between the two lives; a life that is presumed and life that is certain, because the length of our stay in this life is presumed and not certain. We do not know how long we will live therein, and the life of man on earth is seventy years on average, as an example. However, no one knows exactly how long they will be in this life, and our life spans are limited. We are vanishing, going, and dying, but the life of the Hereafter is certain and has no fixed term. It is permanent. We know that the blessings of this life with regards to man, are per his means that are found therein. As for the blessings of the Hereafter, they are per the absolute power of the Original Cause, and He is Allah. Given this understanding, the loss of those who have disbelieved is massive, heavy and bloody because they did not trade with Allah.

‘Those will have lost who deny the meeting with Allah, until when the Hour [of resurrection] comes upon them unexpectedly, they will say, “Oh, how great is our regret over what we neglected concerning it...”’ Those who have disbelieved, it is their disbelief and their denial that has brought them to loss. The coming of the Hour, all of a sudden, is not the end of the trip. It is only the arrival at the first loss because their loss does not end with the sudden coming of the Hour. It only begins the moment the Hour surprises them. They are surprised by the occurrence of that which they were denying, and they know that what they did in this life can only necessitate punishment. Here begins the loss which they are incapable of hiding. That is why they say: ‘Oh, how great is our regret over what we neglected concerning it.’ In other words, we disregarded and squandered ourselves, while we were in this life. With this, we know that commitment to this life and taking the means therein is something that is not blameworthy, but negligence while being in this life is blameworthy because it is wasting time and sowing corruption on earth.

I say this lest no one thinks that enjoyment in this life is blameworthy in and of itself, and so that no one thinks that the religion only addresses the Hereafter because it also addresses this life. Recompense in the Hereafter is only of a different type and manner to that of this life. Whoever has excellent

behaviour in this life will obtain the reward of the Hereafter, and whoever does evil will obtain the punishment of the Hereafter. For this reason, it is totally incorrect to compare between this life and the religion.

We must be aware of the mistake of those who say 'the religion and this life', because the religion is not the opposite of this life. In fact, this life is the total focus of the religion. I say in refutation of those who think that the reason why some countries have become advanced in our age is that their people have neglected religion and become infatuated with the delights and pleasures of this life, and thus, they have worked to build civilizations.

We say that devotion to the religion with a spirit of understanding is what builds civilisations, and those who strive to improve in this life will be rewarded on the Day of Recompense. We must understand that the opposite of this life is the Hereafter, and the religion comprises both. It comprises this life as a subject, and the Hereafter as a reward. Those who are infatuated with this life and do not believe in the Hereafter are the ones who say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Oh, how great is our regret over what we neglected concerning it.' The immaterial burdens in this life (i.e. sins) will materialise as physical realities, and this is so that the humiliation can be public. Thus, whoever stole a sheep in this life, will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection carrying it on his back. Whoever stole a cow will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection carrying it on his shoulder and it will be mooing. Likewise, whoever stole a tonne of building iron will be resurrected on the Day of Resurrection carrying it on his back, and this is how Allah humiliates him on the Day of Resurrection.

This is then the situation of the people of the fire. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Unquestionably, evil is that which they bear.' We know that they will not just be carrying the burdens of their own sins but they will also be carrying some of the sins of those who took them as an example, and this is the sin of misguiding others. They know that the burden will be materialised as physical, and these sins have lead them to the Hellfire. We know that the result of every action is what is sought from it; so whoever does acts of righteousness, will find the righteousness of his actions, and whoever does acts of evil, will find his evil actions.

We see practical examples of this in our daily lives. For example, two brothers working in agriculture; and each of them owns two pieces of land. The first one gets up at the crack of dawn to tend to his land and cultivate it. He brings fertilizers for it and pays attention to the times of irrigation. He strives with earnest and endeavour until the day of the harvest. The other, on the contrary, stays up at night watching television and does not get up from his sleep until midday. He only expends the minimum amount of effort in tending to his land. The day of the harvest comes and the first brother obtains the result of his labour with an abundant yield. The other only has a small yield in addition to the grief he must swallow because of his laziness and neglect. Therefore, the intelligent person is the one who anticipates the return of his actions in life and he chooses the type of activity that will guarantee him felicity in this life and the Hereafter, and bring peace to the soul in this life and the Hereafter.

The one who sleeps and does not go to work is a man who loves himself, and whoever gets up early in the morning to work also loves himself, but there is a difference between the love of an idiot that is followed by regret and the love of someone who deeply understands the meaning of life, and his love is followed by an abundant reward. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says to us:

وَمَا الْحَيَوةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَلَهْوٌ وَلَلْآخِرَةُ
خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

The life of this world is nothing but a game and a distraction; the Home in the Hereafter is best for those who are aware of God. Why will you [people] not understand? [32] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 32)

This sums up life for the kind of people who stop in describing it as an amusement and play. Play is the pursuit of something and its destruction at the same time. For, example, a child who builds a sandcastle on the beach but then wrecks it: He only built a sandcastle so that he could wreck it. The purpose of play is to kill time in some endeavour that may be later wrecked. Thus, building and wrecking in this situation is playing which does not necessarily divert the person from his duties. As for amusement, it is to kill time in some useless endeavour besides distracting the person from his duties as well.

The small child, for example, receives some games from his father so that he can spend his time with them. He may wreck them and then build them again. The games of a child are also amusement at the same time because a child does not have any duties besides going to school. He will come to have more responsibilities and the family will teach him how to distinguish between playtime and the time for carrying out responsibilities. If he plays during the time he is supposed to be carrying out responsibilities, then the games become amusement because it is distracting him from a responsibility that is required of him.

Likewise, a life that lacks the methodology of the One Who created it and created man therein is both game and amusement. As for man taking life consistently with the specifications of the One Who created it, then this is a life that will bring about goodness in this life and in the Hereafter. The One Who created this life made it as a place for us to cultivate for the Hereafter. The believer, therefore, has two lives: one of righteousness in this life and another of felicity in the Hereafter because he lived this life per the Will of the One Who created it.

It is amazing that the One Who created us has not charged us with any responsibility until we reach the age of puberty. Responsibility comes with maturity and the completion of the intellect. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has allowed us to play in the years prior to maturity. However, these games must be played under the supervision of elders so that they can be turned into experience that will benefit us throughout the phases of life. It allows us to know how we arrived, in the modern age, at such a degree of progress in the manufacturing of games from which a child can learn. He can disassemble them and reassemble them again. Even the elders; we find them, in our time, learning how to drive a car while sitting at home in front of the television, as if they are on a real road on a real street crowded with cars. Whoever masters this practical training will be able to go out and drive cars. Thus, we find that training benefits man. Small children know games that will benefit them when they grow up, and likewise, training also benefits adults.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* advised us to teach our children horse riding, swimming and archery, horses were, at the

time of the Message, one of the important weapons that were ridden by those calling to Allah and fighting for His sake. He recommended that we teach our children how to swim because this builds the body and strengthens it. It benefits the youth and teaches them how to confront difficulties. When he recommended archery, it was because defining a target, material or immaterial, and knowing how to achieve it is something required of every youth. These were all games, but they were not amusement. They are enjoyable and man can continue to practice them after reaching the age of responsibility. He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Teach your children swimming and archery.'⁽¹⁾ So what do we say about the games of our age and our time?

Indeed, we find that football has drawn the interest of men and women, young and old, and it is a game that does not teach anyone anything. It is a game for the sake of gaming. It is a game that drains the time of most people, and that game has adopted all the rules of serious matters. It starts at a specific time. The spectators arrive two hours beforehand. The state must devote enough security forces for the sake of maintaining order, even though it is amusement that has no benefit for the spectator. It may also prevent, interfere with and interrupt some people's work, and for other people their prayer. All of this takes place, while we find that some fields that require seriousness have no rules. I say this so that people wake up and realise that this game does not benefit them at all. I state this opinion and I ask every head of a household to exert control over his family, and advise them with calmness and attentiveness until each member of the family becomes aware of his responsibilities and knows that it is just a form of amusement. It takes up a lot of one's time that should be used for working and carrying out the duties and responsibilities of life. If we do this, we will not complain and feel worn out because of a lack of production.

It is the duty of the state to consider these matters, and for us to treat every matter with proportionate measure. It is not sound to put seriousness into the rules of a game, but rather, so that seriousness has its rule, and games have their time. Also, we should not put games inside the sphere of

(1) Narrated by Ad-Daylami in (*Musnad Al-Firdaus*) and Abu Na'im in (*Al-Hilya*)

amusement. This is because the meaning of amusement is that we devote ourselves to doing something that has no objective and no benefit at the outcome. If we look at life lacking Allah's methodology, then it is nothing but games and amusement.

Here we turn our attention to the True Lord's precision in starting with play and then amusement. Then He says, 'but the home of the Hereafter' which clearly indicates that when man becomes detached in life from the methodology of the True Lord *Glorified is He* becomes surprised by events such that he treats sudden events with clear seriousness. Therefore, we must deal with life under the light of Allah's methodology. Allah *Glorified is He* informed us that He had created man from clay and shaped him and breathed into him from His spirit and gave him a first life; and both the believer and the disbeliever partake in it, the obedient, the disobedient and every person that has senses, movement, thoughts and will. Allah sent messengers with the methodology so that this life would be directed towards an objective, which is the second life, the abode of the Hereafter. It is the complete and everlasting life, and we hear the statement of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: 'O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life.' (*al-Anfal*: 24)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is presenting to us a higher, permanent life that is different from the life that ends. The one who refrains from adopting Allah's methodology in his life has simply enjoyed life exactly as the animal. But the one who adopts Allah's methodology chooses the higher life, the life of goodness, beauty, happiness, and excellence. We know that beauty in life is the beauty that does not bequeath ugliness. True goodness is that which spreads Allah's goodness amongst the servants, for man does not take goodness for himself and leave his evils for others. Therefore, I advise you not to take goodness for yourself at the expense of giving evil to others because you would not like it if others acquired goodness at your expense. The one who loves to unleash his evils amongst people, will receive evil from someone else, and whoever loves to take goodness from people, then let him give people from his goodness so that existence can remain beautiful. Therefore, life without [applying] Allah's methodology is ugly because the strong causes

havoc therein with his strength, and the weak retreats with feelings of humiliation and loss.

But the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants the life of the believers to be in the light of His methodology, and when they apply his commandments of 'Do!' and 'Do not do', then they preserve life from corruption per the commands of the Sublime Creator of life, for Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who brought us into existence and laid down for us the laws of maintaining life. When He prevents one believer from doing evil, then He has indeed prevented and made it impermissible for every believing person to do evil towards his brother, which secures man against evil.

Allah only singled out the believers with calling and supplicating because they are the people who respond to Him and obey Him. As for those who are their enemies from the people of disbelief and idolatry, they have denied Allah, disobeyed Him and have not believed in Him. When Allah commands a believer to do goodness He is, in fact, commanding all believers to do goodness towards themselves and others. This is how they obtain a peaceful life. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life.'

Those who do not respond to Allah or to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he calls them to what will give them life, remain in this life immersed in games and amusement. They are like the dead. We know that the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants the higher life for the believers. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* has named the way that lays down for us commands and prohibitions, a spirit: 'And thus We have revealed to you an inspiration of Our command.' (*ash-Shura*: 52). The True Lord *Glorified is He* named this angel that was sent down with the revelation: 'The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193)

Therefore, the life that gives man sense and movement is the first life in which he plays and amuses himself. This is not life that is intended for Allah because the life that is intended for Allah is the life of faith, and this is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* called it everlasting, and he called His methodology 'a spirit.' 'And the worldly life is not but amusement and diversion; but the home of the Hereafter is best for those who fear Allah, so will you not reason?'

Indeed, sheer discernment gives man goodness. It is an attempt to understand the secrets of the universe in terms of causes and causers. We see the sun's light filling the daytime and spreading illumination and warmth, and the disappearance of the sun and emergence of the moon brings about the serenity of stillness and guides people in the darkness of the land and the sea. The flowing of water quenches man's thirst and irrigates crops. The movement of wind moves the clouds, guides ships, assists in navigation and aviation and it pollinates plants. These are all causes that Allah willed so that balance would be implemented in the universe. Man takes his share from life with means that he works with, and he cannot take means from anywhere else. It is true that there are people who live without means and they take from the labour of others, but it is upon them to be wary of Allah. Beware of feeding yourself and your children by exploiting others. This is because life, sooner or later, will overtake you and your strength will become weakness, and insuring man for his state of weakness can only be by giving obligatory *zakat* to the weak, and helping them and assisting them in everything that they need. We find that non-believers have taken the idea of insurance from *zakat*. You give your *zakat* to the poor to insure yourself as a believer. They took this idea and turned it into life insurance, and this is why they have interfered in Allah's preordainment.

But the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted, by way of *zakat*, to secure the entire society, not just secure the one who insures himself. We know that what scares man and makes him accumulate wealth is the fear of weakness, but had the rich given some of his wealth to the poor, reassurance would have filled his soul and the souls of the weak.

What makes people puff and pant in life to accumulate things for their children is their lack of conviction in the mutual responsibility of society that Islam has legislated. They see orphans and they are lost in society, but if people in the society had faith in the mutual responsibilities of society, every orphan would find the paternity of the entire society to be his.

The man who puffs and pants while earning his living in order to ensure the future of his children may turn his children into orphans because he has been preoccupied from their upbringing. This is why the prince of the poets, Shawqi *may Allah's Mercy be upon him* says:

The orphan is not the one whose parents
Are no longer living and have left him abject
But the orphan is the one whose mother has
Abandoned him, or his father is busy

Indeed it is the duty of the society to take the issue of goodness from the statement of the True Lord *Glorified is He* when he says; 'O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life'. (al-Anfal: 24) Just as the True Lord *Glorified is He* brought the bodies to life with the spirit that He breathed into clay which came to have sense and motion, He is also the One Who sent down the Message to elevate human beings so that they do not become like grazing livestock or stray from the path as in the verse, 'And the worldly life is not but amusement and diversion; but the home of the Hereafter is best for those who fear Allah, so will you not reason?' (al-An'am: 32)

The abode of the Hereafter is goodness because the life of this world, no matter how long it lasts, will come to an end. But the Hereafter is eternal. We take our blessings in the life of this world via means, but we take the blessings of the Hereafter according to the vastness and abundance of Allah's Power. The bane of the life of this world, even for those who have blessings and power and riches, is the fear of poverty or death, but in the Hereafter the people of the paradise will be in everlasting blessings. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ إِنَّهُ لَيَحْزَنُكَ الَّذِي يَقُولُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُونَكَ
وَلَكِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ

**We know well that what they say grieves you [Prophet].
It is not you they disbelieve: the evildoers reject God's
revelation [33] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 33)**

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has explained the state of the disbelievers and their situation in the Hereafter when they will stand before the fire and before Allah Almighty. After that, the discussion turns to Prophet Muhammad

peace and blessings be upon him who was shouldering the great responsibility with its difficulty of conveying from Allah *the Exalted* to these disbelievers. He *peace and blessings be upon him* was grieved because his people did not taste the sweetness of faith and he is the Messenger of whom the True Lord *Glorified is He* says; 'there has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful.' (*at-Tawba*: 128)

He *peace and blessings be upon him* was very concerned for all people to be believers and he was hurt by the opposition of some people towards the call of faith. Indeed He *peace and blessings be upon him* was very concerned for the disbeliever to believe despite the fact that his duty as a Messenger was only to convey the Message. If the True Lord *Glorified is He* had wanted to make all of humanity believers, He would have sent down a sign to them that would have made them all believers. Allah tells The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to not kill himself with grief that they will not be believers.

But the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not want the submission of necks; He wants the submissions of hearts. Indeed He *Glorified is He* wants that people come voluntarily and out of their own will to affirm their love for their Creator. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that He knows well that he is saddened by what they say. And when He says *qad* (well), then you should know that what comes after it is an established matter. This particle may be inserted before a perfect verb and in this case, it comes to precede an established matter. Sometimes it indicates scarcity or abundance and this is when it is inserted before an imperfect verb that indicates the present or the future. If there is a cause connecting the agent and that which is acted upon, then this is abundance. If the outward purport of the matter is not clearly connected, then it indicates scarcity. An example of a connection that indicates abundance is someone saying that how often (*qad*) is the diligent person successful. This is because the diligent person and success are connected in a causal manner. However, there could still be a surprise incident that makes a diligent person unsuccessful, such as becoming sick on the day of the exam, but the likelihood of being healthy is greater than the likelihood of being sick and this is abundance.

An example of (*qad*) being used for scarcity is someone saying how rarely (*qad*) does the lazy person succeed. This refers to a lazy person being successful coincidentally, without any logical reason, as if he read a number of lessons the night before the exam and then took the exam and passed. Therefore, (*qad*) that is used with a perfect verb is for something established, and if it used with an imperfect verb, then it indicates frequency if there is a logical causal relationship, but yet it indicates scarcity if there is not a logical causal relationship. However, we all know that Allah's Knowledge is pre-eternal; no power and no matter is outside of what Allah *the Exalted* knows. Thus (*qad*) here is for an established matter even though it is being used with an imperfect verb. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to inform us that He knew from pre-eternity what was going to happen and He used (*qad*) so that we would think of the action.

In the concerned verse, grief occurs when the soul leaves the domain of its happiness. Thus, man has achieved the objective of rectitude and contentment when each one of his organs is carrying out its task. If any breakdown that disturbs the work of one of his organs happens, then this brings grief or it may be affected if something is obtained that was not sought.

What the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* sought was to turn everyone who heard the Message to belief. But some of them opposed faith. Some of them accused the Messenger of sorcery or madness or saying poetry. Here the True Lord *Glorified is He* consoles His Messenger in the concerned verse and tells him that he must know that what they say does not belong to him because he, by consensus of their own opinions, is the truthful and trustworthy one. They are only denying the signs that were sent to him for them because they know him for being truthful and trustworthy. The proof is that any disbeliever from amongst them would not trust anyone with any portion of his wealth or his valuables except the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Man does not cheat himself in what is specific to him, so it is as if Allah *the Exalted* wanted to take responsibility for His Messenger, because whoever insults the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* only insults the One who sent him *the Almighty* Allah.

This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says that He knows that he is saddened by what they say. He confirms to him that they do not call him

untruthful, but it is the verses of Allah *Glorified is He* that the wrongdoers reject. He *Glorified is He* makes it clear to us that His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was concerned to the furthest extent possible for his nation to respond to the call of the True Lord *Glorified is He* until the believers would be convinced of the True Lord's statement *Glorified is He* regarding His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'there has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves; it is grievous to him what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful.' (*at-Tawba*: 128)

Concern has no meaning except that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* loves that no one from among his people turns away from his way and from his religion. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* made the matter of religion optional so that He would know who was coming to Him voluntarily while being capable of not coming and who was not coming to Him while being capable of coming.

Indeed the True Lord *Glorified is He* has universal standard practices in the universe that He applies to the creation and the question may arise, what is it that makes the True Lord *Glorified is He* leave a scope for disbelief in the world, and why does He grant evil a scope in the life of this world? Does He not rule over it with a wise plan? We say: 'If there was no evil in the world, then harming and frightening people would not have truly known sweetness.' Therefore, the existence of evil, disbelief and the effects of disbelief compel people to conclude that they must have faith, and that goodness must exist. If evil had no place in the universe, then what would make people turn towards goodness? This is why you find that the believers' faith gets stronger when the enemies of faith are attacking the believers, harming and instigating against them. If the life of this world was to become monotonous, then maybe the matter of Islam would become lax in the souls of the Muslims. This is why we find that those who believe in Allah *the Exalted* are constantly vigilant; because there are those who disbelieve in Him. Thus He says to His Messenger: 'We certainly know that what such people say grieves you indeed...' (*al-An'am*: 33). It is as if He *Glorified is He* is informing us that He willed for the universe to contain both believers and disbelievers.

This is why, O Muslim, if you ask why there are disbelievers on earth, you should know that they are from Allah's creation and the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted them to choose disbelief. So they did not choose disbelief against His Will. Our master the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was grieved because there were people who did not believe, so the True Lord *Glorified is He* is consoling him because He knows that he is grieved by their statements of disbelief and the accusations that they make against him. Did they not say that he was a sorcerer? Did they not say that he was a madman? Did they not say that he was a liar? Did they not say that he was a soothsayer? Did they not say that he was a poet? He *Glorified is He* knows what they have said and He knows that these statements grieve The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to remove this grief and relieve His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* of it, so He informs him that 'they are not denying you, O Messenger of Allah, for you know your rank with them and it is the rank of being the truthful and trustworthy one. No one dares to deny you, but they reject Allah's signs. Is there a greater distraction than this? It is not possible to find a distraction greater than this.'

We know that what the people of idolatry said about The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is to be rejected, because they were masters of rhetoric, eloquence and fluency, so how can they say that the Quran is poetry while they know the different styles; standard speech and rhymed prose as well as prose and verse?

Does it make sense for them to confuse the Quranic style with poetry? This is definitely not possible. They said that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was a sorcerer, but how could he have bewitched those who believed in him and not bewitch others? If he was a sorcerer, he would have bewitched them as well. The fact that they remained in disbelief nullifies this accusation. They said that he was a liar, but by saying this, they are denying themselves because they know that he is the truthful and trustworthy one. Here is the conversation⁽¹⁾ between Al-Akhnas ibn Shuraiq and Abu Jahl: Al-Akhnas said "O Abu Al-Hakam! What do you think about what you have heard from Muhammad?" Abu Jahl replied; "what have I heard! Here, we hear a

(1) The story of Al-Akhnas ibn Shariq debating with Abu Jahl

statement of jealousy, envy, and hatred. We hear about those matters that are far from the subject of the luminous Muhammadan message.” Abu Jahl continued; “we have competed with Banu 'Abdul Manaf in nobility. They fed and we fed. They bore burdens and we bore burdens. They gave and we gave until we faced each other on horseback and were like racehorses. They said 'There is a prophet amongst us and revelation comes to him from the sky', how can we achieve something like this? By Allah, we will never believe in him and we will never affirm him.” Al-Akhnas then stood up and left him. Therefore, it is a matter of raging jealousy for positions of temporal authority. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* refutes them, saying: ‘How dared they distribute the mercy of the Lord? It is Allah who has apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and has raised some of them above others in degrees of rank in order for them to make use of one another for service. But the mercy of the Lord is better than whatever they accumulate’. (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) And this is the True Lord *Glorified is He* consoling His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying to him that He knows that he is saddened by what they say, but indeed, they do not call him untruthful, rather, it is the verses of Allah that the wrongdoers reject. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘We know that you, [O Muhammad], are saddened by what they say. And indeed, they do not call you untruthful, but it is the verses of Allah that the wrongdoers reject.’ (*al-An'am*: 33)

Indeed they are oppressors because oppression is removing a right from someone to another who does not deserve it. The most repulsive form of oppression is polytheism because the True Lord *Glorified is He* is the Only One Who deserves to be worshipped. The least form of oppression is to move a right that has been earned or granted to other than the one to whom it belongs and this oppression exists amongst people. The polytheists moved the right of the Divine Essence to those who do not deserve it, i.e. the statues and idols. As for the believers, they acknowledge the right of the Divine Essence to be worshipped.

There is another type of oppression that I want to talk about, that is, when someone misuses his name. An example would be a father who gives his son a name of Mahdi, but he fills the life of this world with corruption by harming himself and harming others. We say to someone like this that it is an obligation

for you to respect your father's hope in you, so do not oppress your name 'Mahdi'. There must be consistence between your behaviour and the name that your father has given you.

As for the case of a father calling his son 'Mahdi' but not instructing him in anything regarding guidance or the religion and the boy goes into the life of this world filling it with misery for himself and others, but is then guided afterwards is able to learn guidance, then his name has come to live up to its meaning.

In the 1930's, we used to hear warnings when we visited Cairo: 'Beware against 'Imad Ad-Din (pillar of the Religion) Street because all bad things are on this street.' I was astonished that a street called 'Imad Ad-Din was a place for crime, and I said in that regard:

The ugliest oppression after polytheism

Is to oppress a name by using it to name something that is the opposite in nature

For a street that is named 'Imad ad-Din

Has been made a street for opposing the religion

In life, there are many cases of names being misused by their owners, but the greatest and ugliest level of oppression is associating partners with Allah *the Exalted*. (*al-An'am*: 33) Denying (*jahd*) is the refusal of the tongue and its disdain and reluctance to articulate the word of truth. If the polytheists had isolated themselves and reviewed the issues of The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Message, they would have found their hearts content with him being truthful and a Messenger and that the way has only come with guidance. However, their tongues were not able to acknowledge this.

This is why the way of faith commands each one of us, when we want to discuss whether a matter is true or false, not to discuss it in a gathering of people, but rather to discuss it firstly amongst ourselves so that we can distinguish the truth therein from falsehood. This is why The True Lord says: 'Say, 'I only advise you of one [thing] - that you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually and then give thought. There is not in your companion any madness.' (*Saba'*: 46)

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is guiding us to the manner of distinguishing; either we discuss the matter amongst ourselves or it is discussed by two people so that it is possible for one of them to be convinced by the other's opinion without a third person witnessing his defeat and thus making him stubborn and argumentative. With this, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is advising those who have accused The Messenger, Prophet Muhammad – and we seek refuge in Allah – of having gone mad and madness is that you produce actions without any premise, reflection, or consideration of consequences. The one doing these actions is bereft of wisdom. The sane person, on the other hand, is the one who determines his actions with wisdom. He evaluates and examines allowing his intellect and wisdom to decide on the best course of action. He deals with people in an orderly manner and with excellent conduct. Have any one of the polytheists seen anything from the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that would indicate a lack of consistency in his actions?

This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Nun. By the pen and what they inscribe, You are not, [O Muhammad], by the favour of your Lord, a madman. And indeed, for you is a reward uninterrupted. And indeed, you are of a great moral character.' (*al-Qalam*: 1-4)

A great moral character is incompatible with madness. All people have done this with their Messengers and accused them of madness and stupidity. Every time a Messenger has come to his people with a true way to eradicate falsehood, his people have confronted him in this manner. We know that the sky does not intervene with prophecies and miracles unless corruption is overflowing and the believing soul has been obliterated. Within the believer is a nucleus of goodness and he is thus prompted to do goodness. If his soul tells him to do an act of disobedience and he does it, then indeed his reproachful soul censures him for it. But, if his soul has been obliterated and it does not consider reproach, then his soul that enjoins evil takes control and you will not find anyone in the society saying: 'Do not do that!' This is because the entire society has become corrupted as in the verse: 'they used not to prevent one another from wrongdoing that they did. How wretched was that which they were doing.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 79)

Therefore, the sky does not intervene with a Message or a miracle or a way unless corruption is overflowing, and as long as corruption is overflowing, then there will be those who benefit from this corruption. When a Messenger comes for the sake of preventing corruption, this Messenger prevents those who sow corruption from exploiting people and he intervenes in their exploitation from people. This is why every Messenger was opposed by those who sow corruption and they used to say: 'We do not see you followed except by those who are the lowest of us.' (*Hud: 27*)

The followers of every Messenger are the oppressed who need someone to rescue them. As for the tyrants, they confront the Messenger and oppose him. These tyrants receive him with harm that is commensurate with his mission. If his mission is for the tribe, then the harm comes to him from this tribe. If his mission is broader than that, then he receives all kinds of suffering.

As long as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a Messenger sent to all of mankind, then he must come across all kinds of hardships and bear with them, and Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared him for this mission. The previous Messengers suffered from much harm in accordance with their call. As for The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* he is for all of mankind. There is no message after him and this is why several people have gathered against this Messenger and against this Message.

For this reason the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوا عَلَى مَا كَذَّبُوا وَآوَدُوا إِلَىٰ أَنهٖمْ
نَصْرًا وَلَا مَبْدَلَ لِّكَلِمَتِ اللَّهِ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكَ مِن نَّبَإِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

Other messengers were disbelieved before you, and they bore their rejection and persecution steadfastly until Our aid arrived – no one can alter God's promises. You have already received accounts of these messengers (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 34) [34]

If the Messengers who preceded you were denied and were patient with it, and they were messengers only for their own people or for a specific nation in a specific time, then what about you, as you are The Seal of the Messengers for all of mankind and all time? Indeed you must bear this because the True Lord *Glorified is He* has chosen you for this mission and He is All Knowing

that you are worthy of it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* guarantees the victory of His Messengers so it is not feasible for Him to leave evil and falsehood to overwhelm the Messengers. As long as He *Glorified is He* has sent the Messenger then He must give him victory, for He says: 'And our word has already preceded for Our servants, the messengers, [That] indeed, they would be those given victory, and [that] indeed, Our soldiers will be those who overcome.' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173)

And as long as The Word of Allah *the Exalted* has preceded the Messengers, then nothing can change His Words *Glorified is He* and no one is capable of amending the principles that Allah *the Exalted* laid down in His Statement: 'And none can alter the Words of Allah. And there has certainly come to you some information about the [previous] messengers.' (*al-An'am*: 34)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* narrated to His Messenger the stories of those sent before him and He did not stop at informing him that the Previous Messengers were denied by their people. However, the True Lord *Glorified is He* conveyed to His Messenger what had happened to every Messenger from those mentioned in the Noble Quran and what happened to the Messenger – any messenger – in terms of being firm in the face of his enemies. Then He explains that The Word of The True Lord *Glorified is He* is always victorious and the True Lord *Glorified is He* has related the stories of some of the Messengers, for He said: 'Among them are those [whose stories] We have related to you, and among them are those [whose stories] We have not related to you.' (*Ghafir*: 78)

After that, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ إِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَإِنْ أُسْتَطِيعَتْ أَنْ تَبْنِيَ نَفَقًا فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ سُلَّمًا فِي السَّمَاءِ فَتَأْتِيَهُمْ بِآيَةٍ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَمَعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

If you find rejection by the disbelievers so hard to bear, then seek a tunnel into the ground or a ladder into the sky, if you can, and bring them a sign: God could bring them all to guidance if it were His will, so do not join the ignorant [35] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 35)

This verse means that indeed you, O Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are a Messenger from Allah *the Exalted* and you have a way which is

your miracle that proves the veracity of what you have come with., Furthermore, if their opposition distresses you and it agonises you that they oppose you and turn away from you, and if you are able to make a hole for yourself in the ground in order to bring them a sign or build a ladder to climb into the sky and ask for this sign, then do so. However, you are unable to do so because it is beyond the limits of your capacity and the polytheists and hypocrites will receive the punishment because you came, O Messenger of Allah, to take away the force of their temporal authority and establish justice based on faith. This is why they tried to mock you and harm you.

The disbelievers asked the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to make the earth open up a spring for them and they asked that he climb into the sky and make it send something down to destroy them. These things were not within the capacity or ability of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says to him that which will lock the doors of his grief and put an end to his sorrow and distress that is due to their opposition, and so that he knows that mocking and opposition are perfectly normal for every one of the Messengers. You, O Messenger of Allah, have priority in this because your mission is bigger than those of all the Messengers. We notice that the True Lord *Glorified is He* brings the example of what they say, when He says: 'Then if you are able to seek a tunnel into the earth or a stairway into the sky to bring them a sign, [then do so].' (*al-An'am*: 35)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not say: 'Do that!' as if the matter is a reassurance for the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* because the apotheosis of a situation like this is known, and the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* does not force anyone to have faith. The opposition of these people is a matter intended by the One Who necessarily exists so that He can test them, and had He wanted to force them, He would have done so and no one would turn away from Allah *Glorified is He*. The entire universe is obedient to Allah *the Exalted*; the sun, the moon, the stars, the air, the water, the mountains, the earth and everything that is in the universe is obedient to Allah Almighty including the animals that are subjugated to serve man, but He *Glorified is He* gave man the choice to come to Him with love.

We know that the True Lord *Glorified is He* left some of the subjugated creatures to be out of the control of man, to affirm for man that he does not control these things with his ability, but it is He *Glorified is He* who creates them and puts them under his control. This is why we see a huge camel being ridden by a small child, but we also see men, regardless of how strong they are, being very careful and cautious around a small snake as in the verse: 'Do they not see that We have created for them from what Our hands have made, grazing livestock and [then] they are their owners? And We have tamed them for them, so some of them they ride, and some of them they eat.' (*Ya Sin*: 71-72)

If Allah *Glorified is He* had not put them under our control then no one would be able to get close to them and I always give this example when someone says: 'Why did Allah *the Exalted* create the fly?' One of the people of brilliance said: 'To humiliate the tyrants, for their authority does not include these insects. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has given the man the might of leadership, but He has also taught him to be humble before the Creator'.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* informs His Messenger that if He *Glorified is He* had willed, He would have united them upon guidance. So, never be of the ignorant.

That is, had Allah *the Exalted* wanted He would have made all of mankind believers and to this someone might say: 'How can Allah *the Exalted* address His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying to him to never be of the ignorant?' We say that when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says this to His Messenger, He *Glorified is He* does not say this because He expects the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to do such a thing, as the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is divinely protected from ignorance. Rather, it is a statement that contains transcendence of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* from above being amongst the ignorant ones.

After that, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّمَا يَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ يَسْمَعُونَ وَالْمَوْتَى يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

Only those who can hear will respond; as for the dead, God will raise them up, and to Him they will all be returned [36] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 36)

The meaning of the word *yastajib* (respond) is that they obey the command of the One Who commands and the prohibition of the One Who prohibits. There is a difference between *istijaba* (responding) and *ijaba* (answering) because responding means that the one you have asked for obeys you and carries out what you have asked him to do. Answering means that the one you ask, answers you, even if he rejects what you say, so the answer may be the opposite of what you were asking for. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says that only those who hear will be the ones who respond, i.e. indeed those who respond to the call of the True Lord *Glorified is He* are those who hear with their ears with their hearts in confirmation because there is a difference between hearing outwardly while deviating inwardly and obediently hearing outwardly while inwardly loving this obedience. We know that receiving something heard is one thing and the one who is affected by what is heard is something else.

When good listening is combined with the effect of love to carry out what man has heard, then this is what faith requires. The believers are those who listen to the words of Allah *the Exalted* with the effect of love and they are different from those who hear speech and it goes in one ear and get out through the other ear. They leave the words without applying them and the soul does not contain a single trace of that speech.

Thus, we see that Allah *Glorified is He* has made and created in man senses that guide and show him the way to either belief or disbelief. The believer's ear hears, the heart confirms and the intellect examines and believes. As for the disbeliever, his ear hears but his heart opposes and the intellect looks for reasons to disbelieve as he desires disbelief and strives for it. Therefore, his senses do not carry out their task in an orderly manner and it is as if those who hear but do not respond are like the dead. The matter, therefore, is not restricted to hearing but what is sought is that there is hearing, which is meant to be affected by what is heard and is to obey it. Do not think that it is difficult

for Allah Almighty to let the one who does not hear and obey, to be guided and become upright. Nothing can turn away from Allah Almighty because He *Glorified is He* revives the dead.

As long as He *Glorified is He* revives the dead then He does not demand faith that comes through compulsion. Rather, He demands faith that it out of one's own will and conviction. If He *Glorified is He* had wished, He would send a sign down from the sky and their necks would have remained in submission, but He *Glorified is He* demands hearts and not just the outward forms. Therefore, those who respond to the call of faith are those who are truly alive. As for those who do not respond, they are just like the dead. After they have died and their lives have ended, Allah *the Exalted* will resurrect them to ask them about their actions in the life of this world. When they go back to Allah Almighty, they will find the reckoning. We know that the final and permanent return is to Allah *Glorified is He* and whoever goes back to Allah *the Exalted* with his actions being pure hastens the pure reward and longs and looks forward to it. As for the one who goes back to Allah *the Exalted* under compulsion, he fears a painful reward.

After that, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَادِرٌ عَلَىٰ أَن
يُنْزِلَ آيَةً وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

**They also say, 'Why has no sign been sent down to him
from his Lord?' Say, 'God certainly has the power to
send down a sign,' though most of them do not know [37]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 37)**

Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies for us their continuous argumentation and their request for some sign; a sign is a wondrous matter that Allah *the Exalted* brings to the hands of a Prophet to confirm his truthfulness in conveying from Allah Almighty. It is as if they do not want to acknowledge that the Quran is a clear sign despite them acknowledging the honour of the Quran, for they said: 'Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

But they do not acknowledge the Quran to be a miraculous sign because they know that the previous Messengers were all sent with a miraculous sign that was separate from the Book that they brought. The miracle of Moses *peace be upon him* *Glorified is He* was the stick and his hand that he took out of his pocket which became white without any visible cause, and he parted the sea, but his Book was the Torah. Jesus' miracle was speaking in the cradle by Allah's leave, curing the blind and the leper and bringing the dead back to life by Allah's leave. He came with the Bible to spiritually balance with the materialism that had filled the souls of the Jews. After they said that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was inventing lies, the True Lord *Glorified is He* challenged them to bring something like the Quran and then He asked them to bring ten chapters like it. Then He asked them to bring something similar to the shortest chapters. Therefore, fabrication is possible for you if we suppose that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has fabricated it, so it is possible for you yourselves to fabricate in the rhetorical styles that you have distinction and superiority in. Indeed, the Quran has challenged them and as long as it has challenged them, it is a miracle because the basis of a miracle is a challenge. Allah Almighty challenges them to bring one chapter similar to the chapters of the Quran, but they are unable to do so. He is challenging them in the field of language and they are gifted masters of language. The Quran came to challenge them in the field of their expertise, but some of the Arabs asked the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for a tangible, natural miracle that they could see. Stupidity blinded them from knowing that tangible knowledge only has a temporary affect; whoever sees it, says that it is a miracle and whoever does not see it, may believe, or deny it. We, as Muslims, do not affirm tangible miracles unless the Quran has related them. This is because the Quran has come to all of mankind and for this reason, it does not make sense for the final way to be detached from the Prophet's miracle that he came with.

Thus, the Quran came as a miracle for the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and it is a permanent immaterial sign with the rulings and organic structures that it contains, as well as the universal signs and scientific matters. However, people will always have disagreements in terms of language; and the miracles that the Quran contains, will never cease to be wondrous

until the Day or Resurrection. Every day we extract new miracles from the signs of Allah *the Exalted* that silence every denier because they are universal miracles; and it is astonishing that some of the people who extract these miracles are not Muslims and do not believe in the Quran.

However, some of the polytheists were not content with the Quran as a sign and miracle that proves the truthfulness of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and so they asked for a tangible miracle. But is this request for a sign a real request with hope that they will obtain knowledge of the True Lord *Glorified is He* and have faith in Him, or is it just a reason so that they be excused to stay in their disbelief? If requesting a sign was truly coming from their hearts, then we would take them by the hand, show them the way, guide them and say to them: 'Indeed the Messengers who came with miracles other than the Book of guidance, were Messengers who were sent to specific nations within specified times. They brought signs with them which were seen once, and then they were finished. But Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has come for all time and places, and this is why it is not appropriate for his sign and his miracle to be tangible not to restrict it to a specific time and place. The True Lord *Glorified is He* willed that the miracle of His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* be a permanent way. The treasures of the Quran manifest and reveal universal signs that are verified with knowledge and seen by human beings; and what is concealed, the humans will discover until the coming of the Hour. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.' (*Fussilat: 53*)

That is, indeed Allah Almighty will unveil His signs for human beings so that they are manifest and the truth becomes clear to them. If you demand a sign purely for the sake of argument, hesitating to declare your faith, then you should know that other people demanded signs and the True Lord *Glorified is He* sent down these signs to them, but they disbelieved. Further, it is stated in the Quran that nothing could have hindered Allah Almighty that He should send signs except that the people before them rejected them.

This what happened with the people of Prophet Saleh (Shelah) *peace be upon him* when they demanded that he should bring to them a she-camel, and yet

they rejected this sign and even slaughtered her; therefore their Lord crushed them for their sin and leveled them with the ground. Thus, the nations before demanded signs and Allah *Glorified is He* is surely able to send down signs, but the disbelievers do not know, and will say the same as those who rejected Allah's signs, thereby hindering signs to be sent down as stated in the Quranic verse.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* indeed sent down the Quran to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and it contains many signs that are so majestic that we cannot count. If they had demanded a sign and Allah *the Exalted* had given them one and they still did not believe, then He *Glorified is He* would have had the right to destroy all of them. However, Allah *the Exalted* promised Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He would not destroy them as long as He *peace and blessings be upon him* was amongst them as stated in the verse.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* neglecting their demand by not sending to them a sign, is actually solicitous about them because amongst them are those who will believe and amongst them are those whose progeny will be believers and who will carry the Guidance and believe in it until the coming of the Hour because they are the followers and bearers of the Final Message.

Afterwards, the True Lord *Glorified is He* with the finest eloquence, states:

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ
مَا فَرَقْنَاهُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

All the creatures that crawl on the earth and those that fly with their wings are communities like yourselves. We have missed nothing out of the Record – in the end they will be gathered to their Lord [38] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 38)

Indeed, He *Glorified is He* makes it clear to us: I give signs that I know to be received and accepted by those of sound natural disposition. I sent the Quran down to you so that you would believe in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who bore it as a Guidance for reforming your lives. I have made you the masters of the universe, served by all beings because you are the children of Adam *peace be upon him*. It is more appropriate for you to realise that the animals

are in your service and the plants are in the service of the animals and man. All beings in existence are made subservient to serve you. I made all creation subordinate to man, provided them with what benefits and maintains them and devised a system for them, and I gave them natural inclinations in such a way as befitting their purpose so as to offer you comfort; such being the case with those who serve you, how is it then with you? Indeed I have sent down the Guidance that reforms the life of man who is the vicegerent on earth.

It is stated in the verse under discussion that Allah *Glorified is He* has given every beast apart from man faith by way of a natural disposition and guided them to their provision by natural instincts. Of all beings, man is distinguished with intellect which he may use best so it leads him to faith, or use it incorrectly thereby straying from faith. Man is in doubt that he learned by imitating other creatures besides himself; Cain learnt from the raven how to bury his brother and the designers of aeroplanes learnt about flying by studying birds. Therefore, man must learn that he has a Creator who has made all creation serve him to advance his life and to care for his honour after death. An example is the ant who told the other ants to get into their dwellings in order not to be crushed by Prophet Solomon *peace be upon him* and his hosts, as stated in the Quran. In fact, the ants are a community that have guards and a guard from amongst them said this to warn the other ants.

Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* explains in the Quran that there is not a single thing except that it exalts His Glory and Praise, but we do not understand their glorification. Every community from this great number of communities that Allah Almighty has created in the universe glorify and praise Him, but no one understands the languages of these communities. Allah *the Exalted* has informed us that He taught Prophet Solomon *peace be upon him* the languages of all peoples and communities. This is why, when he heard what the ant had said, he smiled wondering at her words.

Such is how we know that Allah *Glorified is He* gave Solomon's ears the capacity to sense the frequencies of the voice of the ant and the capacity to understand what this frequency conveys. Thus, Prophet Solomon *peace be upon him* smiled as he heard her words, as Allah *the Exalted* had taught him the speech of these creatures. If Allah *Glorified is He* had taught us the speech of these

creatures we would have understood their glorification of Him. However, we do not comprehend their glorification because we have not learned their language. An example of this – and to Allah Almighty belongs the highest similitude – is that an Arab may travel to a land in which English is spoken, but he does not know that language thus he is unable to understand what is being said. Therefore, if Allah *the Exalted* had taught you the speech of birds, inanimate objects and plants, you would have known their languages. Furthermore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* states in the Quran that He caused the mountains to join Prophet David in glorifying and praising Him. Therefore inanimate objects – mountains – joined him in glorification; and so did the birds, for this hoopoe bird understood the Oneness of Allah Almighty and he felt uneasy from within when he saw the Queen of Sheba and her people prostrating themselves to the sun and not to Allah *Glorified is He* as stated in the Quran. The hoopoe understood the Oneness of Allah *the Exalted* and it knew that Satan has ways of getting through to a living creature. He also knew that prostration is for Allah *Glorified is He* alone, as stated in the Quran.

All living beings are divided into communities like us and someone might say: 'But there are living beings that are neither in the sky nor on the earth, such as the fish in the sea.' We say: 'Indeed water comprises three quarters of the earth's surface and fish swim in a part of water that is a part of the earth, therefore they swim in a part of the earth. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who created beasts on earth, birds in the sky and He created what is less than these communities and guided them to their purpose and sustenance, for it is He *Glorified is He* Who Creates everything and then proportions it.

We see scientists nowadays trying to discover the language of fish and the secrets of the ant kingdom and its behaviour and find out how the nests of the ants become storehouses in the summer for the winter's food. They studied how ants deal with wheat germ and how they remove the germination cells from the grain of wheat, because if the germination cells go with the wheat germ inside the ants' food storehouse, it may grow destroying the ants' home. It is He Who creates everything and then proportions it, as stated in the Quran.

Scientists are interested in the ants' antennae because one ant, for example, can see a piece of sugar and not go near it. Instead, it goes and calls on an

army of ants who are able to move the piece of sugar. Scientists have found that if the thing that the ant wants to eat weighs more than what the ant is capable of carrying, it calls on a number of other ants to carry out the task.

The scientists asked: Where does the ant acquire the ability to determine mass, weight and size? It is astounding that ants have the ability to determine the number required to carry a specific mass. What is even more astounding is the ant's ability to distinguish between two things that are of the same size but have a different mass, such as a cube of iron and a cube of sponge that is the same size? For the cube of iron, the ant calls for additional numbers to help carry it even though the sponge is of the same size. This is undoubtedly from the Omnipotence of the True Lord *Glorified is He* who creates everything and thereupon forms it in accordance with what it is meant to be and determines the nature of all that exists, and thereupon guides it towards its fulfilment.

Then you turn your attention towards animals and you find that there are the male and the female and that male animals are tremendously more beautiful than the females. The dominant majority are females and the minority are males. The male only approaches the female within a specific season when the impregnation time comes; the female goes to prepare the nest making it ready for whatever result that may come. This process is for a higher wisdom; maybe it is for the preservation of the species so that animals help man populate the earth.

In the world of birds, we find birds building beautiful nests to receive the young birds furnishing it with the best things. They do this in such a skilful way that maybe even man is incapable of imitating. You find in the life of animals and birds that as soon as a creature is capable of relying on itself, its mother cannot distinguish him from anyone else's son. Therefore, all creations are communities like us and they have provisions and life spans and duties, as stated in the Quran that Allah *Glorified is He* never neglects anything in His decree.

'The Book' here may refer to the Preserved Tablet, but we say that it refers to the Quran. Everything existing, mentioned, or is underground is in the Noble Quran. It mentions that such communities understand the Oneness of Allah *the Exalted* glorify and praise Him. Contemporary work discloses in

exact detail the realities of this regulated universe. We find that the intellect guides us to invent things of benefit to our lives, but when we follow our passions, we corrupt this universe. Allah *Glorified is He* made for the subservient beasts of the earth a sphere for work, provision and a life span by virtue of natural instincts, and He did the same for birds and all living things.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says in the verse under discussion that all will be gathered unto Him. Thus everything is gathered on the Day of Resurrection. Moreover, Abu Hurayra, Allah *be pleased with him*, narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Rights are granted on the Day of Resurrection to whom they belong, such that the hornless sheep takes from the horned sheep.'⁽¹⁾ This means that the True Lord *Glorified is He* will avenge the horned sheep that rammed the hornless sheep to make up for the pain that it endured. After every being apart from men and jinn has taken its right, they are turned into ashes. As for those who hear but do not respond, they are the ones who deny the signs, and this is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says about them:

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا صُمُّوا وَبُكِمُوا فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ مِنْ يَشَاءِ
 اللَّهُ يُضِلُّهُ وَمَنْ يَشَاءُ يَجْعَلْهُ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٣٩﴾

Those who reject Our signs are deaf, dumb, and in total darkness. God leaves whoever He will to stray, and sets whoever He will on a straight path [39] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 39)

Deafness is a problem that afflicts the ears and thus they do not hear, and dumbness is a problem that afflicts the tongue and thus it does not speak. Dumbness is connected to deafness because man does not speak unless he hears and because language is the daughter of imitation. Thus man does not speak unless he hears.

Furthermore, human beings grow up in environments that differ in languages and they only speak the language of the environment that they have grown up in. This is because language is not a blood or a species. Rather, language is hearing and what the ear hears is related by the tongue. Man does not read unless he hears and knows the connection of what he hears with what he sees.

(1) Narrated by Muslim, At-Tirmidhi and Ahmad ibn Hanbal

This is how we know that hearing is the first portal of realisation and this is why deafness comes before dumbness.

However, is realisation related only to deafness and dumbness? No. Indeed man hears first, then he sees, then he tastes, then he smells and then he touches. Hence rational information comes to him. An example of this is that everyone knows that fire burns, but one will not realise this unless he finds that it touched a living being and burned it. Another example: People agree that the nightingale's voice is beautiful and this agreement is the result of people hearing the nightingale's voice. Therefore rational information comes as the result of tangible information.

They also have no capacity to recognise guidance in any way; they are deaf so they do not hear the word of truth, dumb so they do not speak and in deep darkness they are guided to the realisation of things and not to faith. All of this goes back to the Will of Allah *the Exalted* in that whoever He wills, He lets go astray or guides to the straight path as stated in the Quran. But does His Will intrude into the lives of people and force them? No, because the True Lord *Glorified is He* states in the Quran that He does not guide one who has wasted his own self by lying.

This is further stated in another Quranic verse. Therefore, their oppression, sinfulness, and disbelief were all done voluntarily so that sickness burgeoned and was firmly established in their hearts and Allah Almighty increased them in their sickness. He *Glorified is He* is not affected in the slightest by anyone associating partners with Him, for whoever associates anything as a partner with Allah Almighty only wrongs himself. Afterwards, a command comes for the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَتَاكُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ
أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَدْعُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

Say, 'Think: if the punishment of God or the Hour should come to you, would you call on anyone other than God, if you are being truthful?' [40] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 40)

The words '...have you considered...' in the verse under discussion comprised of a question, a verb and a pronoun which is the articulation of the

letter (*ta*) with a (*fatha*) which is for the second person, such as you saying: 'Have you seen so-and-so?' and as if you were saying to him: 'If you have seen him then tell me about him.' When you say this to the one being addressed (the second person) then you are asking about something he has seen and set eyes on and after that you use the letter (*kaf*) to indicate the second person, as if you are saying to him: 'Tell me about you.' And the meaning is 'Tell me about yourselves.' Thus the meaning of '...Have you considered...' is 'Tell me about your state according to the one who sees.' The command is thus for The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask the idolaters to inform him about what they do when harm comes to them or something that is beyond their means. Do they call on the gods (*al-Lat*) and (*al-'Uzza*)? No, because in the moment of sudden danger they are incapable of lying to themselves. Rather, they call on Allah *the Exalted* whom they do not declare their faith in. If they were truthful in their disbelief, they would not call on Allah *Glorified is He*, but rather, it would be obligatory for them to call on their gods. However, in the moment of danger they say: 'O Lord!' as if they know that no one can rescue them but Him *Glorified is He*. Thus, the falsehood of their disbelief and their associating partners with Allah Almighty is exposed right in front of them and no one cheats himself, even the impostor who claims to be able to cure people. If he is afflicted with an illness, we find him referring to a trained, specialist doctor. No one cheats himself and when a man is in danger, the truth comes out from the man himself.

The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* is asking them: 'Who do you call on in the moment of danger?' Indeed they call on Allah Almighty, as if they have no confidence in their gods, as stated in the Quran that when affliction befalls man, he cries out unto Allah, whether he be lying on his side or sitting or standing.

But what happens when the heart's harshness returns? He goes on as though he had never invoked Allah *the Exalted* to save him from the affliction that befell him, as stated in the Quran. Therefore why do they ask Allah *the Exalted* to help them in the moment of danger when they do not follow the commandment? The command comes to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask them who they call on in the moment of danger. The answer also comes from the True Lord *Glorified is He* when He states:

بَلْ إِلَٰهُهُ دَعَاكُمْ فَيَكْشِفْ مَا تَدْعُونَ إِلَيْهِ إِن شَاءَ وَتَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

No indeed, it is on Him that you would call. If it were His will, He could remove whatever harm made you call on Him, and then you would forget what you now associate with Him [41] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 41)

Certainly, you, O idolaters, do not call on anyone besides Allah *Glorified is He* to remove harm from you and if He sees that it is wise to answer your supplication He answers it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَآخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضُرَّعُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

We sent messengers before you [Prophet] to many communities and afflicted their people with suffering and hardships, so that they could learn humility [42] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 42)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* indeed sent Messengers to the previous nations with signs and Guidance, but their people rejected them, so Allah Almighty took them to task with calamities and events that harm either one's person, or wealth, with sickness, or poverty so that they might humble themselves before Him *Glorified is He*.

Thus when the True Lord *Glorified is He* causes misfortune to befall people, i.e. with calamities or adversity or something that harms and causes damage, He only intends to test man. If he believes in other than Allah *the Exalted* then let him go to the one whom he believes in, and he will not remove that misfortune, or harm unless he goes back to Allah *Glorified is He*. But when they humble themselves before Allah *the Exalted* He does not accept the like of this humility, as He *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَوْلَا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوا وَلَكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

If only they had learned humility when suffering came from Us! But no, their hearts became hard and Satan made their foul deeds alluring to them [43] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 43)

Indeed He *Glorified is He* entices and urges them to humble and lower themselves before Him *Glorified is He* so that He removes what they have been

afflicted with, but their hard hearts prevent them, even in the moment of danger when they are being afflicted with harm, from seeking refuge in Allah Almighty because they are scared of following His commands. In addition, their hearts are too harsh to let guidance penetrate it, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* states in the Quran that their hearts are corroded by all the evil that they were wont to do.

This means that their hearts became locked and sealed after Allah Almighty stamped and sealed them so they will not accept goodness and they will not incline towards it. Thus they will not believe. Afterwards, The True Lord *Glorified is He* states:

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَرِحُوا بِمَا أُوتُوا أَخَذْنَاهُم بَغْتَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْلِسُونَ

So, when they had forgotten the warning they had received, We opened the gates to everything for them. Then, as they revelled in what they had been given, We struck them suddenly and they were dumbfounded [44] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 44)

When they forgot the reminder that came to them from the True Lord *Glorified is He* through His Messengers to follow the way and submit to His Oneness, He *Glorified is He* afflicted them with a punishment that surprised them and they fell into confusion that took away their intellects, smashed their hearts and cut off their hope.

The Messengers only come to remind because faith is present in one's natural disposition, but it is heedlessness which conceals faith. Man lives in a universe that is filled with blessings that no one has anything to do with and no one has any hand in them and no one claims them for himself. Thus man must always live praising Allah *the Exalted* the Master of these blessings.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds His slaves with blessings or with Messengers who came with successive Messages. Imagine that a man had become heedless of the blessing of Allah Almighty in food, then the moment of hunger comes and so he sits longing for food and Allah *Glorified is He* then

grants him that food, so how can he forget in the moment of desperation, the One Who gave him this food?

In the verse under discussion, reminding could occur either by means of the Messengers who remind people that the Bestower of blessings is Allah *the Exalted* and that He *Glorified is He* has sent down His Guidance so as to reform the universe with it, or it may be by means of the blessings enjoyed by man in each and every moment. This is because they alert man to the One Who gives them. An example of this is when man covers his nakedness and his body with beautiful clothes. Does he not ask about the One Who gave the manufacturer this gift with which he designs clothing? Therefore how can man take the blessing and not be reminded of the One Who bestows blessings? Indeed Allah *Glorified is He* does not deprive them of blessings when they abandon showing gratitude for them. Rather, He opens to them the gates of all good things, i.e. He gives them more and more blessings. Thus they live in luxury and they lead a life of honour, health, affluence, power and authority. Then what happens? He seizes them suddenly, and they are then left in despair, as mentioned in the verse in question.

In the Egyptian countryside there is a popular saying: 'No one falls from the carpet.', but Allah *Glorified is He* sometimes allows polytheists to attain high ranks in this worldly life and then suddenly takes them to task so that they would suffer a greater punishment in the Hereafter. Therefore, one should not be deceived by those disbelievers to whom Allah Almighty gives the luxuries of this life and thus should never wish to be in their place.

If we carefully reflect on the saying of Allah Almighty: 'we opened the gates of everything to them', we will be fully aware of the absolute accuracy of the style of the Quran. Allah Almighty says that He 'opened ... to them', meaning that He caused them, i.e. the deniers of the truth, to be deceived by the finery of this life. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* grants them understanding by means of which they would realise that the provision of this world's life compared with the hereafter is but little. This meaning here is totally different from the saying of Allah in the chapter of *al-Fath* in which He *Glorified is He* says: 'Surely We have given to you a clear victory.' (*al-Fath*: 1) This means that He *the Almighty* granted Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

a clear victory by allowing him to open Mecca. As such, it is crystal clear that there is a big difference between the two Arabic words, i.e. '*Fath Lak*' and '*Fath Alyk*', for the latter means to overtake someone by degrees from whence s/he does not perceive, whilst the former means to cause one to be prosperous and victorious, which is why He *the Almighty* says: 'Then, as they revelled in what they had been given, We struck them suddenly and they were dumbfounded.' (*al-An'am*: 44)

That is to say that the meting out of the punishment takes place in the moment of joy; a point which is frequently experienced in our daily life. For example, we know of many grooms and brides who were afflicted with disasters on their wedding days. At that point, the following poetic verse may be quoted:

Events walked in the rooms of the Alhambra

The announcer of death walked in the wedding house

This aforementioned verse of poetry can yet give a correct and proper understanding of the verse: 'Then, as they revelled in what they had been given, We struck them suddenly and they were dumbfounded.' (*al-An'am*: 44) In the same connection, when we carefully reflect on the verse: '... what they had been given ...,' we realise that Allah *Glorified is He* by allowing them to get all of these blessings, He paves the way for suddenly taking them to task. That is to say that the divine punishments are afflicted without prior warning. In our daily life, if one is given a warning that a certain disaster would strike him/her, s/he would take all necessary precautions to protect him/herself. Here, we should stress that there is no contradiction whatsoever between the verse under discussion and the verse in which Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Say [O Prophet Muhammad], 'Think: if the Punishment of Allah should come to you, by surprise or openly, would anyone but the evildoers be destroyed?' (*al-An'am*: 47), for this latter verse shows clearly that the Punishment of Allah Almighty, out of His Great Wisdom, might befall the oppressors either surprisingly or openly, as follows: the oppressors may be suddenly and surpassingly afflicted with the divine torture by way of punishing them. They may also be openly afflicted with it, i.e. the divine punishment so that they would not say, 'had not the punishment come to us suddenly, we would have

taken precautions for it'. Allah Almighty then concludes the verse saying that they, i.e. the oppressors, will be struck with the divine punishment while being dumbfounded and disappointed since no one will help them or even save them.

Allah Almighty then says:

فَقُطِعَ دَائِرُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

The evildoers were wiped out: praise be to God, the Lord of the Worlds! [45] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 45)

This verse draws our attention to a very important fact, that is, we must praise Allah Almighty for giving us these examples of those wrongdoers and the punishment that afflicted them to guide us to the Right Path. In addition, we must praise Him; *Glorified is He* for purifying the world from the foulness of the corrupters. This is clearly understood from the fact that even though Allah Almighty opened the gates of everything to those oppressors, they forgot what they were reminded of, which is why He *the Almighty* punished them suddenly when they were occupied with what they were given. We thus deduce that the act of wiping out those corrupters, although a disaster for them, is actually a blessing conferred by Allah Almighty on the believers. At this point, one may ask, 'How does the Quran view punishments as blessings?!' Let us illustrate this point more clearly; Allah Almighty says in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*: 'O assembly of the jinn and the men! If you are able to pass through the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass through; you cannot pass through except with authority, which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny? The flames of fire and smoke will be sent on you two, then you will not be able to defend yourselves, Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?' (*ar-Rahman*: 33-36) These particular verses here give examples of the types of divine punishments, which include the sending of flames of fire and smoke. Even though these are viewed as divine punishments to the disbelievers, they serve as a blessing and reminder to the believers, as we know for certain, that people are deterred by knowing the severity of punishments. That is to say that this divine warning to the disbelievers is, in essence, a blessing from Allah *the Exalted* to the believers.

As a matter of fact, when Allah Almighty confers His Grace upon the believers by wiping out the wrongdoers, the believers must praise His Glory, a point which is proved by the verse; 'The evildoers will be wiped out: praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.' (*al-An'am*: 45)

He *the Almighty* subsequently interrogates them by saying:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَأَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَنَمَ عَلَى قُلُوبِكُمْ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ أَنْظَرُ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

Say [Prophet], 'Think: if God were to take away your hearing and your sight and seal up your hearts, what god other than He could restore them?' See how We explain Our revelations in various ways, yet still they turn away [46] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 46)

In this verse, Allah Almighty orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask those disbelievers what they would do if Allah Almighty took away their hearings and sight and if He *the Almighty* sealed up their hearts; do they think that there is another god other than He *the Almighty* that can restore them? The disbelievers actually exploited the Blessing of Allah *Glorified is He* to oppose Him; He endowed them with the blessing of hearing, yet they did not make use of it to listen to the divine guidance; He *the Almighty* granted them the blessing of sight, yet they did not utilise it to see His signs; and they were given hearts by means of which they could reason, yet they sealed them up and so were unable to receive goodness. So, how would they act if Allah Almighty took these blessings away from them? Is there any other god that can restore these blessings?!

In our daily life, we notice that Allah Almighty has deprived some people from certain blessings which have been given to others. In truth, this is viewed as a way of instructing us how to understand the way the affairs of the universe are run. At this point, we should stress that depriving someone of a particular blessing does not mean that Allah Almighty hates them. Rather, He *Glorified is He* wants to remind people of the fact that there is a Sublime Bestower of Blessings Who is the Only One Who deserves to be worshipped. That is why, if He *Glorified is He* takes these blessings away from the disbeliever, s/he will be unable to ward off any harm.

In this verse under discussion, Allah Almighty tells us that even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified matters for them, i.e. to the disbelievers with clear proofs, they turned away from Him *peace and blessings be upon him* and they did not occupy their minds through carefully reflecting on the truthfulness of the Divine Message that He *peace and blessings be upon him* delivered to them. This is why Allah Almighty described them as turning away from the Truth.

In this regard, when the believer sees someone with a physical disability, s/he should thank Allah Almighty for his Blessings. Yet, I would like to drive your attention to a very important point which is that when Allah *Glorified is He* causes someone to have a physical disability, He *the Exalted* out of His Infinite Mercy, causes him/her to be superior in another area. An example of this is illustrated in the following poetic verses in which the poet says:

I became blind in the womb but (my) intelligence is due to (my) blindness
 I came to have amazing thought, as a refuge for knowledge
 The illumination of the eye diminishes and becomes a support for the heart
 For what man loses of knowledge can be gained again

In our daily life, we may see a blind person leading those who see to guidance. In addition, we may see a person who is deaf enchanting people with his/her music. Beethoven is a classic example. As such, it is clear that Allah *Glorified is He* out of His Grace and Bounty makes those with physical disabilities become superior in other fields of their life. In the same vein, there is no other god in the universe, if any, that could restore the disbeliever what Allah Almighty has taken from him/her. Allah Almighty says: 'See how we explain Our Revelations in various ways, yet still they turn away.' (*al-An'am*: 46) In this particular part of the verse, Allah Almighty drives the attention of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the fact that even though He *the Almighty* made all the signs and His message clear to these people by all possible and impossible means, they turned away from His Way of Guidance as their hearts had been sealed and thus they were unable to understand or even reflect on the Truth.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ بَغْتَةً أَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلَكُ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

Say, 'Think: if the punishment of God should come to you, by surprise or openly, would anyone but the evildoers be destroyed?' [47] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 47)

Grammatically, if we compare the verse under discussion to the following verse: 'Say [Prophet], 'Think: if Allah were to take away your hearing and your sight and seal up your hearts, what god other than He could restore them?' See how We explain Our Revelations in various ways, yet still they turn away' (*al-An'am*: 46), we notice that Allah *Glorified is He* puts a *Fatha* (a short diagonal strike over the Arabic letter) on the second personal pronoun in the verse under explanation, whereas He puts a *Damma* (a little looped symbol like a small *waw* placed over the Arabic letter) on the second personal pronoun in the latter verse. In addition, we notice that Allah Almighty in the verse under discussion has used the Arabic pronoun *Al-Kaf* which is used to indicate the second person, a thing that He *the Almighty* did not do in the verse above. At this point, the fact should be stressed that every word in the Quran is used to impart a particular meaning and thus cannot be replaced with another, although they may be similar to each other. So how can we understand these grammatical nuances? Using the second personal pronouns in this verse, i.e. *At-Taa'* and *Al-Kaf*, clearly indicates that Allah *the Almighty* wants to highlight an absolutely crucial point, that is, He *the Almighty* wants to tell us that the disbelievers would be completely destroyed. As for the verse above, Allah *Glorified is He* interrogates the disbelievers to affirm the content of the question Allah Almighty gave to them in the verse.

In this vein, we should highlight a very important point; when we interrogate someone about a certain incident, it may happen that the person being asked might not have been an eyewitness. In the case where they are an eyewitness, their answer will be in the affirmative. That is to say they have actually seen the incident. Yet, in case they were not present at the time of its occurrence, they will answer in the negative. As a point of thought, this clearly highlights how people act with each other in this regard. Yet, the matter is totally different when Allah Almighty is the One Who asks about an incident that took place in the past which the believers did not see. As a matter of fact, the believers,

out of their faith in Allah *Glorified is He* must give the answer in the affirmative despite not having seen the incident with their own eyes.

This point is further elucidated by the verse in which Allah Almighty asks Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings upon him*: ‘Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant?’ (*al-Fil*: 1) In the aforementioned verse of the chapter of *al-Fil*, Allah Almighty asks The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the incident of the possessors of the elephant that took place in the same year of his birth *peace and blessings be upon him*. That is to say He *the Almighty* asked him this question even though he did not see this incident with his eyes. At that point, someone may ask, ‘Why does Allah ask Prophet Muhammad about something he did not see?’ As a matter of fact, this particular question here and similar indicates a very important point, where The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* must firmly believe in everything that Allah Almighty tells him of. In other words, when He *the Almighty* asks him *peace and blessings be upon him* here, ‘Have you not considered...?’ this means that He *Glorified is He* orders the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to have absolute certainty in all that he is told about. This is because Allah will never deceive him, or tell him a lie, while the Prophet’s perception out of the human nature, might sometimes do so.

As such, it is clear right now that this rhetorical style is intended to indicate certainty. Let us offer another example to illustrate this point more clearly; when you do a lot of favours for someone and then they deny it, you would not say to him, ‘I did a lot of favours for you’. Rather, you would ask him, ‘Have you not considered the favours I did for you on that day?’ As a matter of fact, you put your statement in the form of a question because you are absolutely sure that they, upon carefully reflecting on the matter, would answer you in the affirmative. That is to say, they would confess that you already did them good. By asking questions like this, the fact is yet proved by the person being interrogated rather than the questioner himself.

Having shed light on the disbelievers’ stubbornness regarding the rejection of the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and being unconvinced with the divine signs sent to them to establish the truthfulness of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*, Allah *the Exalted* told

us that disbelievers had exceeded the limits and asked for a number of particular signs. They even did so in a rude and unpleasant way. In the Quran, Allah Almighty tells us about the demands that the disbelievers made to The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘And they say: We will by no means believe in you until you cause a fountain to gush forth from the earth for us. Or you should have a garden of palms and grapes in the midst of which you should cause rivers to flow forth, gushing out. Or you should cause the heaven to come down upon us in pieces as you think, or bring Allah and the angels face to face (with us). Or you should have a house of gold, or you should ascend into heaven, and we will not believe in your ascending until you bring down to us a book which we may read. Say: Glory be to my Lord; am I aught but a mortal Messenger?’ (*al-Isra'*: 90-93)

If we carefully reflect upon these demands of the disbelievers, we will find that they are all presented as a challenge. We know for certain that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who chose the Quran to be the eternal miracle of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* knows that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* faithfully and sincerely delivers the Divine Message to his people. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* orders the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to tell those disbelievers that their belief will neither harm nor bring any benefit to Allah *the Exalted* rather, they will be the ones who will benefit as a result of it. Here, we should take into account the undeniable fact that Allah Almighty possessed the attributes of perfection even before He created the entire universe, and that He *the Almighty* will never lose them.

As a matter of fact, it is out of these divine attributes of perfection including knowledge, power, and wisdom and will that He *the Exalted* created the entire universe. As such, we human beings must be fully aware of the fact that our belief in *The Almighty* will never ever add to His Attributes of Perfection or Majesty. Instead, it is the human beings themselves who will get benefit as a result of their belief. So, if there are those amongst you who are arrogant and obstinate, then Allah *Glorified is He* will not leave them to corrupt His Way of Guidance. Rather, He *the Almighty* overtakes them as is clearly evident in the stories of the previous Messengers and Prophets with their peoples and how Allah Almighty severely and painfully punished them.

Indeed He *Glorified is He* could torture you, O disbelievers of Quraysh, in the same way He did with them. In addition, if you carefully reflect on the stories of the previous Messengers with the deniers of the Truth from among their people, you will know for certain that they were suddenly and surprisingly overtaken by the divine punishment. Let us offer a number of examples to illustrate this point; Allah *The Almighty*, tells us about the people of 'Ad ⁽¹⁾, saying: 'Then as to Ad, they were unjustly proud in the land, and they said: Who is mightier in strength than we? Did they not see that Allah Who created them was mightier than they are in strength, and they denied our communications? (15) So We sent on them a furious wind in unlucky days, that We may make them taste the chastisement of abasement in this world's life; and certainly the chastisement of the hereafter is much more abasing, and they shall not be helped. (16)' (*Fussilat*: 15-16)

The people of 'Ad were given to arrogance and denied the Message of Prophet Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him*. They mistakenly believed that they were the mightiest people on the surface of the earth and thus hurt their Prophet and the believers with him. Yet, they did not take into account that Allah Almighty Who created them, is mightier than them. But, how did Allah *the Almighty* punish them? He sent on them a furious wind so that He could make them taste the punishment in the life of this world... Allah *Glorified is He* then adds that they will receive a more severe, painful and humiliating punishment in the Hereafter since they will find none to support them.

Moving to the people of Thamud⁽²⁾, the Quran tells us that Allah Almighty showed them the way of guidance, yet they chose the way of misguidance and even preferred disbelief over belief. They denied and rejected the Message of Prophet Saleh (Shelah) *peace be upon him* and slew the she-camel. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* overtook them with the scourge of an abasing punishment for what they earned. In the Quran, Allah Almighty says: 'And as for *Thamud*, We showed them the right way, but they chose error above guidance, so

(1) 'Ad (Arabic: عاد , 'Ad) was an ancient tribe mentioned frequently in the Quran.[1] 'Ad is usually placed in Southern Arabia, [2].

(2) The Thamūd (/ˈθɑːmʊd/; Arabic: ثمود) is the name of an ancient civilization in the Hadramaut known from the 1st millennium BC to near the time of prophet Muhammad.

there overtook them the scourge of an abasing chastisement for what they earned.' (*Fussilat*: 17)

The destruction of the possessors of the elephant is a third case in point. The people of Abraha, the Abyssinian, came to Mecca for the sake of destroying the Sacred House, but they were welcomed by flocks of birds that Allah Almighty sent down upon them casting against them stones of baked clay. In the Quran, Allah Almighty says: 'Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant? (1) Did He not cause their war to end in confusion, (2) And send down (to prey) upon them birds in flocks, (3) Casting against them stones of baked clay, (4) So He rendered them like straw eaten up? (5)' (*al-Fil*: 1-5)

According to the aforementioned examples, Allah *the Almighty* meted out His punishment upon those oppressive disbelievers suddenly and surprisingly, that is, they were surprised by the divine punishments which overtook them suddenly. Yet, the Quran tells that Allah Almighty has meted out His punishment upon some people openly and overtly. The drowning of Pharaoh and the destruction of Qarun (Korah) are two cases in point. As for Qarun, Allah Almighty tells us in the Quran how he was wiped out, saying, 'Surely Qarun was of the people of Moses, but he rebelled against them, and We had given him of the treasures so much so that his hoards of wealth would certainly weigh down a company of men possessed of great strength. When his people said to him: Do not exult, surely Allah does not love the exultant; (76) And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode, and do not neglect your portion of this world, and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek to make mischief in the land, surely Allah does not love the mischief-makers. (77) He said: I have been given this only on account of the knowledge I have. Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him of the generations those who were mightier in strength than he and greater in assemblage? And the guilty shall not be asked about their faults. (78) So he went forth to his people in his finery. Those who desire this world's life said: O would that we had the like of what Qaroun is given; most surely he is possessed of mighty good fortune. (79) And those who were given the knowledge said: Woe to you! Allah's reward is better for him who believes

and does good, and none is made to receive this except the patient. (80) Thus we made the earth to swallow up him and his abode; so he had no body of helpers to assist him against Allah nor was he of those who can defend themselves.' (*al-Qasas*: 76-81)

Qarun arrogantly denied that Allah Almighty is the One Who supplied him with his riches. He even became enthralled with what he possessed to the extent that he was totally given to arrogance, yet how did Allah Almighty punish him? Allah *Glorified is He* made the earth swallow him up and his abode was placed before the eyes of those who wished to be in his place. As such, we reach the conclusion that the punishment of Allah Almighty may strike people either suddenly and surprisingly, or openly and overtly. Here arises a good question, 'Why did Allah *Glorified is He* sometimes afflict people with His punishment suddenly with some people and overtly with others?' As for the first kind of punishment which is the sudden one it proves to those who worship other than Allah *the Exalted* that they are deceived, for if those gods had been true, they would have at least warned their followers of the forthcoming punishment that would strike them. That is to say that this particular kind of punishment is intended to definitively prove the incapability of those false gods and the like to protect their followers. But in case someone claimed that they were suddenly struck with the punishment and thus were unable to ward it off, we say to them that the punishment of Allah *the Exalted* also comes openly and overtly, so why are you unable to ward it off?! In spite of the fact that the plea of those deniers of the Truth is null, they are still unable to attain faith. Allah *Glorified is He* acted with the disbelievers of Quraysh in the same way He did away with those people who denied the Messages of their previous Prophets and Messengers; He *the Almighty* sent them miraculous signs in order that they might think and reflect.

In this regard, we should know that the polytheists of Quraysh had plotted to kill Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, which is why they stood at the door of his house, yet Allah *Glorified is He* saved him. It is narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* managed to leave while they were still standing at the door, but they, out of Allah's Omnipotent Power, were unable to see him. In this way, their conspiracy against the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* failed and they were unable to hurt him.

The disbelievers of Quraysh had even previously sought the help of sorcerers to hurt him *peace and blessings be upon him*, but yet they failed to do so. That is to say, Allah *the Almighty* fully protected His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* from the schemes of the disbelievers, for He *Glorified is He* is the best of planners.

Back to the chapter of *al-An'am*, Allah Almighty, says: 'Say [O Prophet Muhammad], 'Think: if the Punishment of Allah should come to you, by surprise or openly, would anyone but the evildoers be destroyed?' (*al-An'am*: 47) We notice that the concluding sentence in this verse takes the form a question which is used, as we showed previously, to affirm the meaning of a sentence, since the answer to the asked question is expected to be given by those who are being questioned and thus will secure confession on their part. We know perfectly well that confession is the best evidence.

Here arises a very good question; 'How does Allah *Glorified is He* save the believers at times of punishments?' We know full well that the divine punishments are only intended to torture the evildoers. We can illustrate this point as follows: destruction means 'to take away the life of a person who is indulged in the finery of this worldly life', which is why those who do not believe in the life after death will surely feel the bitterness of loss upon death. Yet, the believers, who know for certain that they shall return to Allah *the Exalted* and that they will be held accountable for their deeds before Him *the Almighty* fully realise that in case they are negatively affected by the punishments of the disbelievers, they will be admitted into paradise, which is a great blessing for them since they will eternally live therein.

As such, it is clear that destruction is only intended to torture the evildoers because it deprives them from the joy of this worldly life. In addition, upon death, they will have nothing in the Hereafter but perdition, loss and permanent punishment. As for the believers, Allah Almighty will confer His favour upon them by admitting them into paradise wherein they will eternally live in happiness. That is to say that the believers enjoy Allah Almighty's favour and grace at times of ease and hardships alike.

In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* highlights how the concept of faith must be deeply rooted in the minds of those who believe in the

Messengers and Prophets. It goes without saying that people with a sound *Fitra* (natural disposition), upon hearing the divine guidance, do not hesitate to accept it. That is because the *Fitra*, upon observing the deviation of people and upon realising that there is someone who is sent to guide people back on track, will have no choice but to believe in the bearer of the Message, i.e. a Messenger or a Prophet. In the same connection, when one's natural disposition sees that the entire universe has been prepared to serve man, it must then ask about the Creator of this universe and about the way that must be implemented so that this blessing of existence can be preserved.

Furthermore, man should be fully aware of the undeniable fact that s/he is one of the different creatures in the universe, which is full of provisions and endless resources. At that point, we should stress the fact that no one has ever claimed to be the creator of the heavens, the earth, water, or air. That is why people with a sound *Fitra* must wonder about this great Creator Who granted them the right of succession in the entire universe. Yet, when this great Creator sends a Messenger or a Prophet to clarify everything for and to tell us about the creation of the heavens and the earth and about the One Who supplies us with provision, this sound human *Fitra* must then accept and believe in this Messenger or Prophet. In addition, in case this Messenger or Prophet is supported with a divine miracle or sign, the human mind will immediately confess the truthfulness of him because it is at that point that the human mind has found its treasure.

In this vein, we should stress that it is prohibited for the believers and Messengers themselves, as well as the disbelievers to exceed the limit. In addition, they are not allowed to exaggerate in the praise of any Messenger or Prophet. We should be fully aware of the fact that Messengers are ordinary people who are chosen by Allah *Glorified is He* to serve a particular mission, that is, to convey His Message. In addition, we should take into account that the Messengers are unable to bring forth such miracles or signs demanded by their people. That is why Allah Almighty, in the following verse tells us about the ultimate objective behind the sending of Messengers and Prophets; He *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۖ فَمَنْ ءَامَنَ
وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

We send messengers only to give good news and to warn, so for those who believe and do good deeds there will be no fear, nor will they grieve[48] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 48)

This verse means clearly that Allah Almighty did not endow Messengers and Prophets with such great power by means of which they can act as they like. That is to say that the main reason behind sending them is to deliver the divine way of guidance to mankind. Thus, no one should demand signs or miracles from them because they are, without the Help of Allah *the Exalted* absolutely incapable of doing so. Here, we should stress that all the Messengers and Prophets know for certain that they are merely human beings receiving the divine revelation. This is how we should believe in Messengers and Prophets; we should accept them as bearers of glad tidings and warners.

We previously explained that *Al-Bishara* (glad tidings) means giving glad tidings of something pleasing before it actually happens. The reason behind giving glad tidings is to prepare and urge people to accept the divine way of guidance and thus the act of 'giving glad tidings' is viewed fruitfully as it has actually turned into reality. *Al-Indhar* (giving warning), on the other hand, means informing people of something evil or displeasing so that they would protect themselves.

In addition, the act of 'giving glad tidings' prompts people to do good, while the act of 'giving warning' deters people from doing bad and thus keeps them away from it. As such, it is clear that the ultimate objective of sending Messengers and Prophets is to give glad tidings and to warn people, which is why we should not exaggerate their role or associate divinity to them. So, we should not ask them to bring forth signs and miracles since Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who is fully able to do so. At this point, I would like to also stress that it is totally wrong to criticise the divine miracles sent with these Messengers and Prophets.

Once again, the verse, 'We send Messengers only to give good news and to warn ...' exactly and precisely defines the ultimate objective behind the

sending of Messengers and Prophets. That is to say, this is a role to be performed by Messengers and Prophets so what about the role that should be performed by those to whom those Messengers were sent? The answer is clearly given in the verse; '...so for those who believe and do good deeds there will be no fear, nor will they grieve.' (*al-An'am*: 48)

It is clear right now that people must accept faith upon hearing the Divine Message being delivered to them through the Messenger or Prophet sent to them. They should also be fully aware of the essence of the divine way of guidance and apply it. Thus, whoever from amongst them believes and acts righteously has no need to fear because they have indeed achieved a mighty success. In addition, they will not grieve, for they will, on the Day of Resurrection, enjoy the fruits of their good deeds, which are recorded in their book. As for the word *Iman* (belief/faith), it means that the heart becomes totally assured with a matter of creed, in such a way that it gives no room for any more doubt. That is why *Iman* is called *Aqida* (creed) meaning that there is a binding matter that is never dissolved.

In this regard, I would like to stress that believers should make use of all the signs and proofs by which their belief in Allah Almighty becomes firm and steadfast, a matter which can only be fulfilled by the heart. In addition, it is of great importance to know that only convincing the heart is insufficient to establish faith because the heart is not the only organ within. That is to say that man must surrender to the divine way of guidance with his/her entire body including the intellect. In other words, man is said to have true faith in case s/he correctly offers all acts of worship according to the divine way of guidance.

I lay strong emphasis on this point to avoid sayings such as; 'I have a believing and sound heart, yet I do not apply the divine way of guidance.' Wrong is this statement! The matter of belief does not go like this. It is true that your heart has attained faith, but why have all your body parts not carried out the requirements of faith?! Why do you not give your mind a chance to reflect, think, plan and be reminded?! Why do you not give your eye the chance to consider and benefit from the gifts that it sees?! The same applies to the rest of your body parts including the hand, the tongue, the ear, the foot, etc., why do you not give them the chance to do good?!

Regarding *Al-Islah* (doing righteousness), it is an act which is only fulfilled by the body parts; that is, man shall utilise his/her mind in producing ideas which are beneficial to mankind; s/he shall, upon hearing the speech, follow the best of it; and s/he shall utilise his/her hands to perfect all the works they do. Here, we should stress that believers know for certain that the affairs of the universe are run by due measure. In addition, they realise that there are some things in the universe with which they have nothing to do. Yet these things represent the highest ranks of proficiency. For instance, we view that rainfalls in its due seasons and so is the wind, which also blows in its due seasons and courses. In the same connection, we see no contradiction whatsoever between the movement of the sun and that of the earth, for each of them runs in a due course. That is to say that everything in the universe is run by due measure and thus gives clear indication of the absolute proficiency.

As a matter of fact, corruption only occurs as a result of the intervention of man in the affairs of this worldly life. Let us offer an example with air pollution; there are so many factors that led to the corruption and pollution of air including building houses close to each other, the lack of sufficient open green spaces and poisonous exhausts emitted from machines as a result of burning fuel. In actuality, when man made these machines, s/he did not take this into account and to get his/her comfort paid no attention at all things against which s/he had to take precaution. Exhaust fumes, which increase the pollution of the environment being an example. Despite the discovery of other means that can prevent this pollution, some people are reluctant to use them.

When we drive cars, believing that we have reached the peak of civilisation, why do we forget the main principle upon which civilisation is based, i.e. making use of the modern scientific discoveries to make machines in such a way which is beneficial to people? In other words, why should we not apply new techniques by means of which pollution of the environment is decreased? As such, it is clear that car exhausts corrupt the air in our environment and thus destroys man's lungs.

It is important that we know that it is out of the responsibility of faith that we, upon making new machines, should take into account the amount of harm that could result from them. Everyone who lives in a crowded city is harmed

by the bad effects of car fumes despite the fact that not everyone has a car, so how can the driver of a car be satisfied with him/herself not to modify the parts of this machine which may exert harmful impact upon him/herself as well as others? This is why Muslims must not be deceived by the deceptive appearance of civilisation. Rather, they must derive the main reasons behind the progress of today's civilisation from their main resources. In addition, Muslims must take into consideration how to avoid harm to not fall under the category of the greatest losers about whom Allah Almighty says: 'Say [Prophet]: 'Shall we tell you who are the greatest losers in whatever they may do? (103) '[It is] they whose labour has gone astray in [the pursuit of no more than] this world's life, and who none the less think that they are doing good works (104)' (*al-Kahf*: 103-104).

In this regard, we should learn this great lesson from the universe around us and which Allah *Glorified is He* created in such a way that guarantees its permanent existence. If we carefully reflect upon the universe, we will fully realise that everything created by Him *the Almighty* is beneficial to mankind including the waste of animals which man uses to fertilise land. In truth, this is the true meaning of the verse: '...so for those who believe and do good deeds there will be no fear, nor will they grieve.' (*al-An'am*: 48)

It is clear right now that 'faith' is an action of the heart and 'doing righteousness' is an action of the body parts. For this reason, we must exert our utmost efforts to set the course of life in order. Here, we should stress the fact that the entire universe has been perfectly created; it runs by due measure and thus it suffers no flaws. Yet, due to the fact that we want to have a luxurious life, we should make use of our minds created by Allah Almighty to utilise the worldly materials and elements in such a way that secures us permanent joy.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point more clearly; primitive man used to drink from rivers when feeling thirsty. Then, when s/he realised that their thirst was not sufficiently quenched by stretching his/her hands to get a handful of water from the river, they made a vessel out of clay to use it in drinking. After that, people made vessels out of thin iron sheet to use for the same purpose. They finally managed to make vessels out of glass. So, the question to be asked here shall be 'Are these things to fall under the category

of necessities of life or that of luxuries of life?' Indeed they fall under the category of the luxuries of life, so if you, O mankind!, want to make your life luxurious, you should then use your intellect to reach the best potential on how to utilise the materials and substances placed by Allah *the Exalted* in the universe. In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* enables you to reach the latest scientific discoveries. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; our grandmothers in the countryside used to fill vessels with water from wells and canals for drinking, yet they used to filter this water to make it potable. As time went by there were certain people who used to get water from canals and then sell it to people at homes. However, when scholars managed to discover the law of *Al-Istitraq* (balancing liquids), people were able to send water to tanks in upper floors and thus they managed to pump it into pipelines of different sizes. As such, people were able to get access to water directly to their homes. This example shows us clearly how man made use of his/her intellect benefit from the materials Allah Almighty placed in the universe.

However, in the past when water was not as easily accessible as it is today, there was less wastage. Previously a couple of vessels of water were sufficient for a family for a whole day; now that water is readily available there is more wastage.

That is why it is of great importance for Muslims to fear Allah Almighty in all their actions. If we fear Him *Glorified is He* in the use of water, we will fully realise that the large quantities of water we waste in vain, may be urgently needed by other people. So, when we put an end to the misuse of water, this will keep us as well as others away from harm.

Let each one of us calculate, for example, how much water s/he consumes when performing ablution. Indeed a man from amongst us opens the tap, washes his/her hands three times, rinses his/her mouth three times, cleans his/her nose three times, washes his/her face three times, washes his/her forearms three times, wipes his/her head and finally washes his/her feet, yet during this entire period of making ablution, a large quantity of water falls down from the tap and goes in vain. Had s/he carefully thought about using such water falling down from the tap properly, others would not have complained about the lack of water. So, why do Muslims not just take the amount of water that is

necessary for ablution? It is narrated that people in the past used to make ablution with half a litre of water, so why do we not use the Blessings of Allah *the Exalted* in the best way?

At that point, we must take into account that just as we are ordered by virtue of Islam to offer prayers to perfect our souls, we are also required to cultivate our manners and perfect our moral conduct. That is to say, that we should not misuse our capabilities which Allah *the Almighty* granted us. In addition, we should pay great attention to know how to attain the highest ranks of righteousness. We should not yet exert our efforts to get comfort while neglecting the fact that this comfort will bring forth further hardships. Rather, we must carefully and thoroughly reflect upon matters so as not to fall under the category of those people mentioned in the verse; ‘And follow not that of which you have not the knowledge; surely the hearing and the sight and the heart, all of these, shall be questioned about that.’ (*al-Isra*’: 36) In this aforementioned verse of *al-Isra*’, Allah Almighty, explains that Muslims must take into account the fact that they are responsible for their hearing, sight and heart, and that they will be held accountable for them on the Day of Resurrection. For this reason, it is not right for them to languish in taking the best of knowledge so that they can perfect their speech and actions. By doing so, there will be no need for them to fear in the life of this world or the Hereafter because they have believed and lived righteously. In addition, they will not be afflicted with grief in the life of this world or the Hereafter; this is the true meaning of the verse; ‘... so for those who believe and do good deeds there will be no fear, nor will they grieve.’ (*al-An’am*: 48)

It is clear right now that following these divine laws allows man to protect him/herself in this worldly life and in the Hereafter as well. If you see, O Muslim, that the affairs of people are not run perfectly, you then should know that one of the rules of Allah Almighty has been neglected. If you see a poor person suffering from hunger or without clothes, then you should know that one of his/her rights have been denied by someone else. Here, we should stress a very important fact which is that Allah, Creator of the universe, destined that the rich, whom He *Glorified is He* gave great provision, should give the poor from the extra amount of this provision so that they be relieved

from their poverty, but the rich refuse to obey the divine order and thus deny them of this right. However, there are some people who used to practice it as a profession even though they are in no need. As such, we can deduce that corruption in this regard has two reasons as follows: man's deception of others by asking them for money, although s/he is in no need of that; and the rejection of the rich to carry out the divine order by giving obligatory alms to the poor.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَمَسُّهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

**As for those who rejected Our signs, torment
will afflict them as a result of their defiance [49]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 49)**

There are two possible explanations for this verse under discussion; it may refer to those who deny and reject the signs of Allah Almighty, which are sent with the Messengers and Prophets as a proof of their truthfulness. By doing so, those deniers of the Truth are thus judged as disbelievers. It may also refer to those who denied and rejected the divine way of guidance, that is, they did not act upon the divine teachings and instructions therefore deviating from the Right Path. In other words, they became immoral and disobedient. As for the Arabic word *Al-Fisq* (defiance), it refers to the date when it comes forth from its peel when its size, upon ripeness, becomes smaller than it was. Here, we stress that the one who deviates from the divine way of guidance is the one who is deemed a loser because Allah *Glorified is He* has laid down this way of guidance to protect people from falling prey to misguidance. The essence of this divine way is yet crystal clear in the two orders 'Do!' and 'Do not!'

Indeed man acts sinfully and defiantly when s/he does not obey the divine commands or when s/he does what He *Glorified is He* judged prohibited. Let us offer this example to illustrate this point; a man, fearing that his radio may stop working properly, will follow the rules regarding its proper use. An electronic device, for example, will not perform at a capacity that its manufacturer has not set for it. So, if the manufacturer says, 'Use 220 volts so as not to ruin the

machine,' man should act accordingly. If we apply this to man, we will find that Allah *the Almighty* has created man and laid down for him/her rules by means of which they could protect themselves from the divine punishment. Therefore, whoever breaks these divine rules will be struck with His punishment. As for the verse: '... torment will afflict them as a result of their defiance,' it gives the impression that the punishment loves to descend upon the disobedient and the defiant. That is to say that torment has rushed towards him/her in order to afflict him/her; this point is yet proved by the verse in the chapter of *al-Mulk* in which He *Glorified is He* says: 'Well-nigh bursting with fury; [and] every time a host [of such sinners] is flung into it, its keepers will ask them, 'Has no warner ever come to you?' (*al-Mulk*: 8)

In another position in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'On the day that We will say to hell: Are you filled up? And it will say: Are there any more?' [*Qaf*: 30) That is to say that the punishment itself is keen to be applied to the one who has done evil which is why the suffering insists on afflicting those who have acted sinfully and defiantly. Here, we should stress that using the Arabic word *Al-Mass* in this context indicates a very important meaning which is that the human penalties are incomparable to those of Allah *the Almighty*.

As a matter of fact, if a man punishes his fellow man, he does so according to his own strength and power, and no creature's punishment can ever become severe and painful like that of Allah *Almighty*. That is because the severity of the punishment differs according to the power of the punisher. If we apply this principle to Allah *Glorified is He* we will find that His punishment is so severe and painful that no one can endure it. He *Glorified is He* and then says:

قُلْ لَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ
 إِن أَتَيْتُ إِلَّا مَا يُوْحَىٰ إِلَيَّ قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرُ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

Say, 'I do not have the treasures of God, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I tell you that I am an angel. I only follow what is revealed to me.' Say, 'Is a blind person like one who can see? Why will you not reflect?' [50] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 50)

We previously explained that the Arabic verb 'say' gives a command to The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. We know for

certain that The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* delivers the divine message as it was revealed to him. Here, we stress that it was sufficient for him *peace and blessings be upon him* to just say: 'I do not have the Treasures of Allah', without the verb 'say' in the beginning of the speech. However, the existence of the verse as such clearly indicates the absolute accuracy of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in delivering the Message of Allah *the Exalted*. It is taken for granted that all the words of the Quran are *Tawqifi*, meaning that every word therein is sent down from Allah *Glorified is He*. In other words, the archangel Gabriel conveyed the Message to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* exactly as he received it from Allah *the Exalted* and he *peace and blessings be upon him* in turn, conveyed and delivered it to us as it was revealed to him; an act which plainly indicates that no one has the right to change even one letter of the Divine Revelation.

In this vein, The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed us that Allah *the Almighty* has sent him as a guide, a giver of glad tidings and a warner. In addition, He *Glorified is He* supported His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* with a sign, i.e. the Quran, proving his truthfulness and accuracy in delivering the Message. It goes without saying that whoever listens to this guidance from him *peace and blessings be upon him* was not supposed to ask for anything except that which is consistent with his human nature. That is to say that no one is allowed to ask The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring forth any signs other than those sent down by Allah *Glorified is He*. That is because The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say except that he is a mere bearer of the Divine Message, which is why any discussion with him must be within the framework of this claim.

As a matter of fact, the disbelievers overstepped this when they asked The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring them forth other signs including a bursting spring of water from the earth, or that he should have an embellished house. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* orders him *peace and blessings be upon him* to inform them that he does not possess the treasures of the heavens and the earth, so how can you, O disbelievers, demand him to have houses and palaces?. Furthermore, how can you ask him *peace and blessings be upon him* to inform you of the unseen so that you can accept that

which is beneficial and avoid that which is harmful? Is the divine way of guidance which guides to everything beneficial and keeps you from all that is harmful, not suffice you? Moreover, The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never told them that he knew the unseen. In fact, they themselves gave this testimony about him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Yet they say: 'What sort of Messenger is this [man] who eats food [like all other mortals] and goes about in the market-places? Why has not an angel [visibly] been sent down to him, to act as a warner together with him?' (7) Or: '[Why has not] a treasure been granted to him [by Allah]?' Or: 'He should [at least] have a [bountiful] garden, so that he could eat thereof [without effort]!' And so these evildoers say [to one another], 'If you were to follow [Muhammad, you would follow] but a man bewitched!' (8)' (*al-Furqan*: 7-8)

The disbelievers of Quraysh had indeed mocked The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked him to bring forth other signs and miracles for them. They even wondered how it could be for this man who claims to be a Messenger, to eat food as they eat and to go to markets as they do! If he, i.e. Muhammad *peace and blessings upon him* the disbelievers say, was truly a Messenger sent from Allah, He *Glorified is He* would have relieved him of the hardship of earning a living or would have sent down an angel to help him convey the divine way of guidance to people or would have sent down treasure from the sky with which he could spend out of or would have been granted a bountiful garden from the fruits of which he would eat.

These were the demands of the chief disbelievers of Mecca; those who oppressed their own selves with disbelief and wanted to turn people away from believing in the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In pursuit of achieving their goal of turning people away from the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the disbelievers of Quraysh once accused him *peace and blessings be upon him* of being bewitched, another time of being mad, a third time of being delirious, a fourth time of being a liar and a fifth time of receiving the Quran from non-Arabs. Yet, Allah *Glorified is He* refutes all of these false and unfounded allegations and fabrications with which they went astray and caused others to go astray. Allah *the Almighty* says in the Quran: 'And We have not sent before you any

apostles but they most surely ate food and went about in the markets; and We have made some of you a trial for others; will you bear patiently? And your Lord is ever seeing.' (*al-Furqan*: 20) This verse clearly states that The Messengers and Prophets that were sent before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to eat food, earn a living, and frequent the marketplace. So, if the polytheists are faulting the Messenger for that and trying to lead people astray with all possible means, then Allah *the Exalted* is reassuring the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* that He, Allah *the Almighty* will grant him victory. In addition, people will be held accountable before Him *Glorified is He* for their deeds, be they good or bad. Furthermore, all their demands from you, O Messenger Muhammad, clearly indicate their stubbornness. He *peace and blessings be upon him*, never ever said to them that he was a king, but rather, he told that that he was just a bearer of the Divine Message. So, how could they then ask him *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring forth for them signs which have only to do with Allah's Ownership of the treasures of the heavens and the earth? In the same way, how could they ask him *peace and blessings be upon him* to inform them of the unseen? Furthermore, how could they criticise him *peace and blessings be upon him* for being a mortal Messenger that eats, marries, and walks in the marketplace?!

All of these statements by the polytheists of Mecca clearly indicate their obstinacy and insistence on disbelief because they have asked him *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring forth for them signs which go beyond the fact that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was just a bearer of the Divine Message. The disbelievers of Quraysh asked him *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring them forth springs of water, gardens and palaces all of which are demands that cannot be met by a Messenger sent only to convey and deliver the Divine Message to people. It is taken for granted that Allah *the Almighty* Alone is the One Who is fully able to bring forth these signs.

As for the Arabic word *Khaza'in* (safes) which is the plural of *Khizana* (a safe) refers to that item in which every precious thing is stored so that it can be taken out at the time of need. You do not call something a *Khizana* unless you have made it as a container for something precious which you fear to be taken out at the wrong time. Here, we should be fully aware of the fact that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who possesses the treasures of the earth a point

which is proved by the Quran in which He says: ‘And the earth – We have spread it out wide, and placed on it mountains firm, and caused [life] of every kind to grow on it in a balanced manner, (19) and provided thereon means of livelihood for you [O men] as well as for all [living beings] whose sustenance does not depend on you. (20) For no single thing exists that does not have its source with us; and nothing do we bestow from on high unless it be in accordance with a measure well defined. (21)’ (*al-Hijr*: 19-21) Allah tells us about the most essential point in this regard which is that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who knows the secrets of the universe, and that He *Glorified is He* manifests and discloses them at their appropriate time, but the question to be asked here right now is ‘How does Allah Almighty do so?’ Allah *Glorified is He* sheds light on the beginning of creation and on the creation of the heavens and the earth. In the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say: What! do you indeed disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two periods, and do you set up equals with Him? That is the Lord of the Worlds. (9) And He made in it mountains above its surface and He blessed therein and made therein its foods, in four periods: alike for the seekers. (10) Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it is a vapour, so He said to it and to the earth: Come both, willingly or unwillingly. They both said: We come willingly. (11)’ (*Fussilat*: 9-11)

In these aforementioned verses, Allah *the Almighty* commands The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask the polytheists of Mecca how they could disbelieve in Allah *the Exalted* in spite of the fact that He *Glorified is He* is the One Who created the heavens and the earth in two periods and how they could set up partners for Him in worship when He is the creator of the earth upon which they live and get the necessary materials and substances by means of which their lives are preserved until the end of time. We know for certain that man’s life is kept by virtue of the food placed in the earth out of the Divine Mercy. Yet, in case man wants to have a luxurious life, s/he had to be ambitious to do so. He *Glorified is He* then tells us that He placed towering, unshakable mountains in the earth, and that He blessed the earth and the towering, unshakable mountains altogether. Having told us about the creation of these mountains, He *Glorified is He* moves to tell us about the apportioning of nourishment; a point which indicates that mountains are, in reality, the storehouses of nourishment. At that point, someone may ask, ‘How is this?’

We say, 'Indeed the facts confirm this reality because if you reflect on the flowing rivers, you will find that they consist of the rain that fell down on the mountains. That is to say that rainwater which is made up of small, minute particles, falls on these mountains and thus breaks them down. As such, it becomes full of the different minerals which are of great benefit to the land. We call this mixture of rainwater and minerals as *Al-Ghrain* (alluvial mud). When water flows in rivers and streams, this alluvial mud is transported to the land and serves as natural fertilisers from which plants get the necessary minerals. Had Allah Almighty so willed, He would have made the entire surface of the earth flat and thus enjoys fertility which is beneficial to plants, However, His Wisdom destined that the nourishment of plants is done in this way. As a matter of fact, if we carefully examine plants, we will find that they differ in the way of absorbing minerals from the soil. There is a particular type of plants that take their nourishment from a depth of half a metre, whilst a second type of plants do so from a depth of one metre, and so forth. Also, if we do not add manure or fertilisers or alluvial mud to the cultivated land, it becomes weak. Out of the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* wants the process of cultivation to be continued forever, He *the Almighty* created mountains in such a rigid form which makes them vulnerable to the factors of erosion, such as heat, cold and cracks. Yet, when rainwater falls down on them, it becomes full of the nourishing ingredients and minerals that the earth needs. These nourishing ingredients are thus transported via water to the earth. This is how the earth is constantly fertilised. As such, it is clear right now that those mountains are, in essence, the storehouses of Allah's Treasures.

But, is man's entire life based only on agriculture? The answer is definitely 'no' because if we look at a small model of the earth, we will find that it resembles a large melon. If we thus cut it into equal triangles, all of which are of the same distance as that from the exterior to the centre of the melon and made them all in the form of a pyramid, we would find that each piece contains an amount of provision which is equal to the other. Why? It is because life does not only depend on particular types of nourishment, but rather, we need different tools, materials and minerals to inhabit the earth, such as iron, petrol, manganese and the like from the other natural treasures of the earth upon which civilisation is established.

Indeed we find that these treasures are hidden either in the mountains or in the deserts, but each one of these treasures will not be disclosed but in an appointed time. Yet if we draw a comparison between the treasures found in a pyramidal section of the earth measuring from the centre to the perimeter and another, we would find that the treasures found of them are equal to each other. However, each type of these treasures has an appointed time to be disclosed to people. This goes in accordance with the Quran in which Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For no single thing exists that does not have its source with Us; and nothing do We bestow from on high unless it be in accordance with a measure well-defined.' (*al-Hijr*: 21)

That is to say, there is not anything except that its storehouse is with Allah Almighty Who sends it down in accordance with a due measure. Let us examine this point in the light of intellect which is man's greatest blessing. Indeed the intellect is something and thus has storehouses with Allah *Glorified is He*. This point is yet proved by the fact that the amounts of ideas man had ten centuries ago can in no way be comparable to those we have today. This is because every generation has benefited from the ideas of the previous ones to arrive at new conclusions. Therefore, it is clear that there are storehouses for ideas and thoughts and likewise everything in existence has storehouses with Allah *the Exalted* yet He *Glorified is He* does not send down from these treasures and storehouses except in accordance with a well-defined measure.

As a matter of fact, when Allah *Glorified is He* wants a particular secret to be disclosed, He *the Almighty* prepares the means for it. For example, in the past, we used to chop wood from trees in order to make fuel. After chopping the wood, out of fear that it might be spoilt, we transformed it into charcoal and thus secured a source of energy. These are all treasures that were hidden in the earth, yet man did not discover these sources of energy until after Allah *the Exalted* qualified them to receive this treasure. Here, we should stress that the Grace of Allah Almighty will surely remain until the end of time. Having managed to make charcoal, we entered the age of steam which led us to the age of electricity that has further allowed us to advance our knowledge and utilise the resources that Allah *Glorified is He* has bestowed upon us which led us, in turn, to the age of the atom.

All these discoveries were created by Allah *Glorified is He* and deposited in earth. When the time is due, Allah *the Exalted* inspires a person to take all the necessary steps to reveal it. The following generation builds on the discoveries of the previous and thus the development is always growing.

Such discoveries were either Allah's totally hidden or deposited with a certain code. For example, it was Allah *the Exalted* who made manifest the discovery of radium at the necessary time, by Madame Curie. Before the discovery of radium, scientists knew that there was an element they had not yet identified which had a specific atomic composition. This is because the elements of the universe are made with great and majestic wisdom. Furthermore, something could be typically transformed into something else. An example would be that you pick a flower and enjoy its fragrance until it wilts. You may not be fully aware that the flower has a specific composition and that humidity allows the flower to bloom. A flower is composed of the elements found on earth and when it wilts, these elements return back to the earth after the water it contains evaporates, like other water, and forms clouds which are moved by the wind and falls as rain again.

In this way, the drops of water contained in the flower evaporate to form clouds and then return to the earth once again in the form of rain. The percentage of water in the universe is stable, without decrease or increase since Allah *Glorified is He* created the creation in this universe. When man makes use of an amount of water, it returns, according to certain processes designed by Allah *the Exalted* to the reserve of water in the universe. Someone may ask: How many tonnes of water have I drunk in my life? You will find that you have drunk and made use of hundreds or thousands of tonnes of water and you disposed it in the form of perspiration, urine, mucus or similar. Then, how much water remains in your body after disposal of such quantities of water? The proportion of water may be more than ninety per cent of one body's weight⁽¹⁾. After your death, this amount of water in your body will evaporate, join the clouds, and then come down again as rain. Thus, the amount of water in the universe does not decrease or increase. This is what we call stored and ever transformed provision. Just as the amount of water

(1) Not correct as a scientific fact, it is around 65 percent

contained in the flower evaporates, its smell also evaporates into the air and likewise its coloured substance dissolves into the earth. When we plant a rose tree, each rose takes its colour from the coloured substance stored in the earth. Therefore everything is either stored in its essence or its elements are stored in a transformed form. This is one of the laws of the universe. Life is based on these two types of elements.

For instance, man is certainly created of flesh and blood, and a cow is also created of flesh and blood. When man dies he returns to the earth and when man benefits from animals, then those animals also return to the earth. The elements composing the bodies of humans and animals enter into a new cycle. Therefore they are reserves designed by Allah *Glorified is He* which is either in a transformed or preserved form. The thing which is embedded into another thing and returns to its original state once again, is considered a transformed reserve.

It is out of the Mercy of Allah *the Exalted* that He does not allow anyone to own the reserves of the earth or heavens so they cannot be arrogant with others. Even The Messengers, being humans, were not authorised to dispose of these reserves. Allah *Glorified is He* has taken it upon himself to preserve the reserves of the earth and the heavens so that we are assured of our provisions. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that if we control His treasures of Mercy, then we would withhold them from fear of spending and man is ever stingy. Allah *Glorified is He* knows that man, by his very nature, can be very greedy or selfish, while He *Glorified is He* is The Rich, The Bountiful. Therefore, He sends down what He wills to His servants from His reserves so that they can take benefit from them. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not claim that he owns the reserves of Allah *the Exalted* so how is it then that the idolaters ask him for that which is in the reserves of Allah *Glorified is He*? He *peace and blessings be upon him* made this clear to them and further clarified that he does not know the unseen as he is told in the Quran to inform people that he does not have the treasures of Allah Almighty nor does he know the unseen.

In this way, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* negates for himself having any Divine attributes because the universal reserves are in the hands of Allah Almighty. Likewise he negates for himself having knowledge

of the unseen. It may be said: 'But what about the future incidents and events about which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told us, are such incident of the unseen? We say: 'That certainly does not mean that he knew the unseen, but rather, he was informed of it'. That is Allah *Glorified is He* taught him these issues as He states in the Quran that such announcements relating to the unseen were revealed to him; otherwise he could not have known them. It is none but Allah *Glorified is He* Who told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the news of the unseen. To decisively settle the matter, Allah *Glorified is He* states in the Quran that He is the Knower of the unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to anyone except to those whom He chooses as a messenger; for surely He makes a guard to march before him and after him. Allah *the Exalted* alone is the Knower of the Unseen and He does not let anyone from the creation know about the Unseen except the Messengers whom He chooses to inform of it. Allah *Glorified is He* protects His Messengers in the meantime with angels who protect them from the interference of the jinn so that they do not eavesdrop what has been revealed to him of the unseen and communicate it to the soothsayers before it is conveyed to people. In addition, this is intended as a preservation of the revelation from the tampering and insanity of the jinn.

Therefore the Messenger is taught some of the unseen, but is not a knower of the unseen. The unseen – as we know – is that which is hidden from the senses and for which there are no premises. There are things hidden from you, but they have premises that if you follow from the outset, they will possibly lead you to the conclusion. For example, if you give a student a mathematical problem to solve, he will solve it, but this does not mean that he knows the unseen. Rather, he follows the premises and arranges the available information to figure out the answer.

The same applies to those who have discovered secrets in existence. Did they know the unseen? No, because they only used some of the premises available for them in the universe in order to arrive at new conclusions. It is true that these conclusions were concealed from us, but their premises were not. This also applies to all engineering theories; every theory is based on the one that preceded it and is an observation of a self-evident matter in the

universe, however difficult and complex the theory is. Every science has premises that if a researcher looks into them, he will arrive at new conclusions. This is what we call 'relative unseen' (*ghayb idafi*), i.e. it was unseen at a certain time but comes to be seen at later time. Hence, this knowledge is always attributed to human beings, as stated in the Quran that none can comprehend anything out of the knowledge of Allah *the Exalted* except what He pleases.

The all-encompassing knowledge belongs to Allah *the Exalted* and He *Glorified is He* is the One Who allows some of His creation to encompass some of His Knowledge. None of the secrets in this universe are to be unearthed except by His permission. Allah *Glorified is He* guides scientists to scrutinise the premises that lead them to the conclusions, but what about the knowledge that does not have any premises? This is from the absolute unseen of which Allah *Glorified is He* informs no one but those whom He chooses from among His Prophets.

I underline this fact so that none of us mistakenly think that being informed of the whereabouts of your lost property is not related to the knowledge of the unseen. It may be unseen for the owner of the lost item, but it is not for the thief who steals neither it nor the one who conceals it. It is not also unseen for the jinn who accompany the thief. Thus, it is not an absolute unseen as it is known to some others. Therefore, the reserves of Allah *Glorified is He* are filled with all kinds of treasures that enable man to sustain his life on earth, providing him with necessities or luxuries.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...nor that I know the unseen, nor do I tell you that I am an angel'... (*al-An'am*: 50). Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as can be inferred from the verse, negates for himself three things: two of which negate his divinity, namely, ownership of the universe's reserves and knowledge of the unseen. The third thing is that he is not an angel. Does this mean that an angel is higher than a prophet? No, but they said that he walks in markets and earns a living by working. An angel does not do this. However, a Messenger is certainly of a higher rank than an angel because he guides the human beings and the jinn and follows what has been revealed to him from the absolute King, Allah *Glorified is He*.

'I do not follow aught save that which is revealed to me' (*al-An'am*: 50). Being perfectly honest in conveying what was revealed to him from Allah

the Exalted, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* declares his reality as being merely a human. A human being is subject to changing circumstances. He knows one thing and is ignorant of something else. It is for the benefit of people that the Messengers follow and do not innovate, in that they convey to them the commandments of the Creator in their actual wordings and not the ideas of human beings that may change or be replaced. Had they innovated, they would have done so due to their human nature. Innovation in this regard would be a disadvantage. Exact following of the revelation in this respect is an elevation for human beings because Messengers follow what Allah *the Exalted* Who chose them to be Messengers, has revealed to them. Therefore the illiteracy of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is an honour for him and for us. As regards a normal person, illiteracy is a shortcoming, but it is perfection Only for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*!

The word *ummi* (unlettered) –as we know– means that he is as uneducated as he was born. He has not received an education nor has he learnt from others. But his knowledge and education is entirely divine, being inspired by Allah *Glorified is He*. With him declaring himself unlettered, it means that everything in his mind is not taken from the creation of Allah Almighty. Rather, everything occurring to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was inspired by revelation.

That being the case, then his illiteracy is deemed as an honour for us, whilst illiteracy amongst us –i.e. Muslims– is considered an aspect of backwardness and we must all strive to put an end to it. Allah *the Exalted* orders His Prophet Muhammad to tell his people: ‘...I do not follow aught save that which is revealed to me...’ (*al-An'am*: 50). Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* does not speak of his own desires but rather, he conveys the revelation that has come to him.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse stating: ‘Say, ‘Is the blind equivalent to the seeing? Then will you not give thought?’ (*al-An'am*: 50)

When Allah *Glorified is He* presents an issue as an example, it must be agreed upon even by those who disbelieve in Him. They know that the blind and seeing cannot be deemed equal, as is true of shade and heat or darkness

and light. The natural disposition of man does not accept any disagreement in these matters. Blindness – as we know – is the lack of sight affecting someone who would normally see. So someone could not say about a rock: ‘This rock is blind’ because it is not normal for rocks to see. Therefore, the term ‘blindness’ can only be applied to the one who is normally supposed to see. What does the loss of sight do in regard to a tangible matter? The lack of sight definitely harms man because he is a being that moves. He might fall into a hole or collide with something causing harm to himself. We all agree and know that the blind person has trouble getting around and suffers many hardships. What protects him from this is either his sight or seeking help from a sighted person.

At old times, scholars thought that sight was the result of rays of light being emitted from the eyes and directed towards the visible object, but this theory was refuted by an Islamic scholar called Ibn Al-Haytham, who taught the scholars that the rays of light are, in fact, emitted from the visible object and directed towards the eye of the beholder, based on the proof that man cannot see the object in the dark. Blindness prevents the eye from receiving the rays of light and no one disagrees that blindness is destructive, harmful, and troublesome, whereas sight provides ease and comfort. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* says to the creation: Beware of assuming that your entire life depends on your tangible surroundings. No, there are some values that if man does not know, he stumbles, strays and is troubled.

Accordingly, Allah Almighty’s Guidance has come to guide the human soul to values, such as light guides man towards objects. The same as sight helps man to avoid obstacles, Allah’s Guidance helps man to avoid obstacles with regard to immaterial matters. Man lives by his values, considering that a blind person may find a sighted person to lead him, but he may not be led to guidance if it is provided to him. Therefore man can do without sight, but he cannot do without guidance. Without guidance, one will go astray. When one’s values are spoiled, this would be more severe and serious than misguidance in sensory matters.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Say, ‘Is the blind equivalent to the seeing? Then will you not give thought?’ (*al-An‘am*: 50)

There is thinking (*tafakkur*), remembering (*tadhakkur*) and reflecting (*tadabbur*). Thinking is to employ the intellect in something obvious from the outset, intending to infer something from it. When someone says to someone else: 'Think about this matter', it means to turn over in your mind everything related to this matter. It is as though the one urging thinking about the matter is confident that the one turning it over will arrive at the same opinion he has in mind. As for remembering, this is when someone arrives at a conclusion after reasoning, and then forgets it. Afterwards, someone draws his attention to this conclusion that he reasoned out. Hence, thought brings an initial, fresh conclusion, while remembering calls to mind a conclusion that was known to someone but he forgot about it. As for reflecting, it is not sufficient for man to only look at the outer aspects of matters, but he should look deeper into it. Everything has a surface which may conceal what is beneath it. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* demands that man should look into the depths of things and what is on the other side; that is, he reflects on the matter from every aspect and not to be satisfied with that which is merely on the surface. It is similar to someone buying something from a trustworthy merchant and the merchant honestly shows the buyer the specifications of the item and asks him to test the item as per its specifications. However, a cheating merchant will attempt to tamper with the specifications in order to deceive the buyer.

When Allah *Glorified is He* asks us to think, remember, and reflect, it is only to revive our rational abilities with which we come to the conclusion that Allah *the Exalted* desires. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَنْذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يُحْشَرُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ وَلِيٌّ وَلَا شَفِيعٌ لَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

**Use the Quran to warn those who fear being gathered
before their Lord – they will have no one but Him to
protect them and no one to intercede – so that they
may beware [51] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 51)**

This means to warn with the revelation – that you follow – those who fear the Day when they will be brought before Allah Almighty. To Warn – as we know – means to inform people of something dreadful before it happens so as

to prevent it from happening, so who are those people whom Allah *Glorified is He* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* to warn with the revelation? In the early days of Islam, the interest of some believers in devotional faith was weak, but since their hearts had faith and they feared the day when they will be brought before Allah Almighty, then the revelation signifies a warning for them to take devotional faith seriously. Likewise, the people of the Book can also be warned by the revelation because they believe that they will meet Allah Almighty on the Last Day. Warning can also be for someone who believes in Resurrection but doubts the Prophets and their intercession. Alarming and warning may cause this category of people to re-examine the issue of faith and accept the true Message brought forth by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Warning by way of the revelation may be undertaken in one of the aforementioned ways, but does a believer fear being gathered unto Allah *the Exalted*? No, a believer only fears being gathered without a protector or helper and in reality, there is no one who can offer help or protection from Allah Almighty. No intercessor can rescue from Allah's punishment unless He permits it, as stated in the Quran that no one can intercede with Him except by His permission 'Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission?' (*al-Baqara*: 255) This is what is held by the believers in Allah *Glorified is He*. To define this, Allah *Glorified is He* states that: 'There is no guardian for them, nor any intercessor besides Him- that they may guard (against evil)'. (*al-An'am*: 51) Indeed they are the believers who have believed in Allah *the Exalted* and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, but they fell short in some of the requirements and commandments as provided in the Quranic statement 'Whoever believes and acts aright'. (*al-An'am*: 48)

When warning comes to these believers, they do righteous deeds out of fear that they will be brought before Allah Almighty without a protector or intercessor. Believers, therefore, hope to be under the Protection and Mercy of Allah *the Exalted* on the Day of Gathering. Such are those about whom Allah *Glorified is He* tells that have confessed their faults and mingled a good deed and an evil one; maybe Allah will turn to them mercifully; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [there are] others who

have acknowledged their sins. They had mixed a righteous deed with another that was bad. Perhaps Allah will turn to them in forgiveness. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.' (*at-Tawba*: 102)

Even though the noble verse deals with and includes, in addition to the believers, the people of the Book and also those who believe in the Resurrection but do not follow Prophets. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ مَا
عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ
فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

**Do not drive away those who call upon their Lord
morning and evening, seeking nothing but His Face.
You are in no way accountable for them, nor they for
you; if you drove the believers away, you would become
one of the evildoers [52] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 52)**

We know that Allah *Glorified is He* created man and settled him in the earth and made his existence contingent in this universe in which He has placed all the essentials that are necessary for man's life and welfare.

Allah *Glorified is He* orders that there should be equality in worship between people such that there would be no one elevated over someone weak, no transgressor over someone oppressed. In this way, life's activity takes the right course in such a way as grants every individual certain gifts in accordance with what they are prepared for. If the balance of human equality were ever to be disturbed, Allah *Glorified is He* would refer them to undisputed proof; that is you, O humankind, were equal when you were all created originally from dust and you are equal because you return to dust. Then you are all equal when you are called to account on the Day of Resurrection, so why should you differ in the other matters? Equality must rather be established. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was keen to guide people and he burdened himself with more than what Allah *the Exalted* commanded him. Thus Allah Almighty reproved him for being hard on himself out of his keenness for his people to have faith. Some people think

that Allah *Glorified is He* rebuked His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* because of a shortcoming, and we respond to these people saying that they should understand this kind of reproof in its true sense because there is a difference between reproving for the benefit of the one being rebuked in order to censure them because they contravened and disobeyed. For instance, if you were to find your son playing on a working day not going to school and neglecting his lessons, you would rebuke and censure him for disregarding what is expected of him. However, if you found your son putting all his energy and spending all his free time revising, you would ask him not to burden himself with all this trouble and would tell him to go and take a break. In this situation you are censuring him for his own benefit, so it is as if the censuring and reproving is for and not against him. Therefore the issue they keep raising regarding reproving Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has been solved as we clarify that Allah *Glorified is He* reproves His Messenger for his credit and not against him. Finding it easy and simple to spread His message amongst the weak, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* exerted himself and expended effort in the hope that the arrogant and proud would taste the sweetness of faith. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'He frowned and turned (his) back because there came to him the blind man. And what would make you know that he would purify himself, or become reminded so that the reminder should profit him? As for him who considers himself free from need (of you), to him do you address yourself and no blame is on you if he would not purify himself' ('*Abasa*: 1-7).

Therefore, reproving here is for the benefit of whom? It is reproving for the benefit of Allah's Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and when Allah *Glorified is He* says to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'O Prophet! Why do you forbid (yourself) that which Allah has made lawful for you? you seek to please your wives; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.' (*al-Mumtahana*: 1) This verse points to a matter that annoyed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then he abstained from some of that which the human soul desires and which Allah *the Exalted* has made permissible. Reproving here is also for the benefit of Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Due to his deep concern for all his people to be

guided, it was obligatory for him to treat the tyrants with gentleness in order to soften their hearts, but the tyrants did not want to be made equal with the weak. An assembly from the Quraysh passed and found Khabbab ibn Al-Aratt, Suhayb, Bilal, 'Ammar and Salman al-Farisi, Allah *be pleased with them all*, with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They were all from amongst the weak. They said: 'O Muhammad, are you pleased with those from amongst your people? Is it these whom Allah has favoured among us? Are we to follow these people? Send them away, for perhaps if you do, we will follow you.' It is as if they were saying to him: 'Surely, you have satisfied yourself with these weak people and left us while we are the powerful. We will not sit with you unless you tell these weak people to get away from you.' To that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by the disposition of faith, said: 'I am not one to repel believers.' The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* knows that there were people resembling them who said similar things to their prophets. The people of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* said to him what is narrated in the Noble Quran that they did not see him but as a man like themselves, and that they do not see him followed except by those who were the lowest of them and at first suggestion. And they did not see in the believers over them any merit; rather, they thought they were liars.

'So the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said, "We do not see you but as a man like ourselves, and we do not see you followed except by those who are the lowest of us [and] at first suggestion. And we do not see in you over us any merit; rather, we think you are liars.'" (Hud: 27) Some of the disbelievers tried to invite The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to meet them halfway by saying: 'When we come then drive them away and when we leave then bring them back.' In his opinion the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* found a medium solution that could bring the differing points of view closer together. He *peace and blessings be upon him* consulted with 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab, Allah *be pleased with him*, who said: 'If you do it then we can see what they want.' The wealthy disbelievers of Quraysh asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to record this in a document. The inkwells and pens were brought, but before writing took place the following verse had been revealed: 'And do not drive

away those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, they desire only His favor; neither are you answerable for any reckoning of theirs, nor are they answerable for any reckoning of yours, so that you should drive them away and thus be of the unjust.' (*al-An'am*: 52)

Consequently, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* threw down the leaf brought to contain some words giving preference to the chiefs of the Quraysh as regards sitting with him. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only inclined towards writing this document because he desired that they would accept Islam so that their people would follow Islam as well, out of his mercy and affection towards them. He *peace and blessings be upon him* saw that this would not take anything away from his Companions nor would it make them less esteemed, so he inclined towards it. Whereupon, Allah *the Exalted* sent down this verse to forbid him from inclining towards sending his weak companions away, but it does not mean that he *peace and blessings be upon him* had repulsed them and sent them away. Then, after that, he summoned the weak and they came to him.

Prior to this incident, he *peace and blessings be upon him* would sit with the weak and would leave the gathering if he *peace and blessings be upon him* wished, but, Allah Almighty wanted to honour those weak people after forbidding him from repulsing them and for what they underwent in His cause. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* sent down another command ordering Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not to leave his gathering with the weak until they themselves leave. This is stated in the Quranic verse as Allah *Glorified is He* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to withhold himself with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring His goodwill, and not to let his eyes pass from them, desiring the beauties of this world's life; and not to follow him whose heart Allah Almighty has made unmindful to His remembrance, and he follows his low desires and his case is one in which due bounds are exceeded. When this verse was sent down, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Praise be to Allah who has made among my nation he with whom I am ordered to be patient.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Haythami in (*Majma' Az-Zawa'id*) and At-Tabarani. Al-Haythami declared its chain of narrators to be authentic

With this noble statement Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to honour the weak and oppressed. Salman Al-Farisi and Khubbab ibn Al-Arratt Allah *be pleased with both of them* said: 'This verse was sent down regarding us, because he *peace and blessings be upon him* would sit with us and come so close to us that his knees would be touching our knees. He would stand up and leave when he wanted to and then this verse was sent down. Therefore, he would not stand up and leave us until we stood up. We knew this and we hastened him to stand'. This means that they were the ones who stood up first from the gathering of The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do not drive away 'those who call upon their Lord Morning and evening, seeking nothing But His Face' (*al-An'am*: 52).

This is a divine order to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and to all Muslims as well. This the highest honour for those who constantly remember Allah *the Exalted* from amongst the weak because they are the people who love faith and they were the first to believe in Islam.

It is narrated that some of the Arab noble people embraced Islam and went to meet one of the Muslim caliphs. They sought permission to enter. The caliph did not grant them permission until he had granted it to the weak of the Muslims. This angered them and they said: 'How comes that he gives permission to these people before us although we have become Muslims?' One of them, who knew and understood the religion, said: 'Are you all angered because he is granting permission to these people before you? They were called to believe in Islam and they responded, whereas you were called, but you hesitated to accept Islam. So what will be your response when they will be called to enter paradise before you?'

These weak people obey Allah *the Exalted* seeking *wajh Allah* (*lit.* Allah's Face) The Arabic expression *wajh Allah* indicates that their hearts are imbued with faith and that, for the sake of preserving their faith, they fled the oppression and tyranny of the disbelievers who wanted to force them to return to disbelief and misguidance again. They love faith and the Pleasure of Allah *the Exalted* and were pleased that Allah Almighty would reserve for them all their rewards to the hereafter. When we hear the verse: 'seeking His Face...'

(*al-An'am*: 52), we know that this is one of the attributes of Allah *Glorified is He*. Accordingly, we shall believe that the Attributes of Allah Almighty have no similar as there is nothing like unto Him *Glorified is He*.

The term (*wajh*) is used to refer to the essence because the face is the distinguishing characteristic of essence. If you were to meet a group of people and they would cover their faces with their clothes, you would not be able to distinguish between them. The word *wajh* may also refer to noble people. When one says, 'So and so met *wujuh al-Qawm*,' this means that he met the nobles among his people. Allah *Glorified is He* states that everything shall perish except for Him *Glorified is He*. When Allah says: 'You are in no way accountable for them' (*al-An'am*: 52), this communicates a sense of reverence for the dignity of the weak as someone might say, 'These weak people sought refuge in the Islam so that they could flee from the oppression and not out of love for the Islam. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* makes it clear here that this, i.e. to judge peoples' intentions, is not the mission of anyone. People's actions shall be considered, whereas their intentions shall be judged by Allah Almighty alone. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'You are in no way accountable for them, nor they for you; if you drove the believers away, you would become one of the evildoers.' (*al-An'am*: 52) It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to His Messenger that if you were accountable for them in any way, it would have been permissible for you to drive them away, but you, Messenger of Allah, know that every individual is rewarded for his actions. If they are good then the reward is good and if they are evil, then the reward is evil. Allah *the Exalted* revealed to His Prophet Muhammad that no one shall bear the recompense of the bad actions committed by another: 'Say, "Is it other than Allah I should desire as a lord while He is the Lord of all things? And every soul earns not [blame] except against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. Then to your Lord is your return and He will inform you concerning that over which you used to differ.'" (*al-An'am*: 164) Thus, every individual has his record of actions, according to which one shall be rewarded or punished. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُم بِبَعْضٍ لِّيَقُولُوا أَهَٰؤُلَاءِ مَنَّ اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ بَيْنِنَا أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِالشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

We have made some of them a test for others, to make the disbelievers say, ‘Is it these men that God has favoured among us?’ Does God not know best who are the grateful ones? [53] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 53)

Here Allah Almighty refers to two groups of people; the first group felt haughty to sit with the second group of weak people who were sitting with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Here, Allah *the Exalted* puts both groups to the test (*fitnah*). Some people think that *fitnah* is a blameworthy matter. In fact, it is not. It is not intrinsically blameworthy. Rather, it may be blameworthy because of its consequences. *Fitnah*, or test is designed to reveal a believers’ deep faith... Allah *the Exalted* points out that tests are meant to distinguish the true believers from the liars: ‘But we have certainly tried those before them and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful and He will surely make evident the liars.’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 2-3)

Allah *Glorified is He* tests the truthfulness of one’s faith, with either afflictions or blessings. Allah Almighty also put the previous nations to the test of blessings and afflictions. He *Glorified is He* had known the results of these tests even before their occurrences. Through these tests, the true believers are distinguished from the hypocrites. Whoever shows patience throughout trials and tribulations then he proves that he is a true believer. On the contrary, he who does not show patience then proves to Allah Almighty that his belief is not true; when he is granted goodness he is assuaged and pleased, and if he is afflicted with evil and tribulation, he turns away from worship. Thus, he loses both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Accordingly, tribulation is only a test for people. There are many differences in our universe. These differences are intrinsic features of life. It is obligatory to believe in the decree of Allah *Glorified is He* in His creation as He created people different; one is tall, another is short; one is white, another is black; one can see, another is blind; one is rich, another is poor; one is healthy, another is ill – each one is a test for the other.

A sick person, for example, is a test for the healthy one, and a healthy person is a test for the sick. A sick person shall accept the decree of Allah *the Exalted* and not be envious of the healthy person. Rather, he may observe whether the healthy person will disparage him or offer him help. Likewise, the poor person is a tribulation for the rich person. He looks towards the rich person to know if he will despise him, impede him, or take advantage of him. This rich person is a tribulation for the poor person. The rich person sees whether the poor person is looking at him with envy or he is pleased with what Allah *the Exalted* has given to someone else. This is how tribulations are.

Indeed amongst people are those who have been given some gifts and there are those who have been stripped of this gift. Both giving and stripping is a test for us so that we should believe that the Creator of this universe has distributed gifts amongst the creation and He did not allow for one person to have everything. This is intended so that every person would be in need of the gifts of someone else and that co-operation and social cohesion would be established amongst people.

When Allah *the Exalted* creates someone with some sort of disability, He *Glorified is He* compensates him with some other gift. Accordingly, one finds that all human beings are a test for each other. Likewise, the existence of believers is a test for the disbelievers. Disbelievers were a test for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and vice versa. The disbelievers of Quraysh used to say that they wished that the Quran would have been sent down on a great man of the two cities of Mecca and Ta'if; 'and they said, "Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) Hence, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew that these people were begrudging him because the Glorious Quran was being sent down to him. This statement was a trial for The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* but he was patient with this and proceeded until he completed his mission and conveyed the message, paying no attention to what they were saying. He *peace and blessings be upon him* considered their sayings evidence for the strength of the miracle that proved the truthfulness of his message.

The weak people were a trial for those haughty people who asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to drive away the weak, and so was the weak for them. Had those haughty people been true believers, they would

not have been begrudging the weak believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* before them.

Therefore, we are all trials for one another. When anyone of us sees someone with a gift that he himself has not been granted, then he must know that it is a trial for him. He must accept and be pleased that someone is granted a gift. Allah Almighty is not worshipped with anything better than respecting His decree regarding how people are granted different blessings. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* puts all of us into tests. Accordingly, if one is true believer in Allah *the Exalted* then one shall fully accept the blessings bestowed upon other people so that Allah *the Exalted* makes other people fully accept the blessings He bestows upon you.

In the verse under discussion, the test was that a group of people demanded that the weak be driven away saying, 'Is it these men that Allah has favoured among us?' It is as if they were belittling the social status of the weak believers. Allah Almighty then replies to their question: 'Does Allah not know best who the grateful ones are?' (*al-Ana'am*: 53) It is Allah *the Almighty* Who has eternal knowledge about human beings and no one shall suggest to Him what He decides. Those disbelievers used to object Allah's decrees previously asked why the Quran was not revealed to a great man of the two cities. But Allah Almighty replied to their question stating that He *Glorified is He Alone* Who decides who shall be granted His blessings and grace.

In this way, we know that Allah *Glorified is He* did not entrust the message to the polytheists or any other one, nor did He entrust them to distribute provisions and manage the peoples' affairs. Rather, it is He *Glorified is He Alone* Who is the One Who distributes provisions and blessings amongst human beings so that every individual has to rely on others to do things that he is incapable of. Others then shall rely on him also for things that they are incapable of. Prophethood is a divine choice that is great and more exalted than all other worldly affairs. The context thus shows that some of the influential Arabs asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to drive away some weak people, so Allah *the Exalted* wanted to assuage the weak with some worldly reward even though He reserved reward for the rest of the believers to the Hereafter. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* afterwards says:

وَإِذَا جَاءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ
 أَنَّهُ مَن عَمِلَ مِنكُمْ سُوءًا بِجَهْلَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِن بَعْدِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

When those who believe in Our revelations come to you [Prophet], say, ‘Peace be upon you. Your Lord has taken it on Himself to be merciful: if any of you has foolishly done a bad deed, and afterwards repented and mended his ways, God is most forgiving and most merciful’[54] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 54)

The demand to drive away these weak people signified an attack against their honour and status because they were not wealthy or eminent amongst the people. But Allah *Glorified is He* assuaged them with peace from Him in this worldly life and He commanded His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to communicate this message of peace to them. Peace here signifies a state where one becomes free of both psychological and physical weaknesses. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to compensate them with peace coming from Him. The word *rahma* (mercy) is repeated several times in the Glorious Quran. For example, Allah *the Exalted* states that He reveals in the Quran what gives people health and mercy.

What is the difference then between mercy (*rahma*) and giving health (*shifa*)? Mercy is that Allah Almighty does not test man with an illness. Indeed it is prevention. As for giving health, it is that Allah *Glorified is He* removes an illness that has afflicted man. This is the convalescence after the treatment.

Therefore, this verse clearly proves that in the Quran there is both mercy and giving health, i.e. prevention and treatment. The one who adheres to the way of the Quran will never be afflicted with social and psychological diseases, whereas the one who deviates from the guidance of the Quran will be afflicted with social and psychological diseases. If one returns to the guidance of the Quran then he will be cured of whatever disease he suffers from. When Allah *Glorified is He* commands His Messenger to say to these people who had been incensed by the demand for them to be repulsed, despite their faith in the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Peace be upon you. Your Lord has taken it on Himself to be merciful’ (*al-An’am*: 54), it means that what happened to them in this case was the last of their tests. In return for this provocation, they had been granted everlasting peace. As long

as Allah *the Exalted* has taken it upon Himself to be merciful, then He will protect them from what may harm others.

When you hear Allah's statement: 'Your Lord has taken it on Himself to be merciful' (*al-An'am*: 54), you shall be sure that no one obliges Allah Almighty to do anything because He is the Creator of the Universe. His Will is absolute over the universe, so no one can prescribe anything for him and obliges him to do it. However, Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who obliges mercy upon himself. When we consider the word *nafsih* (upon himself), we should understand it in the light of the fact that 'there is nothing like unto Him'. This is because the self (*nafs*) with regards to human beings signifies that there is body, blood, movement, and life. Nevertheless, what does it mean when it is used in reference to Allah *the Exalted*? In such context it refers to the Divine Being. If you do not believe that it communicates this sense, then you will be trapped into many violations. May Allah Almighty protect us, and you from their evils.

I underline this meaning so that it settles in the mind of every believer. Indeed the (*nafs*) (self) in relation to living beings is different when attributed to Allah Almighty. We must consider anything that is attributed to Allah *the Exalted* in light of the Quranic verse 'there is nothing like unto Him' (*ash-shura*: 11) because the (*nafs*) with regards to living beings necessitates the existence of spirit mixed with material. The material is comprised of parts. If you do not consider the meaning of Allah's (*nafs*) in light of the Quranic statement that 'there is nothing like unto Him' (*ash-shura*: 11), then you –we seek refuge in Allah Almighty from this – negate the Oneness of Allah *the Exalted*.

We know that Allah *Glorified is He* has two descriptions which are derived from the same Arabic root: (*Wahid*) and (*Ahad*); those who have not deep understanding think that (*wahid*) and (*ahad*) have the same meaning. We say 'no'; rather, each word has its special sense. When we say: 'Indeed Allah Almighty is (*Wahid*),' it means that there is no second individual of His kind and He does not have an equal, a counterpart, or anything that is similar to Him. When we say: 'Indeed Allah Almighty is (*Ahad*),' it means that He is not comprised of constituent parts whose existence together is necessary for the making the whole. This is because something can be (*Wahid*) but not (*Ahad*). For this reason we clearly stress the difference between (*Wahid*) and

(*Ahad*); so that every believer knows it well. Allah *Glorified is He* is One (*Wahid*) with no similar or partner. He *Glorified is He* is also (*ahad*) which means that He does not have constituent parts that require one another. We clarified before that there is something called (*kulli*) totality and something else called (*kulli*) total. The totality is made up of parts and each of its parts does not have an independent reality. There is not a reality for the totality unless the parts are joined to one another.

An example of this would be a chair which is made of wood, nails and glue. But when they exist separately, we cannot call them a chair. However the thing that is manufactured from all of these things in a fixed shape is indeed a chair. Therefore the totality has parts that come together in order to form this total thing. The word *kulli* refers to a genre or genus who include many members. Accordingly, it may refer to human being.

Based on this Allah *Glorified is He* is not a *kull* (totality), i.e. He does not have parts because He is (*ahad*) and He is not a *kulli* (total) because there is nothing like unto Him. Therefore, we all shall understand that everything that is attributed to Allah Almighty must be understood in the context of that there is nothing like unto Him.

We should not understand the word (*nafs*) in relation to Allah *Glorified is He* as we understand it in relation to human beings because for Allah *the Exalted* it has a very different meaning unlike that of human beings. This is because Allah Almighty is independent and is not in need of anyone else. Allah *Glorified is He* is not comprised of parts, for He has all perfection and majesty in His oneness and uniqueness as well as in all of His Attributes and Actions.

One might ask about the significance of mercy in this context? The answer comes in the verse: 'If any of you has foolishly done a bad deed, and afterwards repented and mended his ways, Allah is most forgiving and most merciful'. (*al-An'am*: 54) When Allah Almighty revealed His Legislation, it included texts which prescribes punishments for adulterers, thieves and others who violate the rulings of the sharia. A punishment can only come after something is stated to be prohibited. For example, no one should be punished for committing bribery, slander or any violation to legislation unless it is clearly stated that this very act is a crime. Nothing can be considered a crime unless with clear text. Allah

Glorified is He Who created humankind knows that some of them may incline to disobedience as their very souls incite them to evil. Examples of these punishments include the punishment of theft, adultery, and fornication.

What is the meaning of sending down texts like these? The meaning of sending down texts like these is that Allah *Glorified is He* knows that man may be weak with regards to adherence to some obligations and thus falls into disobedience. Therefore, there must be a punishment for violating His commands. In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* considers the very nature of man; as He gives him the right to choice, He lays down reward and punishment. Just as Allah Almighty lays down texts regarding crimes and their punishment, He *Glorified is He* also opens for people the door to repentance so that the one who disobeys Him once does not give up all hope. Doing so, Allah *the Exalted* protects society from the evil of those disobedient people and shows them mercy as long as they show repentance for their disobedience. Furthermore, Allah Almighty may show mercy to some of His creation by protect ing them from falling into disobedience. Allah *Glorified is He* states clearly in the Quran that He opens avenues for people to show repentance for their disobedience.

Allah *the Exalted* guides people to show repentance and pardons them. He shows great mercy toward the repentant believers. One of the aspects of His Mercy is that He *Glorified is He* accepts the repentance showed by those who commit bad deeds out of *jahala*, i.e. unintentional purpose.

A bad deed is something that Allah Almighty has prohibited. But is there anyone who does a bad deed out of (*jahala*)? Some of us think the word *jahala* stated means lack of knowledge. This is not the intended meaning here. The one who lacks knowledge is someone who is not preoccupied with something and thus has no knowledge about it. In Arabic, *jahl* and *jahala* have different meanings. *Jahl* means that someone believes in something of no real essence such as the case when someone believes in a false doctrine. In order to eliminate (*jahl*) in this case, we should convince him of the true doctrine in order that he should reject the false one.

What bring about hardship for mankind are ignorant people because the ignorant person firmly believes in something which has no ground at all. When Muslim scholars contemplated this verse: ‘so that if any of you does a

bad deed out of *jahala*' (*al-An'am*: 54), they said: '*jahala* is (foolishness) and thoughtlessness when the consequences of an action are not taken into consideration and man does not appreciate the reward he misses out on and the punishment that will overtake him'. Even a believer may commit a bad deed because he does not consider the reward and punishment. In this case, one commits whatever fulfils his immediate desires without carefully examining the consequences to come in the future. When one calls to mind the reward he will get or the punishment he will suffer, he will not commit bad deeds.

Moreover, *jahala* means that one commits a bad deed without contriving it. For example, a man may plan to travel to somewhere to acquire knowledge. Having settled there, a gorgeous woman may come to him and incite him to make love with her and he may fail to resist her incitement and, thus, commits the major sin. Falling in this sin is considered to be out of *jahala* because he did not intend to commit this bad deed and he would never boast about it.

There is a difference between this man and another man who looks up all the addresses for brothels in his new neighbourhood before travelling there. He is actually planning to do evil and commit indecency. He is resolved to commit a bad deed, he boasts about it and does not regret doing it. Allah Almighty does not forgive this one if he insists on doing evil and does not show repentance until he sees death. In this case, repentance has no value at all as Allah *the Exalted* indicates in the Quran.

This is because Allah *Glorified is He* only accepts the repentance of those who commit sin in a state of idiocy and thoughtlessness, who then hasten to show repentance for their sins. On the contrary, as for those who do not regret for doing until they see death, Allah Almighty does not accept their repentance and puts them into severe torment. This verse clearly states that Allah Almighty does not accept the repentance of those who do not turn in repentance immediately after committing sins, but who wait until they are in the agonies of death, nor does He accept the repentance of the disbelievers who die without embracing Islam.

Allah *Glorified is He* clearly states: 'If any of you has foolishly done a bad deed, and afterwards repented and mended his ways, Allah is most forgiving and most merciful.' (*al-An'am*: 54) This verse clearly indicates that repentance

must be followed by reform and righteousness. This is because good deeds remove bad deeds. Allah *Glorified is He* is the Most-Forgiving and does not punish one for a sin for which one repents from. He is a dispenser of Mercy because He rewards the one who frequently repents from committing bad deeds. Furthermore, out of His great Mercy, Allah *the Exalted* replaces bad deeds with good deeds. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَذَلِكَ نَفْصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ سَبِيلُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

**In this way We explain the revelations, so that
the way for sinners may be made clear [55]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 55)**

When we hear the verse: 'In this way we explain the revelations...' (*al-An'am*: 55) we then know that the verse is going to give detailed elaboration of legal rulings which resembles a previous elaboration. In the previous Quranic verses, Allah *the Exalted* had already elaborated on several matters such as; the veracity of the Oneness of Allah, The Prophethood of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the divine destiny and decree. After all of that, Allah Almighty provides us with the evidence which affirm the realities that the people of falsehood deny. He elaborated for us on matters of creed and the activities of life and the acts of worship that we carry through the commandments of faith. Just as Allah *the Exalted* has elaborated for us the veracity of His Oneness and Prophethood of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the divine destiny and decree. In some modes of recitations, the word (*sabil*) is stated in the nominative case, i.e. the path of those who are lost in sin manifests itself and makes itself distinct and clear. In some other modes of recitations, it is stated in the accusative case, i.e. that you, O Muhammad, will come to know the path that those lost in sin will travel along. The word (*sabil*) is stated in the Quran in the feminine case in some verse and the masculine case in other verses.

With this, Allah Almighty wants to teach us that the Quran is sent down in a clear Arabic tongue that has been received and accepted by the Arab tribes. Some of them have supremacy, like the tribe of the Quraysh because they inhabit Mecca where the *Ka'ba*, to which all tribes make pilgrimage, is located.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to put an end to this supremacy. This is why the Quran stated some words that the other tribes use. An example of this is the word (*sabil*), which is feminine in the language of the Hijaz. The Quran states it in the masculine form which is the language of the tribe of Tamim. Allah *Glorified is He* did not reveal all words of the Quran according to the style of the Quraysh so that the people of Quraysh should not think that the supremacy they had prior to Islam will continue even after the advent of Islam. The Quran was revealed for all people. That is, indeed Allah will judge every human being according to his certainty of faith. Those who stubbornly oppose will receive fair judgment, and so will those who persist in sin and prefer disobedience to submission. However, believers will receive an entirely different treatment; however, both believers and disbelievers fall within the framework of Divine Justice. Finally, everyone will receive justice corresponding to his position in terms of faith. Sinners will stand opposite of believers; if you identify the clear path of sinners, you will accordingly recognise the path of believers. When the Lord *the Most High* mentions the opposite of something and specifies a certain ruling for it, then the other ruling appropriate to its opposite is left to the understanding of readers and listeners. If the True Lord *the Most High* specifies a curse and rejection as the outcome of sin and crime, then mercy and honour are the distinct outcomes of believers. For example, if you say to a student who assiduously devotes himself to lessons and keeps revising during free time outside the school, 'You are on the path of success.' Whoever hears this statement knows that a student who does not assiduously devote himself to studies and revisions during free time will end up failing and suffering disappointment.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* leaves it to the perception of those hearing His speech to understand the implied meanings. He certainly knows the outcome of all. If the True Lord *the Almighty* says, '[We do it] so that the path of those who are lost in sin might be distinct [from that of the righteous].' (*al-An'am*: 55) It also indicates the path of honour and mercy awaiting believers. It is well known that the Quran presents the most rhetorical of styles which requires readers to know the semantics of every word and each letter to understand the implications of each situation and circumstance as in the example when Allah *the Exalted* says, 'you have already had a sign in the two hosts that met in battle: one host fighting in Allah's cause and the other denying Him.' (*Al-'Imran*: 13)

The Lord *the Most High* leaves it to readers' intelligence to know that the disbelieving hosts fight in Satan's cause, whereas the believing hosts fight in Allah's cause. Allah *the Most High* leaves it for us to understand that faith belongs to those who fight in the cause of Allah, which is opposite to the other disbelieving hosts who fight in the cause of Satan since it mentions that the first host is fighting in the cause of Allah. The same holds true for the verse in question. Allah *the Most High* says, '[We do it] so that the path of those who are lost in sin might be distinct [from that of the righteous]' (*al-An'am*: 55). Accordingly, we distinguish the path of those who are not lost in sin from that of believers.

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهَيْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ قُلْ لَا آتِيكُمْ
أَهْوَاءُكُمْ قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ إِذَا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

Say, 'I am forbidden to worship those you call on other than God.' Say, 'I will not follow your vain desires, for if I did, I would stray from the path and cease to be rightly guided' [56] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 56)

We know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not worship any idol before Islam, following the convictions of his natural disposition. Why does then come this prohibition of such aberrant worship? This prohibition comes to clarify the difference between a matter of custom and a standard of worship. We know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never worshipped idols due to the sound nature in which Allah *the Almighty* created him. In this verse, the habit is transferred to a commandment of worship: 'Say [to the deniers of the truth], "Behold, I have been forbidden to worship those [beings] whom you invoke instead of Allah"' (*al-An'am*: 56)

They used to supplicate and worship idols instead of Allah *the Exalted*. If we discuss this issue as one of natural dispositions, we perceive the foolishness of this kind of thinking and acting. Why is this? Simply put, the idols are stones that the People of ignorance sculpted themselves and then worshipped. In other words, they created their gods, which goes against human common sense; a created being normally worships only the Creator. Furthermore, if anyone of

them looked at the idols, he would question their essence of, or the truth of their, existence. They are inanimate objects and, as known, such objects are the lowest form of creation. A category is distinguished from another by something that either raises or lowers it. The peak of the creation is man, whom Allah *the Most High* has ennobled with sense, will, movement and thinking. After man come the animals that have senses and movement but no thought. Then come the plants that grow without movement or thought. When the natural inclination to grow is stripped from plants, they become inanimate objects. Therefore, the order of created matters from the highest to the lowest is as follows: man, animals, plants, and inanimate objects.

Each category has its particular characteristics, while each higher category has an additional superior characteristic. The lowest of all is inanimate objects that serve plants, while plants serve animals and man. Finally, animals serve man. Evidently, the highest of all is man, while the lowest is inanimate objects. How can the highest of all, man, worship the lowest of all, idols? Indeed, the judgment of human natural disposition clearly disregards the folly and illogicalness of this kind of thinking.

The nature of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* even before his mission, guided him to reject this false notion. Then, the mission turned the habit of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* into an established worship for him and for all his followers. 'Say [to the deniers of the truth], "Behold, I have been forbidden to worship those [beings] whom you invoke instead of Allah." Say, "I do not follow your errant views" (*al-An'am*: 56)

The fact that idolaters worshipped idols proved that they followed no guidance, but clearly indicated human submission to *hawa* (delusive desires and aberrant views). To put it simply, guidance is a path leading to a desired objective, whereas *hawa* refers to personal thoughts that seek to fulfil desires and delusions. This is why we find some who want to lead humanity astray have started movements that have nothing to do with religion at all, such as Qadianism, Bahaism and Babism to name a few. These people claim religiosity but waive ethics and morality. Several examples came to the forefront concerning issues recently examined by courts, such as one who claims religiosity, but he kisses women. He does not establish a relationship between people and

religious principles; rather, he lets loose their natural inclinations to follow their desires. People with large fortunes and certain degrees of education have followed them and have made themselves believe in a great deception. They think that they have assumed religiosity, while in reality they have followed many desires that go against the principles of religion.

‘Say, "I do not follow your errant views – or else I should have gone astray, and should not be among those who have found the right path." (*al-An'am*: 56)

In other words, the verse tells the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to inform idolaters that he is not following their desires that lead to misguidance. To put it simply, whoever follows his desires will deviate from the truth and never join the rightly guided.

The True Lord *the Most High* then says:

قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُم بِهِ ۚ مَا عِندِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ
 بِهِ ۚ إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ يَقُضُ الْحَقُّ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفَصِّلِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

Say, ‘I stand on clear proof from my Lord, though you deny it. What you seek to hasten is not within my power. Judgment is for God alone: He tells the truth, and He is the best of judges’[57] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 57)

Allah *Glorified is He* informs His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that his abandonment of idolatry, even when he perceived it by his very sound reasoning and pure nature, has now become an obligation. The fact that Allah *the Most High* has chosen him for His mission qualifies him to receive obvious guidance in the clear Revealed Laws of commandments and prohibitions! Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the best example for mankind to follow. He carried out all actions in accordance with the Divine Law, and believers followed his example. For a contemporary example, the Quran declares alcohol forbidden, so believers abide by the prohibition in submission to the Lord, *the Most High*. Nowadays, doctors from every country prohibit the consumption of alcohol since it harms human organs such as the liver and the brain, along with the nervous and digestive systems. We also have films that show how one glass of alcohol affects man's health. When a

non-Muslim sees a film like this, he refrains from alcohol for his own benefit aside from religious devotion. However, as Muslims, we must adhere to this restraint as a matter of faith. Therefore, the Lord, *the Most High* says: 'who could be better of speech than he who calls [his fellows] unto Allah and does what is just and right, saying, "Verily, I am of those who have surrendered themselves to Allah' (*Fussilat*: 33).

In this verse, we realise that no one is better in speech than the one who obeys the Divine Laws and does good deeds that affirm his belief in monotheism: 'Say: 'Behold, I take my stand on a clear evidence from my Lord' (*al-An'am*: 57). Without clear evidence from Allah, we cannot identify the way. Only through clear Divine Evidence do we know that He is the Only God Who lays down laws: commands and prohibitions. In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* uses the word *rabbi* (my Lord) for us to know and realise that He is the Creator Who sustains us all. Since He is the Creator and Sustainer, we must obey His Laws. Allah has sent down commandments since He is the Only True Lord worthy of worship along with being the Creator and Sustainer, so we comply with His Laws. However, what about deniers? '...[So] it is to Him that you are giving the lie! Not in my power is that which [in your ignorance] you so hastily demand. Judgment rests with none but Allah. He shall declare the truth, since it is He who is the best judge between truth and falsehood' (*al-An'am*: 57).

The deniers of Allah take others besides Him as partners, along with not conforming to His Laws. Some went to extremes in disbelief and said, as Allah *the Most High* relates their claim: 'O Allah! If this be indeed the truth from You, then rain down upon us stones from the skies or inflict [some other] grievous suffering on us!' (*al-Anfal*: 32) When we discuss their claims, we find their vocative formula, 'O, Allah!' which is an acknowledgement of Allah to Whom they turn. Why do they turn away from His Law and Worship after acknowledgment? They do it out of arrogance and pride: 'If this be indeed the truth from You, then rain down upon us stones from the skies, or inflict [some other] grievous suffering on us!') (*al-Anfal*: 32) Was it not more appropriate for them to contemplate the truth and say, 'If this be the truth from you, guide us to it?'

It should be noted that they did not refer the truth to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying, 'O, Allah! If this be the truth from Muhammad', rather, what was said was the following: 'O, Allah! If this be the truth from you.' They opposed Allah's command and anticipated punishment, being the worst example of arrogance and stubborn disbelief. In response, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them: '[so] it is to Him that you are giving the lie! Not in my power is that which [in your ignorance] you so hastily demand.' (*al-An'am*: 57) The word *isti'jal* (hastily demanded) refers to matters that are urgently and quickly requested. It is derived from *Al-'ajalah* (haste) which signifies actions done too quickly to attain a certain objective before its due time. As long as they seek for punishment to be hastened, then it will come to them, but it will come at the time that Allah *the Exalted* decides. Simply, everything in the universe only occurs when Allah so wills: 'Not in my power is that which [in your ignorance] you so hastily demand. Judgment rests with none but Allah. He shall declare the truth, since it is He who is the best judge between truth and falsehood' (*al-An'am*: 57).

Indeed, the judgment rests with none except Allah Who can, as He wills, either send down punishment against them in this world as certain people from the past suffered or delay it for a specific time or for the Hereafter, and none can change His Will. It is a sign of Divine Wisdom that He keeps those who oppose the way of faith in order to be indicative of the truthfulness of faith. We must understand that the evil taking place in the universe is not outside or against Allah's Will. The Lord *the Most High* created mankind, gave them freedom of choice and allowed them to make their own choices, whether they are good or evil. Therefore, nothing happens in the universe against Divine Will. He *the Almighty* is the Creator of human freedom. If He so willed, no one would do any evil in the universe. O believer, contemplating the Divine Philosophy of supporting truth and certainty reveals that the continuance of evil and disbelief supports the certitude of faith, but how? In response, presume that we live in a world devoid of evils, there would be no victims. If there are no victims, there would be no encouragement to do goodness. This is why you find that the spirit of faith becomes stronger when Islam is disturbed by enemies for it wakes up the human souls. If the harmful effects of evils do not exist, mankind would not mobilise for goodness.

Likewise, disbelief may be a way to certain faith when mankind see the evil tyranny and corruption of disbelievers in the earth. When this happens, people become armed with certainty and fortified with faith to win protection from many evils. In conclusion, the existence of evil and disbelief turns to be a means to certain faith: 'Judgment rests with none but Allah. He shall declare the truth, since it is He Who is the best judge between truth and falsehood' (*al-An'am*: 57).

Yes, the judgment rests with none but Allah; He *the Exalted* judges all situations fairly and impartially, for He is All-Sufficient and free from needing anyone or anything. He created the universe, so He is independent of it. He has all Attributes of Perfection, and the creation adds nothing to Him. He only created the universe for the benefit of the creation. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* informs us:

قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّ عِنْدِي مَا سْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَفُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ
بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

Say, 'If what you seek to hasten were within my power, the matter would be settled between you and me, but God knows best who does wrong' [58] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 58)

This is a message from the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to the whole creation that the events of the universe occur only in conjunction with the Divine Will of the Creator at fixed times that only He knows. O, Prophet, tell them that if it was within my power and capacity, then the punishment that you so hastily demand would come and destroy you swiftly out of my anger for my Lord and wrath upon you, as you deny Him. However, the matter is not for me to decide; it only belongs to Allah, the Wise Who knows what oppressors deserve. In another context, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If We defer their suffering until a time-limit set [by Us], they are sure to say, "What is preventing it [from coming now]?" Oh, verily, on the Day when it befalls them there will be nothing to avert it from them; and they shall be overwhelmed by the very thing which they were wont to deride' (*Hud*: 8). It is Divine Wisdom that decreed to delay punishment until a certain time as

Divinely determined. In turn, this wisdom allowed disbelievers to daringly violate Divine Laws and grow worse and worse in their disbelief to the point of saying, 'What is withholding the punishment from us?' Indeed, they do it as a way of mockery and do not know that punishment will inevitably come when they will have no escape from it. Allah is truthful in both His promises and His threats. Punishment will come to them because of their mockery, and there will be no refuge or way out for them.

In another context, the Lord *the Exalted* says: 'They challenge you to hasten the punishment. Indeed, had not a term been set [for it by Allah], that punishment will most certainly come upon them of a sudden, and they will be taken unawares! They challenge you to hasten the punishment. Hell will encompass all those who deny the truth on the Day when punishment overwhelms them from above and from below their very feet, and they will be told, 'Now taste the punishment for what you used to do.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 53-55)

In this verse, we see disbelievers, challenging Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring them punishment, but it only occurs following Divine Will, and it will inevitably take them by surprise. It will inundate them from above and from below when they will hear the angel in charge of punishing them saying: 'Taste the punishment that you denied and it is the reward of your actions.'

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says:

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِيحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ
وَرَقَةٍ إِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِي ظِلْمَتٍ الْأَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَلَا يَأْسٍ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٩﴾

He has the keys to the unseen: no one knows them but Him. He knows all that is in the land and sea. No leaf falls without His knowledge, nor is there a single grain in the darkness of the earth, or anything, fresh or withered, that is not written in a clear Record [59] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 59)

The *mafatih* is the plural of either *miftah* or *maftah*. The former refers to the instrument used for unlocking, i.e. the key. The latter refers to a safe to be unlocked. According to the meaning of the former, it means that Allah *the Almighty*

has the keys to the unseen, whereas the latter implies that Allah has the safe of the unseen. Both meanings are timeless—unlimited by time, and the safe refers to a repository for storing valuables for their due times; each safe has a lock and key. The True Lord *the Most High* says about Qarun (Korah): ‘Behold, Korah was one of the people of Musa (Moses), but he oppressed them. We had given him such treasures that even their keys would have weighed down a whole company of strong men. His people said to him, "Do not gloat, for Allah does not like people who gloat."' (*al-Qasas*: 76)

Evidently, only treasures are hoarded and kept in locked safes. Allah *the Most High* has the keys of the unseen. The unseen refers to everything that is hidden from you. It has two types: first, a matter hidden from you but known to someone else, and this is not absolutely, but relatively unseen. For example, when a pickpocket steals your wallet while you are on the street, and you do not know where your money is, it is the thief who knows exactly where your money is. This is a relative form of the unseen since it unknown to some and known to others. However, there is the special unseen that you and others do not know, for it has certain physical means, which if followed, man will win the knowledge of this unseen. Scientific discoveries that bring out their secrets when scientists take the means that Allah has placed in the universe are types of relative unseen. There is also the absolute unseen which no one knows but Allah, such as the exact time of the Last Day and other eschatological issues known only to Allah. This is why we say that the only Knower of the Unseen is Allah Who has the keys of the unseen. This unseen occurs beyond human senses and has no physical means to discover.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘He has the keys to the unseen. No one knows them but Him. He knows all that is in the land and sea. No leaf falls but He knows it, nor is there a single grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything, living or dead, but it is written in a clear Record.’ (*al-An‘am*: 59) It is out of His kindness towards His creation that He explains to them matters falling outside their perception through other perceptible matters. There is the visible world that is heard, seen, tasted, or touched, and there is the world of the unseen. Therefore, Allah chooses some servants to receive gifts from His Graces and Bounties to explain these matters. For example, the righteous slave who was

the travelling companion of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said: 'And I did not do [any of] this of my own accord. This is the real meaning of all [those events] that You were unable to bear with patience.' (*al-Kahf*: 82)

A gift like this proves that the one who receives it, has a relationship with his Lord. The True Lord *the Most High* does not give these gifts so that they become a part of a person's nature or his job, whereby we refer to him in every matter to inform us of what to do. This is not the case. They are simply pure gifts that He *the Exalted* grants; He distributes or withholds them. He has the keys of the unseen, and He reveals some to us through the visible world.

'He knows all that is in the land and sea' (*al-An'am*: 59). Allah *the Almighty* mentions land before sea, for land with all of its contents of inanimate objects, plants, trees, animals, mankind, towns, and roads are perceived by all human beings. Conversely, some countries are landlocked. This is why Allah *the Most High* mentions land before mentioning the sea, which is possible to see, but the sea world is more hidden than that of land. The sea world takes up a large part of the earth's surface, and every day we discover something new in it. After that, Allah *the Exalted* takes us back to the sea again and says: 'No leaf falls but He knows it...' (*al-An'am*: 59).

Allah *the Most High* explains to us clearly His Omniscience since He knows everything including the things connected to a tree's leaf after it carried out its tasks of photosynthesis, nourishing the tree and ripening the fruits before it falls to the earth. Falling, as we know, is when something material drops. Later, scientists explained that it was the earth's gravitational pull. When a leaf falls from a tree, it has a very lightweight. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who does what He wills in the atmosphere surrounding the area in which it falls as well as the movement of the wind that puts it into motion. Why does the Lord mention the matter of a leaf? This example helps us know that when He concludes the previous verse saying: 'But Allah knows best as to who is doing wrong' (*al-An'am*: 58), it implies that He knows the times in which every leaf moves. It is a sign of His Perfect and All-Encompassing Knowledge.

Clearly, these matters do not result in reward or punishment, so what about the matters that do result in reward and punishment? He certainly

knows and judges them: 'No leaf falls but He knows it, nor is there a single grain in the darkness of the earth' (*al-An'am*: 59). He *the Most High* also knows the seed that is hidden in the depths of the earth and its circumstances. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'nor anything living or dead, but it is written in a clear record' (*al-An'am*: 59) which means that He, indeed, knows the affair of every being in this world since every being in the life of this world is either living or dead. He not only knows that but also has everything written down and recorded. Angels are in charge of this process. When angels find that the movement of the universe continues precisely and exactly in accordance with the written Book, they keep glorifying Allah day and night: 'For unto Him belong all [beings] that are in the heavens and on earth, and those that are with Him are never too proud to worship Him and never grow weary [thereof]. They extol His limitless Glory by night and by day, never flagging [therein].' (*al-Anbiya'*: 19-20) The dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah, and He is the only one worthy of worship. Angels never become arrogant. They tirelessly worship Him and humbly submit to His Will. O slave, you are forced in some situations and free in others, whereas He knows what choices you will make at all times.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says,

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُم بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيهِ
لِيُقَضَىٰ أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

It is He who calls your souls back by night, knowing what you have done by day, then raises you up again in the daytime until your fixed term is fulfilled. It is to Him that you will return in the end, and He will tell you what you have done [60]

(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 60)

We all know that sleep is not an optional process. Sometimes we see someone who suffers distress and fails to sleep. Sleep is a forced process that Allah creates in man to stop human activity after exhausting energy exerted by movement. Sleep is a type of self-inhibition. Why has Allah *the Exalted* made sleep similar to death? Some people understand that death signifies the spirit's departure from the human body. Seemingly, the Lord tells us: 'Beware

of thinking that the presence of a soul in a body gives life, motion and freedom of movement. No, it is I Who preserves the soul in the body, and I have not given man any choice concerning these actions.' Therefore, do not become infatuated by the soul; there are apparatuses that you have no control over, such as heartbeats, breathing and other physical activities of human bodies. Allah gave us the example of the People of the Cave whom He caused to sleep for three hundred and nine years: '... and [some people assert], "they remained in their cave three hundred years" and some have added nine [to that number].' (*al-Kahf*: 25)

To sum up, sleep is a Divine Blessing that Allah places in creation itself. For this reason, if you want to sleep, it is not within your capability; rather, it is controlled by Allah's Will. It is said that sleep is a guest: if you request it, it troubles you, i.e. it makes you tired, but if it requests you, it brings you ease. Sleep comes to the tired person even on pebbles, while it may not visit a person lying on a bed of silk. Allah *the Most High* says: 'And among His wonders is your sleep, at night or in daytime, as well as your [ability to go about in] quest of some of His bounties. In this, behold, there are messages indeed for people who [are willing to] listen!' (*ar-Rum*: 32) Sleep is a perfect sign itself. It does not only come at night, but also during daytime. Some jobs must be done at night. Night workers must sleep during the daytime. Allah causes us to be like the dead at night, and He knows what work we have done during the daytime. Then, He allows us to live until an appointed time only known to Him. He will resurrect us on the Day of Resurrection to show us the outcome of our deeds. Allah refers to sleep as death and calls waking up 'resurrection'. Simply put, people have no choice regarding their movements in both death and sleep.

When he declared his mission openly after three years of calling to faith secretly, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Indeed I am warning you of a severe imminent punishment. You will certainly die just as you sleep, and you will be resurrected just as you wake up. For the good deeds, you will be rewarded with good and for evil there is punishment. Eventually, it is either everlasting Paradise or everlasting Hellfire.' Ibn 'Abbas, Allah *be pleased with him* and his father, said: 'The Prophet (*peace and blessings be upon him*)

climbed Mount Safa one day and called out to the Meccans in a loud voice, "O, Community of Quraysh, come and gather here, I have important news for you!" The tribal fellows of Quraysh gathered around him and said, "What happened?" He responded, "If I were to tell you there were enemy horsemen on the other side of this mount who were about to attack you in the morning or towards the evening, would you believe me?" They said, "Yes, indeed." He said, "Then, I warn you against a severe punishment ahead." Abu Lahab said, "Woe to you! Is this why you gathered us?" Allah then revealed: "Doomed are the hands of Abu Lahab" (*al-Masad*: 1).⁽¹⁾

During sleep, human consciousness is lost, or human conscious soul leaves the body by the Will of Allah. Therefore, man sleeps, but when Allah takes the soul and keeps it, death follows. This is why we must understand that sleep and waking up have their laws and so does death. Every law has its principles. Thus, the law of being awake is not like the law of sleep, and that of sleep is not like that of death.

Furthermore, the law of resurrection is not like the law of death. Thus, awakening, sleep, death, and resurrection exist independently. It would be wrong to take the law of one state and apply it to another state. Allah gives us a clear example regarding ourselves; when someone is awake, the spirit has control over human voluntary movement. When one sleeps, their voluntary movement is incapacitated, but the vital activity continues. When one sleeps, he may see dreams and visions in which he sees someone dressed in certain colourful clothes, so how can he perceive these colours while his eyes are closed? Simply, there are means of perception besides eyes.

Likewise, we feel the passage of time while awake, but during sleep one may see a dream in seven seconds and talks about it half an hour. Two people may share the same bed yet one meets friends and beloved ones, eating, drinking, and rejoicing, while the other meets enemies and experiences suffering and fight. Thus, the time is different, and so is the company. Evidently, the law of sleep differs from the law of wakefulness, and the law of death differs

(1) *Al-Bukhari, Sahih; At-Tirmidhi, Sunan. Book: At-Tafsir; Al-Bayhaqi, Ad-Dala'il; Ahmad, Musnad; At-Tabari*

from the law of life: 'He it is Who causes you to be [like] dead at night, and knows what you work in daytime; and He brings you back to life each day in order that a term set [by Him] be fulfilled. In the end, unto Him you must return. Then, He will make you understand all that you were doing [in life].' (*al-An'am*: 60) In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us of all human states: wakefulness and work, sleep and death, and resurrection. Each state has its laws. We only know the laws of wakefulness and sleep since we consciously experience them. For the law of death, we compare it to them, and accordingly, we also believe in the law of resurrection. Allah *Glorified is He* then says,

وَهُوَ الْغَافِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ
أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفَرِّطُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

He is the Supreme Master over His subjects. He sends out recorders to watch over you until, when death overtakes any of you, those sent by Us take his soul – they never fail in their duty[61] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 61)

Al-Qahir (one who is supreme) refers to the One Who dominates through His tremendous supreme power. One may say, 'As long as the True Lord. *The Most High* is *Al-Qahir*, then how can the disbeliever disbelieve or the sinner sin?' In reply, they do so since Allah *the Exalted* has given them free will to believe or disbelieve and to obey or disobey. However, as a sign of His Supreme Power, Allah *the Almighty* decrees various inevitable events and situations to take place beyond everyone's abilities. Not one who rebels against Allah dares to save himself from sickness or death. Rebels and disbelievers choose since Allah has endowed man with free will, but He is the One Who decides birth and death, and man has no say regarding them. Likewise, He *the Almighty* has the absolute control over the matters of wealth and poverty, and deniers cannot escape afflictions even though they deny the Divine Way. To put it simply, disobedience and rebellion fall within the capabilities created by Allah in man: 'And He is Supreme over His servants. And He sends forth heavenly forces to watch over you until, when death approaches any of you, Our messengers cause him to die, and they do not overlook [anyone].' (*al-An'am*: 61)

When Allah *the Exalted* talks about Himself, He may use the first person pronoun, such as: ‘Verily, I – I alone – am Allah.’ (*Ta Ha*: 14) He also uses the majestic plural: ‘Indeed it is We Who has sent down the Reminder [the Quran], and indeed it is We Who will preserve it.’ (*al-Hijr*: 9) Allah also talks about His Essence using the third person pronoun, such as in the verse in question: ‘And He is Supreme over His servants’ (*al-An‘am*: 61). The first person pronoun is evident as the speaker says, I, He addresses others by saying, 'You'. However, the third person pronoun designates a person other than the speaker. When the Lord *the Most High* uses the third person pronoun, He wants to make it clear to us that He is absolutely present and witnessing everything. When He says 'He', it only refers to His Exalted Essence. This is why He says: ‘Say: "He is Allah, the One God"' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1). He *the Exalted* says 'He' before mentioning the reference, which is 'Allah' even though it is normal for the reference to come first. However, He says: ‘Say: "He is Allah, the One God."' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1)

If this pronoun is used, it refers to Himself. When He speaks in the first person pronoun, we see Him speaking about His Essence in the singular form: ‘Verily, I – I alone – am Allah.’ (*Ta Ha*: 14) He also says: ‘Indeed it is We Who have sent down the Reminder [the Quran], and indeed it is We Who will preserve it.’ (*al-Hijr*: 9). Why are there differences? When He talks about His actions, we find that each action requires all His Attributes of Perfection; it requires Knowledge for speech, Power for creation and Wisdom and several other necessary attributes to materialise perfectly. When He says, ‘Indeed, it is We Who have sent down the Reminder [the Quran], and indeed it is We Who will preserve it’ (*al-Hijr*: 9), the act of ‘sending down’ requires various attributes. Thus, the plural *majestatis* must be used; all Attributes of Perfection are manifested in sending down. However, if He talks about His Essence in the context of Monotheism, He never uses the plural pronoun since He wants to exclude all traces of plurality from His Essence. He is the One Who has no partner. When He talks about His Essence, He says: ‘Verily, I – I alone – am Allah.’ (*Ta Ha*: 14)

When He talks about the reminder, He says: ‘Indeed it is we who have sent down the Reminder [the Quran], and indeed it is We Who will preserve

it.' (*al-Hijr*: 9). Thus, in the context of exaltation and sending down, which entails a number of His Attributes, He uses the plural pronoun; however, when presenting the Oneness of God to exclude all notions of polytheism, He uses the singular pronoun. In this verse, He *the Exalted* says: 'And He is Supreme over His servants...' (*al-An'am*: 61). Upon hearing the word *Al-Qahir*, it implies the controller and those who subject to control, or *Al-Maqhur*. Since there are two realms of *Al-Qahir* and *Al-Maqhur*, we have two measures and two domains. Truly, Allah is *Al-Qahir*, but what are the manifestations of this attribute? Actually, everything in the universe is held under God's Omnipotence and Power. He creates and ends creation, gives wealth and poverty and grants health and afflicts sickness.

Everything in the existence is under His Control, even the soul that He makes is a source of human perception and power. He is supreme over it. If a man kills another by hitting a vital human organ, life comes to an end, and the remaining parts of body fails, and then the soul is drawn out. Clearly, it is the soul that controls the body. However, whoever destroys the structure within which the soul resides, forces it to leave the body. Sometimes, He destroys the body by taking its soul without affecting the body with any affliction or malady, and then it turns into decayed bones. To sum up, He holds irresistible Power over souls and bodies, and nothing in existence can confront or resist His Power. 'And He is Supreme over His servants...' (*al-An'am*: 61).

Al-Qahir also signifies the One Who governs by means of his comprehensive power over others, or *Al-Maqhur*. Look at any set of opposites in life, and you find that it is subjected to the attribute of *Qahr*, or the Divine Irresistible Power.

'And He is Supreme over His servants' (*al-An'am*: 61). The word *fawqa* (over), necessitates a place but one with limits. Since having supremacy over others requires power; does it mean that the fully Capable must be in a high place? The answer is 'certainly, He must not'. For example, someone who places a bomb under a high building destroys it from beneath; it requires no high place. Thus, *fawqa* implies dominance and mastery. When we talk about the True Lord, bear in mind the rule that 'There is nothing like unto Him' (*ash-Shura*: 11) for His Essence is not like any other essence, and His

Attributes are not like any other attributes. The same holds true for His actions. His actions become true, or into being, following His saying 'Be!' So, the Supreme Power in His statement: 'And He is Supreme over His servants...' (*al-An'am*: 61) refers to Divine Dominance. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then says, 'Our Lord descends to the lowest sky every night in the last ten days of *Ramadan*.' In which night does He descend? Is it the night befitting your place or the place of someone else in the other side of the world? Sunsets and sunrises successively follow one another around the different parts of the world, and every minute night begins and daybreak starts. This is how we know that Allah is with you and, meanwhile, with all others as well. His hand is stretched out to you and to others as well: 'Nay, but wide are His hands stretched out' (*al-Ma'ida*: 64).

When the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'Indeed, Allah stretches His hand out at night to receive repentance for the evil actions of the day, and He stretches His hand out in the day to receive repentance for the evil actions of the night until the sun rises from the place it sets,'⁽¹⁾ do not understand to mean that it refers to a specific night or day. Simply put it as: Divine Forgiveness is always there during all times and at all places, and there is nothing like unto Him. 'And He is Supreme over His servants...' (*al-An'am*: 61).

In this verse, the word '*Ibadihi*' means His slaves (singular '*abd*', or a servant/slave). The Arabic plural is either '*abeed*' or '*ibad*' (slaves/servants). The '*ibad*' are those over whom Allah is supreme, or in other words, they have no choice, and they submit to His ruling for which they do not have a choice. It is plainly clear that man is forced in some matters and has no say in them, e.g. breathing and heartbeats. Likewise, man has no say regarding the work of the stomach, intestines, ureters, kidneys, etc. In this aspect, believers and disbelievers are alike. It is Allah's Mercy that willed these matters to work beyond our powers and choices. If we did have a say in them, we would have to ask, 'How do we regulate the process of breathing while we sleep?'

It is Divine Mercy that He denies us any choice in some matters that affect our lives. Who can say to his stomach, 'Have you not digested the food

(1) Narrated by Ahmad and Muslim from Abu Musa in (*At-Tawba*)... It is also narrated by An-Nasa'i in *At-Tafsir*.

yet?' Who can command a kidney to function? In these matters, man submits to Allah and has no choice. As for areas where man does have a choice, the scope of legal responsibility exists. Therefore, the Divine Law does not impose or prohibit anything unless man is able to undertake it. So, only matters that fall within human freedom and ability constitute the area of legal responsibility.

Whoever obeys the Lord in the area of legal responsibility submits to the law and admits himself to the category of *'Ibad*, or those who renounce their choices and wholeheartedly submit to Divine Laws. They say, 'O, Lord! We will not do except what Your Law wants us to do.' All of them carry out Allah's Ruling in that which they have a choice but not to carry out. Unlike the *'Ibad*, the *'Abid* rebel against legal responsibility. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* guides us: 'Say: 'O, you servants of mine who have transgressed against your own selves! Despair not of Allah's Mercy. Behold, Allah forgives all sins.' (*az-Zumar*: 53). Allah clarifies the characteristics of His *'Ibad* saying: 'For, [true] servants of the Most Gracious are [only] they who walk gently on earth, and who, whenever the foolish address them, reply with [words of] peace' (*al-Furqan*: 63). These *'Ibad* renounce their choices and accept the Divine Commands in obedience to Allah. In matters in which they have no choice, they are like the rest of the living. The entire creation are *'Abid* in areas which they have no choice, but only believers are *'Ibad* of Allah, as well.

However, there is a Quranic verse that stirs up debates over this meaning. The Lord talks about the events of the Hereafter saying: 'Was it you who led these creation (*'Ibadi*) astray.' (*al-Furqan*: 17) In this verse, the word *'Ibad* refers to those who have gone astray because the reason for this is that in the Hereafter everyone and everything is His *'Ibad*. No one has any choice there, but in this world, it is only believers who are the *'Ibad*, whereas disbelievers are *'Abeed* since they disobey when they possess the choice.

'And He is Supreme over His servants. And He sends forth heavenly forces to watch over you' (*al-An'am*: 61). In addition to dominating the world, Allah sends heavenly forces. If being supreme (*Qahr*) means dominance, mastery, control, and power, then He is All-Dominant over His slaves, and He also sends heavenly forces to watch over them. He also says: 'He has hosts of helpers – both such as can be perceived by him and such as are hidden from

him – that could preserve him...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 11). This is how Allah is supreme over us, and it is for our benefit. When a weak person is under the power of a tyrant, he may say, 'Allah is the All-Dominant, the Sublime.' There is a reminder in this for the one who possesses relative power that there is the All-Dominant Lord over all living beings. For this reason, a strong person retrains their dominance and refrains from sins to avoid punishment.

It is a manifestation of Divine Mercy that 'He sends forth *hafazhah* to watch over you' (*al-An'am*: 61). *Hafazhah* (heavenly forces/keepers) may also record the speech of people: 'not even a word can he utter but there is a watcher with him, ever-present' (*Qaf*: 18). These angels who watch and are always present are also *Hafazhah*. They are the noble scribes who observe and keep count of and record human deeds.

Whenever science advances, it gives us better understandings of the hidden meanings even if the Quran and Sunnah are the only reliable evidence for eschatological issues. Therefore, we believe that angels record our deeds as the Lord said in submission to the statement of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Who believe in [the existence of] that which is beyond the reach of human perception' (*al-Baqara*: 3). To put it simply, if faith relies only on visible things, there would be no difference between people? Rather, faith, in its perfect sense, is the belief in the unseen. When Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Not even a word can he utter but there is a watcher with him, ever-present' (*Qaf*: 18), He informs us about angels that write down good deeds and bad deeds. When we look at human beings, we find them different; some exceed others in attributes and capabilities. As time progresses, man knows more of the Divine secrets, and then achieves better spiritual progress.

In the past, huge recording devices first appeared, and advancements followed, along with their size being reduced. As this industrial process progressed, the machine became smaller insomuch that they made recording devices that were the sizes of watches, ring stones and even small grains, which may be scattered in any place for the purpose of espionage by recording the secrets of gatherings and meetings. Whenever the power of a manufacturer develops, it grows more delicate and finer. Now compare these manufactured devices to the creative powers of Allah? If a human

being can produce an invisible recording device, even though the human power, skills and wisdom are limited, and when the Lord says: 'Indeed there are angels that you will never see but they calculate your deeds', accept and believe in it. He *the Most High* also says: 'noble, recording [angels]' (*al-Infitar*: 11). In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And He sends forth heavenly forces to watch over you until, when death approaches any of you' (*al-An'am*: 61). In their definition of death, the scholars said, 'Death is the cessation of all life processes. Your lifetime depends on the time you spend before death reaches you. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'until, when death approaches any of you' (*al-An'am*: 61). He simply says that death will approach all of us without specifying its time, place, cause, or means. This kind of vagueness clearly implies a wonderful lesson—we must be ready to meet death at any given time, place and possible mean.

It is no surprise that it could happen at any age. Allah *the Exalted* keeps its time unknown for greater benefits. Now, if He *the Most High* were to inform us of its determined time, place, year, or cause, man will wait for it. However, the True Lord decreed it to be obscure to keep humans on guard for it as a most profound admonition. It draws humans' attention and prompts them to anticipate death at every moment and at every place, expecting by any cause. In this way, death stands clearly in front of all human beings. This is why we are scared of committing any sin lest our soul be taken while we are engaged in it. You do not like to meet Allah in a state of disobedience. When the call to prayer for *Zhuhr*, or noontime prayer, is called and you do not perform it, you may say, 'Its time is extended', and you may find someone who will tell you, 'Guarantee me that you will be alive when the time for *Zhuhr* ends.'

'Abdullah Ibn Masud Allah *be pleased with him* asked the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Which action is best?' He said, 'Praying on time.' 'Abdullah Ibn Masud Allah *be pleased with him* asked, 'Then what?' The Prophet said, 'Gratitude and benevolence to one's parents.' He asked, 'then what?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Striving in battle (*jihad*) for the sake of Allah.'⁽¹⁾ You certainly cannot guarantee that you will

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

live until the end of a given prayer time. Then, believe the fact that obscurities are most profound in effects and clarification. Some people may ask, 'And why has Allah not made this clear to us?' I always say that, indeed, Allah has clarified what He has made obscure since keeping a thing hidden to expect it all times is more profound than specifying its time, place or cause. Have we not seen someone going to a doctor for treatment, but what happened is that death occurred and the doctor proved the cause of his death? We have definitely seen that. This person sought help from the means, but this very means does not prevent Allah from implementing His Decree. Shawqi *Allah's Mercy be upon him* said:

Like a lion, death is inevitably lethal,
 Whether you face it early or at old age
 When it overlooks you, then every medicine is beneficial
 But when vigilant medicine can but help it.

Doctors may make a mistake with an injection bringing life to an end. We usually say that a doctor's mistake is a Divine Decree coming into effect. An affirmation of this fact, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Until, when death approaches any of you, our messengers cause him to die...' (*al-An'am*: 61). The Quranic word *tawaffahu* (cause to die) takes three forms:

- The first form is *yatawaffa* (Allah causes you to die). It occurs in Allah's statement: 'It is Allah [alone that has this power – He] who causes all human beings to die at the time of their [bodily] death' (*az-Zumar*: 42).
- The second is *yatawaffakum* (the angel of death causes you to die). Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Say: The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die' (*as-Sajda*: 11).
- The third form is *tawaffathu* (they caused him to die). Allah *the Most High* also says: '...Our messengers cause him/her to die...' (*al-An'am*: 61).

Sometimes Allah directly causes death to occur, while at other times, the angel of death or His messengers are in charge of this mission. The

messengers of death obey the command of the angel of death. Finally, no one causes death without permission from Allah. Taking souls and holding them is a Divine Command. The angel of death is just a means, and his messengers are executors. 'Our messengers cause him to die: and they do not overlook [anyone]' (*al-An'am*: 61).

However, how can overlooking appear? Two things are put forth in this verse: heavenly forces that watch over and observe human behaviour and deeds. They also take the soul. These angels do not overlook anything in their missions. When we look at the root letters 'f - r - t', we find that they have two forms: *farrata* and *afrata*. It is amazing that the same letters convey two opposite meanings. For *farrata*, it means 'to pay little or no attention', while *afrata* is 'to do something excessively beyond the moderate and acceptable limits'.

That is why Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse of the Quran: '... and when [the end of] their term approaches, they can neither delay it by a single moment, nor can they hasten it.' (*al-A'raf*: 34) He *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

ثُمَّ رُدُّوْا۟ اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰهُمْ اَلْحَقُّ اَلَا لَهٗ الْحٰكَمُ وَهُوَ اَسْرَعُ الْحٰسِبِیْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾

**Then they will all be returned to God, their true Lord. The
Judgment truly belongs to Him, and He is the swiftest of
reckoners [62] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 62)**

Here is a very important point, which is that the Arabic phrase *Ruddu* (they will all be returned) clearly indicates that people had previously met Him, which is why they will all be then returned to Him, but how could this happen? The answer to this question is quite clear in the fact that He *Glorified is He* is the One Who created people in the very beginning out of nothing, and then they will all be returned to Him to be held accountable for their deeds. This point is proved by another verse of the Quran in which He *the Almighty* says: 'From it we created you and into it We shall send you back...' (*Ta Ha*: 55).

The Arabic word *Mawla* is translated in this verse as 'the True Lord' since it means that there is someone who is close to you, and thus he might help and support you during times of distress. Therefore, we find that the word *Mawla* has been used to give the meanings of 'someone who is close to you',

‘someone who supports you at hard times’ or ‘someone to whom you turn at times of hardships’. It is important here to understand that you might have a *Mawla* from among human beings, yet he might not give you support for some reason or another. In addition, you might be afflicted with a disaster, which is beyond his capacity, and so he is unable to help you. In the same respect, you might have a *Mawla* whom you implore and ask for help, yet he rejects to help you since he might have a strong relationship with your enemy, a relationship that might even be stronger than yours with him, and thus he supports your enemy instead of you, although he might deceive you by telling that he has your back.

We may experience all of the aforementioned situations in this worldly life, but in the Hereafter there is only One True *Mawla* (Lord), i.e. Allah *Glorified is He*. Thus, we should know that there is a further possible explanation for the word *Mawla* which is ‘the master who frees his slave’. If we yet understand this particular part of the verse under discussion in the light of this meaning, we will find that saving us from the fire clearly indicates the truest meaning of Lordship. That is to say that Allah *the Almighty* is the True Lord Whose Power cannot be challenged or defeated; He *Glorified is He* unlike His creation, does not change.

At this point, we should take into account that when Allah asks you to make use of your intellect, He does so because He wants you to benefit. In this regard, we find that if you rely on an immortal human being to give you help and support, he might not do so for you for some reason or another, which is why He *Glorified is He* the Ever-Living, asks you to depend only upon Him since He will never leave you alone.

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Then they will all be returned to Allah, their true Lord. The Judgment truly belongs to Him ...’ (*al-An‘am*: 62). This raises a good question, which is ‘Why does He *the Almighty* use the word "judgment" in this context?’ It is due to the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* might entrust some human beings in this worldly life with making judgments in particular fields, which is why we find some people issuing rules or giving verdicts, etc. Yet, the matter is totally different in the Hereafter, for there will be none to judge except Allah *Glorified is He* a point which is quite clear in the Quran

where Allah says: 'To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all).' (*Ghafir*: 16)

In other words, you, in this worldly life, might have the ability to provide your children with sustenance. Also, you might have the ability to issue an order for the promotion of your employee to a higher rank. In the same respect, you might have the ability to sew clothes for others. This is to say that we, in this worldly life, have the ability to affect one another in one way or another. However, this matter is totally different in the Hereafter when Allah *the Exalted* is the One Who has absolute, sole sovereignty.

The Arabic particle *ala* may be translated as 'oh'; it is used to draw the attention of the listener to an important thing mentioned after it, but what is the wisdom of using such a particle in this context? It is because the topic mentioned after it is of great importance. We know for certain that speech goes to and fro between a speaker and a listener. As for the speaker, he transfers his ideas, thoughts and desires to the listener. Yet, before he utters a word, he carefully reflects on the matter and thus decides to say it or not. That is to say that the speaker, before saying what he wants, has to reflect and examine the main idea of the topic he wishes to convey to others. The listener, on the other hand, does not know about what the speaker is going to talk. This is why when one wants to convey a very important topic; he tries his best to attract the full attention of a speaker, to ensure that he misses nothing of his speech. In doing so, one may use the particle *ala*. It is thus clear that this particular particle is used in this context to attract the attention of people to what Allah is going to say after that.

Judgment is to decide on two matters, yet we should take into account the undeniable fact that it must be made fairly and justly. Unfortunately, we may find that some judges, driven by their whims, pass unfair judgments. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point. We use two-container scales to determine the exact weight of a particular item. In doing so, the two containers of the scales must be equal to each other. In this case, we are able to establish equivalence. This is known as 'achieving balance,' which means we take a neutral position.

In the same respect, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'The judgment truly belongs to Him ...' (*al-An'am*: 62) indicates plainly that Allah *the Almighty*

will judge all people starting with Adam *peace be upon him* to the last human being born. Therefore, we should stress the fact that even though some of us have committed injustices against each other, Allah *Glorified is He* will judge us all in no time. Concerning this point, 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* was asked by some people, 'How will Allah judge the entire mankind at the same time?' He replied, 'Just as He provides for them all at the same time.' This matter is a very easy one for Allah *Glorified is He*. A long time ago, we used to illuminate the streets by lighting lamps here and there, and the stoker used to add fuel to each lamp alone. Yet, when mankind managed to produce electricity, they used it to illuminate the streets with the click of a button.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

قُلْ مَنْ يُنَجِّيكُمْ مِنْ ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُونَهُ تَضَرُّعًا
وَحُفْيَةً لَئِنْ أَجَبْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾

Say [Prophet], 'Who is it that saves you from the dark depths of land and sea when you humbly and secretly call to Him [and say], "If He rescues us from this, We shall truly be thankful"?' [63] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 63)

It is troublesome for the creation when darkness comes to produce light or when light comes to produce darkness. This is due to the fact that each of these two, darkness and light, has a particular role to perform in this life. This point is clearly mentioned in the first verse of this chapter under discussion in which Allah says: '[All] praise is [due] to Allah, who created the heavens and the earth and made the darkness and the light.' (*al-An'am*: 1) Concerning the aforementioned verse, some people mistakenly think that Allah *the Almighty* should have given precedence to the mention of 'light' over 'darkness'. Yet, if we carefully reflect on this matter, we will reach the correct conclusion that the roles to be performed by these two items are of equal importance to each other. But what is that important role to be performed by darkness? We all know for certain that 'light' enables us to walk in the slopes of the earth and to perform our due roles in this life, an act which cannot be fulfilled without energy. Therefore, we stress that we cannot get energy without rest, relaxation,

and tranquillity, all of which cannot be obtained by man except in darkness. It is thus clear that darkness is one of the Blessings Allah *the Almighty* conferred upon mankind. Yet, what causes man to be overtaken by tiredness is to substitute 'light' for 'darkness', or vice versa, for this is viewed as a departure from the due role of each of these two opposites. At this point, we should be fully aware of the fact that Allah *the Almighty* created opposite items in such a way which makes them complementary to each other in every sense. That is to say that they are not antagonistic whatsoever to each other. This point is yet proven by the Quran in which Allah says: 'Consider the night as it veils [the earth] in darkness, and the day as it rises bright!' (*al-Layl*: 1-2)

In these aforementioned verses, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the night time first and the day time second. As a matter of fact, each of them has a due role to perform, and thus none of them can perform the role of the other. Therefore, we should take into account that we, human beings, cannot perform properly roles which are due in the daytime unless our due roles at nighttime are performed properly. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point more clearly. If there is a man who does not sleep well at night for some reason or another, he will be half-asleep and unable to concentrate, in other words, he will be absent minded.

Therefore, it is clear right now that in order to be able to carry out our daily activities during the daytime, there must be darkness to provide rest and relaxation.

The nighttime and daytime are therefore both blessings, and they are both of equal importance to each other. Yet, we should take into account that they are not against each other, rather, they both complement each other in every sense. The True Lord *Glorified is He* and then says: 'Consider the creation of the male and the female!' (*al-Layl*: 3). He *the Almighty* again mentions another set of opposites, the male and the female. In the same way, we should firmly believe that there is no antagonism whatsoever between the roles to be performed by the male and the female, for He *the Almighty* has created both of them to complement each other. That is to say that in case one of them performs the role of the other, the course of life will not run perfectly. In the same respect, as long as the night has a particular role to perform and so has

the day time, the male has a due role to perform and so has the female. Allah says: 'Consider the night as it veils [the earth] in darkness, and the day as it rises bright! Consider the creation of the male and the female! Verily, [O men,] you aim at most divergent ends!' (*al-Layl*: 1-4)

Back to the chapter *al-An'am*; Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Who is that saves you from the dark depths of land and sea when you humbly and secretly call to Him [and say], "If He rescues us from this, we shall truly be thankful?"' (*al-An'am*: 63)

Darkness, therefore, is the absence of light. Thus, we notice that Allah *the Exalted* does not say that looking for safety is done only in one depth of darkness, rather, it is done in various ones of it. That is to say, we ask Him *the Almighty* to save us from such depths of darkness, which are accumulated over each other. We know that when a depth of darkness is veiled by a second, and this second is yet covered by a third, and so on, it is at that point that we have various depths of darkness one over another.

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...the dark depths of land and sea...', yet if we want to know whether He *the Almighty* intends the corporeal meaning of darkness or the incorporeal one, we should first give the definition of darkness in its corporeal meaning, stressing that it is that which leads to misguidance when looking for the path to safety. This means anything that leads to misguidance, be it corporeal or incorporeal, is judged as a depth of darkness. This is due to the fact that man, in this case, goes through matters without any guidance. In the same respect, events and catastrophes from which man cannot be saved are also considered depths of darkness.

Thus, we should know that Allah *Glorified is He* offers us examples with incorporeal matters so that we are able to correctly understand the corporeal ones. What is meant by the depths of darkness here is the events, catastrophes and calamities that strike man and from which they cannot be saved. We know fully well that man is always keen on benefitting himself, yet their actions, based on the fact that each of them views the essence of benefit from a certain perspective, are contradictory to each other. Let us offer this striking example to illustrate this point more clearly. If we suppose that there is a student who goes to his school early in the morning, pays attention to his

teachers, and then goes home to do his homework, it is clear that this student has thus left the pleasure of laziness to enjoy that of hard work. That is to say that he loves himself and thus wants to do that which will benefit him and his life. On the other hand, we have another student who sleeps most of the day and spends his time in cafés. This student certainly loves himself but in a foolish way since he wants to enjoy immediate pleasures that will be followed by great suffering later. The future of such a lazy student will certainly not be prosperous. Of course, this will not be the case with the hard working student who will have a promising future.

Let us offer another clear example from the countryside to fully clarify this point. If we suppose that there is a farmer who spends his time in the cafe and stays up late, to the extent that he does not till his land or even pay attention to its irrigation and fertilising, it goes without saying that his land will never produce an amount of crop equal to that one produced by this particular land whose owner takes care of its irrigation, fertilisation, etc. Thus, we should stress that Allah *the Almighty* will undoubtedly give abundant provision to the one who makes use of the Divine means given to him by exerting his utmost efforts to achieve his goals. Yet, the case is completely different with the lazy one who neglects his work. If we draw a comparison between these two cases in question, we will find that the latter, i.e. the lazy person has loved him/self in a way that is short-sighted and not smart, while the former, the hard working one, has a deeper love for himself, for he conducts his life in a way that benefits him and others as well.

Indeed, every activity that man engages in is done with the objective of acquiring benefit, but the essence of benefit differs from person to person. At this point, we should stress that an intelligent person is the one who takes into consideration anything that will bring long-term benefits and thus works hard to achieve his goals, a point which is clear in the following poetic verses by Al-Mutanabbi:

I see that each one of us desires life for himself
Vigilant over it, aiming for it with ardent love
The love of the coward for himself is brought about by prudence
The love of the courageous person for himself led him to war

What this poem is saying is that the love of the courageous person for himself makes him eager for the eternal life, so he exerts his utmost efforts to die as a martyr in the cause of Allah. The coward's love for himself, on the other hand, makes him a prisoner of fear because of his inability to leave this non-eternal life. Furthermore, when the coward is struck by a calamity, he, driven by his personal interests, looks for the means of salvation from any given place. In doing so, he may use his own means or those who are close to him in such a situation. Yet, in case no human being is able to give him any help, while he was heedless of Allah, it is for certain that these bad events, afflictions and calamities will guide him back on the Right Path, by reminding him of Allah, the Creator. He thus seeks His Help by supplicating to Him *the Almighty* and beseeching him to save him from such distress. That is to say that he does not sell himself short. However, we should take into account the fact that in case man asks Allah *the Almighty* to save him from a hardship, and he then returns to his disbelief and defiance after his goal has been achieved, he will be viewed as deceiving himself and fall under the following Saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter *al-Isra'*: 'And when harm touches you on the sea, all of those whom you call upon, except Him, are lost to you. But when He brings you safe to land, you turn aside; and man is very ungrateful.' (*al-Isra'*: 67)

We find those who come face to face with horrors, while their means are exhausted, do not lie to themselves. Rather, out of their natural disposition, they turn to Allah *Glorified is He* the Omnipotent, to save them. For example, the moment a ship is struck by strong lightning and storms, to the extent that it is about to go down, we find the entire crew and passengers, excluding no one, seeking the Help of Allah *the Almighty* and saying, 'O Lord, O Lord, O Lord!' Some of the people on the deck of this ship might yet recite some verses of the Quran with the intention of attaining safety. The same applies to the crew and passengers of a plane which is about to crash; we find them all humbly seeking the Help of Allah *the Almighty* to save them.

These two aforementioned examples fully clarify the meaning of the Saying of Allah *Glorified is He* 'And when harm touches you on the sea, all of those whom you call upon, except Him, are lost to you.' (*al-Isra'*: 67) As a matter of fact, man's invocation of his Lord and Protector is undoubtedly viewed as the first and foremost means of achieving certainty. We know fully

well that one in this worldly life undergoes one of two matters, happiness or sadness. Happiness is yet achieved by realising beauty, blessings, rest and contentment. As for sadness which includes anything that displeases man and causes him suffering, he tries hard to get rid of it.

This previously mentioned fact is proved by the natural disposition that Allah *Glorified is He* has placed in man. Truthfully speaking, it is out of this natural disposition that man, upon observing what pleases him, will not find any expression to clearly indicate his praise and glorification of Allah but to say, 'Allah!' The same completely applies when man is at risk, for we will certainly find him saying, 'O Lord!' In other words, he will be saying, 'No refuge is but with Allah.'

Back to the chapter *al-An'am*, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Say [Prophet], "Who is it that saves you from the dark depths of land and sea..."' (*al-An'am*: 63). This question actually indicates the reality that everyone who hears it shall confirm which is Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who saves man from the dark dangers and depths of both land and sea. Therefore, we should take into account the fact that when Allah *the Almighty* commands His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to present this question to disbelievers, He *Glorified is He* knew for certain that they, out of their natural disposition, would answer this question. In other words, they will frankly admit the undeniable fact that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who truly saves them from the dark depths of land and sea. At this point, someone might yet say that this verse under discussion restricts the calamities striking man to those of land and sea, although these days we suffer calamities striking us in the air, as well!

We say, 'We must understand that every air space takes the same ruling of its place which means that air over land is subject to the same ruling as land. Also, air over the sea takes the same ruling as the sea. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point. It is possible for people offering their prayer in the Sacred Mosque to do so on the ground floor which means that they do so while surrounding the main building of the *Ka'ba*. They are also allowed to do so either in the first floor, or the second, or even the third, etc. of the buildings of the Sacred Mosques surrounding the *Ka'ba*, although the height of its main building does not exceed that of the first floor surrounding it. That

is to say that these buildings surrounding the *Ka'ba* are judged sacred by virtue of the fact that they are in its vicinity, which is also sacred.

The same completely applies to going round As-Safa and Al-Marwa; pilgrims are allowed to do so on the ground floor which is between the two main symbols of these two items. They are also allowed to do so, while in the first floor of these two symbols. In other words, the first floor has been judged sacred due to the fact it is pertinent to these sacred symbols. In the past, planes were not allowed to fly over Mecca and Medina. This was due to the fact that pilots at that particular time were not Muslims. In other words, the main reason why planes were not allowed to do so was not to allow non-Muslim pilots to fly over these sacred places. Yet, when Muslims had pilots from among themselves, this prohibition was abolished. Therefore, it is clear that the air has the same ruling of its place, be it land or sea.

He *the Almighty* says: 'Say [Prophet], "Who is it that saves you from the dark depths of land and sea when you humbly and secretly call to Him..."' (*al-An'am*: 63). It is taken for granted that man, out of his natural disposition, invokes Allah *the Almighty*. The Arabic word *Ad-Du'aa* (supplication) means to request something from someone; in other words, any request necessitates the existence of three elements: the one who requests, the thing requested and the one to whom a request is addressed. Basically, we stress that 'request' is a type of command, but we cannot call it as such when it is made by someone of lower rank than the one being asked. As a matter of fact, in such case, we call it an act of supplication.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point. When we ask students to do a grammatical analysis of the following statement 'My Lord, forgive me', we find the students who did not study their lessons very well saying that the word 'forgive' is an imperative verb. Yet, if the same question is given to students who correctly understood their lessons, we will find them, out of their good manners, saying that the word 'forgive' is a verb indicating 'supplication'. At this point, we should stress the following important facts: first, in case a request is made by someone who is of lower rank than the one being asked, it is called a *Du'aa*; yet in case it is made by a person who is of equal rank to the one being asked, it is an 'appeal'; and in case it is made by someone who is of higher rank than the one being asked, then it is an 'order'.

When we look at the psychological state of the one who is struck by calamities and catastrophes, we find him, out of his natural disposition, humbly beseeching Allah *the Almighty* to save him, which is the true meaning of supplication. In this scenario, we stress that 'beseeching Allah humbly' is fulfilled by action and saying. In other words, it is an act which is associated with one's emotions and behaviours.

Wrong are those who think that 'beseeching Allah humbly' can be made in speech only, and without action! Let us illustrate this point more clearly. When you are in a position of power and authority and someone asks you to do him a favour, this person is thus viewed as humbly beseeching, or calling upon, you but in speech only. Yet, in case such a person asks you to do yourself a favour, then this is viewed as humbly beseeching, or calling upon you in both speech and action. When man is at risk, he sincerely beseeches, or calls on His Lord to save him from distress, a point which is proved by the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...when you humbly and secretly call to Him...' (*al-An'am*: 63). We should take into account that the act of 'humbly calling to Allah' can also be fulfilled with the heart. This is due to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* the Creator is the Only One Who knows for certain what is in the hearts. Let us offer an example to clarify this point. A European woman once read the biography of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then she came across the cause of revelation of the Saying of Allah, '...and Allah will protect you from the people...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67). She found out that this saying was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while he was asleep after staying up all night. It is narrated that 'A'isah *Allah be pleased with her* said to Prophet Muhammad, 'Is there not a righteous man to guard us this night?' Upon finishing her question, she *Allah be pleased with her* heard the clank of swords of the two companions Sa'd and Hudhayfa who came to guard him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* thus fell deeply asleep. The archangel Jibril (Gabriel) then came down to him with following saying of Allah, '...and Allah will protect you from the people...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67) whereupon he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to these two Companions who came to guard him, 'O, people, go away, for Allah shall protect me.'

'When this European woman read this narration and fully understood it, she embraced Islam and said, 'If he were deceiving everyone, he would not have deceived himself by doing something that would risk his own life.' As a matter of fact, this woman, out of her discernment, fully realised that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not order guards to leave him unless he was absolutely certain that Allah *the Almighty* would protect him and that He *Glorified is He* is fully Capable of preserving him. Once again, we stress that man at times of hardships humbly and secretly calls to Allah to save him. In addition, we explained that the act of supplication cannot be fulfilled without saying, action and emotions, three pillars shown clearly in the saying of Allah, '...you humbly and secretly call to Him [and say], "If He rescues us from this, we shall truly be thankful"' (*al-An'am*: 63).

The phrase *tad'unahu* (you call to Him) refers to speech, while *tadarr'uan* (humbly) refers to action which means that the act of supplication should include both speech and action. As for the word *Khufya* (secretly), it refers to the humility and fear of the heart, while the phrase *Anjana* (He rescues us from) indicates that the act of 'saving them' which frequently happened. This point is also understood from the saying of Allah, 'Say, "Allah rescues you..."' (*al-An'am*: 64). That is to say He *Glorified is He* does not save them just once, but rather many times. In this respect, He *the Almighty* tells that His rescue of people may be done in several ways. In other words, it may be done either by repeating the act of rescue itself or by rescuing one from various disasters. As for the first case, which is repeating the act of rescue, it is done when there is a single disaster from which Allah saves many people, or when He *Glorified is He* repeatedly rescues only one person from several disasters. Thus, it is clear that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who saves individuals and groups from different calamities. In the Quran, He *Glorified is He* says: 'For [thus it is:] when affliction befalls man, he cries out to Us, whether he be lying on his side or sitting or standing; but as soon as We have freed him of his affliction, he goes on as though he had never invoked Us to save him from the affliction that befell him...!' (*Yunus*: 12)

This aforementioned verse of the chapter of *Yunus* clearly indicates that whenever an affliction befalls man, he identifies his weakness and thus invokes Allah *Glorified is He* to save him from this affliction. As a matter of fact, he does so in whatever state he may be in, whether he be lying on his

side, sitting or even standing. Yet, when Allah answers his call, he forgets His Favour and Blessings upon him as if he did not supplicate to Him *the Almighty* to remove this affliction from him. This point is yet proved by the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in which He says: 'And when harm touches you on the sea, all of those whom you call upon, except Him, are lost to you. But when He brings you safe to land, you turn aside; and man is very ungrateful.' (*al-Isra'*: 67)

In this aforementioned verse of *al-Isra'*, He *the Almighty* reminds the polytheists of Mecca and all the deniers of the Truth that whenever they are afflicted by some harm at sea, they completely forget their idols and all what they used to worship beside Him *Glorified is He* which is a confirmation that polytheists, under this situation, turn to none but Him *the Almighty* to save them from drowning. Yet, He, meanwhile, stresses that after He removes affliction from them, they return to associating other partners with Him in worship and even denying His Blessings and Favours upon them.

The same meaning is also understood from this particular verse under discussion. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Say [Prophet], "Who is that saves you from the dark depths of land and sea when you humbly and secretly call to Him [and say], "If He rescues us from this, we shall truly be thankful?"'" (*al-An'am*: 63)

The verse indicates plainly that polytheists and the deniers of the Truth humbly called to Allah *the Almighty* to save them from the dark dangers and depths of land and sea, confirming that they would be from amongst the grateful, but how did they act after He *the Almighty* saved them? He *Glorified is He* gives the answer in the following verse,

قُلِ اللَّهُ يُنَجِّيكُمْ مِنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Say, 'God rescues you from this and every distress;
yet still you worship others beside Him' [64]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 64)

The verse clearly indicates that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who saves them from the depths of dark in land and sea. Yet, it is at that point that we should take into consideration that He *Glorified is He* out of His Pre-Eternal Knowledge, knows for certain that these polytheists and deniers of the Truth

would return to polytheism after being rescued. This point may be more clearly illustrated in the light of the fact that man, by nature, transgresses when he sees himself from want, a fact which is proved by the Quran. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Nay! Man, indeed, transgresses, Because he thinks himself to be independent.' (*al- 'Alaq*: 6-7)

As a matter of fact, a man of great wealth may overstep his bounds and become arrogant towards those around him, and he may even become so towards His Lord. Therefore, we stress that nothing can protect man from falling prey to arrogance but attaining faith in Allah *the Almighty*. It goes without saying that man will certainly be prone to arrogance as long as he does not follow the Divine Way of Guidance; the matter is completely different as to those who are conscious of Him *the Almighty* in all what He *Glorified is He* provides them. As a matter of fact, it is righteous people who lend a hand to the needy and the poor. In this respect, we should take into consideration that whenever the word 'man' is used in general sense, it is always associated with 'loss'. We can see this point ever so clear in the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'I swear by the time, most surely man is in loss' (*al- 'Asr*: 1-2).

These previously mentioned verses indicate clearly that man will certainly be a loser if his guidance is left to himself. Yet, Allah *the Almighty* excludes those who believe, do good and enjoin truth and patience for each other. He *the Almighty* says: 'I swear by the time, most surely man is in loss, except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience.' (*al- 'Asr*: 1-3)

It is quite clear that a person who is distant from the Divine Way of Guidance will certainly experiencing utter loss. Yet, the one who firmly adheres to His Way of Guidance, he will never experience utter loss. As a matter of fact, when man does not follow the Divine Way of Guidance, he falls under the category of those dispraised in the saying of Allah, '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.' (*az-Zumar*: 49)

This aforementioned verse clearly indicates that in case one, who does not follow the Divine Way of Guidance, is afflicted with harm, and then Allah

removes this harm from him, he will attribute that act of rescue to himself. In addition, when such person is provided with more and more blessings, he does not admit the fact that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who provides him with them, rather, he claims that he has been given everything on account of his knowledge or cleverness. As a matter of fact, such people completely forget that Allah *the Almighty* gives them these blessings as a form of testing them.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ
شِيْعًا وَيُوَيِّقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نَصَرِفُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

Say, 'He has power to send punishment on you from above or from under your very feet, or to divide you into discordant factions and make some taste the violence of others.' See how We explain Our revelation in various ways, so that they may understand [65] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 65)

The Arabic word *Al-Qadir* is translated in this verse as 'He has the power' which means that Allah *the Almighty* is fully capable and that no power, no matter how enormous it may be, can defeat or even challenge His Omnipotent Power. Furthermore, we stress that He *the Almighty* gives respite to oppressors, but then He suddenly strikes them with punishment that might afflict them from above or even from under their feet. What follows is an example of a number of oppressors who were overtaken with Divine Punishment from above. The people of Abraha, the Abyssinian, went to Mecca to destroy the *Ka'ba*, but Allah *the Almighty* sent down upon them flocks of birds that were casting stones of baked clay against them, and so He rendered them like chewed straw. Yet, there is another example of people who were destroyed by a cry, while there were others who were destroyed by a roaring, violent blast.

Let us move now to give examples for some whom punishment struck from under their feet. Qarun and Pharaohs are cases in point. As for Qarun, Allah *the Almighty* made the earth swallow him and his abode up. Pharaoh, on the other hand, was drowned in the sea. It is thus clear that Divine Punishment can afflict people from above and from under their very feet. Furthermore, this can be done either physically or spiritually.

In the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...or to divide you into discordant factions and make some taste the violence of others...’ (*al-An‘am*: 65), the Arabic phrase *Labsu Al-A‘mr* (division) means to confuse the matter in such a way that cannot be understood by people. As for the word *Shya‘an*, it is translated as ‘factions’, and it is the plural of the word *Shi‘a*, which basically refers to those who cooperate on doing something, even if it involves falsehood, and who gather together to achieve one goal. The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...or to divide you into discordant factions...’ thus means that He *the Almighty* might divide them into discordant groups, each of which is led by a certain leader and has its own school of law. In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* will be making them taste the violence of each other.

This raises a good question: ‘Why does Allah *the Almighty* afflict people with all these trials?’ The answer is quite clear in the fact that as long as they deviate from the Divine Way of Guidance, He *the Almighty* leaves them to taste the violence of each other. Furthermore, we should take into account that this act, people’s deviation from the Divine Way of Guidance, never brings about any change in the world or its established laws, for we find the sky in its original state, as well as the earth, the sun, the moon, the rain and the stars; none of them has ever changed in one way or another.

In other words, Allah *the Almighty* leaves people to taste the violence of each other and thus become oppressors for one another when people deviate from the Divine Way of Guidance. That is to say that when we see people complaining about each other, we shall realise that they all are sinful and deviate from the Divine Way of Guidance, which is why they will not feel comfort unless they return to the Way of Allah. We know for certain that the Way of Allah prevents believers from showing off and being arrogant, for they all bow down before Allah *the Almighty* the Only One Who deserves to be worshipped. Confirming this point, we find Allah *the Almighty* commanding us to offer certain acts of worship in congregation so as to keep people of authority from thinking that they are of higher rank than those who are poor.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point. Pilgrimage is a proof to the equality of human beings before Allah *the Almighty*; we see them all wearing the same clothes and going round the *Ka‘aba* in the same way. We find no

difference whatsoever between those of power and authority and those who are poor. In other words, people are all equal to each other, for they all humbly offer their acts of worship to Him *the Almighty* Alone. At this point, we should be fully aware of the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* wants to remove arrogance and conceit from among believers by prescribing such acts of worship, a point which definitively proves that they all are equal to each other.

In the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Say, "He has power to send punishment on you from above or from under your very feet, or to divide you into discordant factions and make some taste the violence of others." See how We explain Our Revelation in various ways, so that they may understand' (*al-An'am*: 65); nowadays, we see how Allah *the Almighty* divides people into discordant factions; we see so-called Muslims (those not heeding the laws of Islam) killing each other year after year. Even if we were to see two believing parties who are fighting against each other, where is the third group that will prevent them from doing so, as mentioned in the saying of Allah, 'And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's command; then if it returns, make peace between them with justice and act equitably. Surely, Allah loves those who act equitably.' (*al-Hujurat*: 9). Unfortunately, we currently watch the blood of so-called Muslims being shed and the number of victims increases day after day. Amazingly enough, other Muslims do nothing to prevent such destruction. Not only that, but we find them also providing opposing parties with weapons to kill each other; a matter that indicates that the *ummah* is under an awful and big disaster. Therefore, let us affirm once again that two forms of truth cannot be in conflict with each other. This is so because one issue does not accept but just one form of truth. In the same respect, a conflict between truth and falsehood will not take along period of time before the latter is defeated since it is always vanishing and fading. Yet, a conflict between two forms of falsehood may take a long period of time before it is settled since none of them deserves the support of Allah *the Almighty*.

The civil war in Lebanon is another case in point. It was due to this civil war that the Lebanese had discordantly divided into factions, all of

which were led by their own whims and desires, thus tasting the violence of each other.

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, '...See how we explain Our Revelation in various ways, so that they may understand.' (*al-An'am*: 65)

This particular part of the verse clearly indicates that Allah *the Almighty* offers them clear proofs and even afflicts them with trials so that they would understand that they would receive no comfort as long as they astray away from the Divine Way of Guidance. As for *Fiqh* (understanding), it means to properly and correctly understand a matter. That is to say that Allah *Glorified is He* sent them down all of these signs and miracles so that they might heed admonition and go back to the Divine Way of Guidance.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَكَذَّبَ بِهِ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ قُلْ لَسْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ

Yet your people still reject it even though it is the truth. Say, 'I have not been put in charge of you [66]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 66)

This raises a very important question: 'What is that thing which is denied by the people of Prophet Muhammad?' The answer is that they rejected the Quran or the Divine Way of Guidance which includes the Quran itself and with all what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent. We know for certain that the Quran is a miracle which contains the general pillars of the Islamic faith. The role of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was, in essence, to explain and lay down detailed rules. In this respect, we say to those who claim that they are not to abide by anything other than what has been mentioned in the Quran, The Quran is a miracle which contains the pillars of the religion. In addition, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to explain and lay down the rules, and so his *Shari'a* is perfect.' Let us offer an example to illustrate this point.

Allah orders us in the Quran to perform prayer, yet we do not know how many prayers nor how many units we are to offer except from the *Sunnah*. In

this regard, he *peace and blessings be upon him* is related to have said, 'Offer your prayers in the same way you saw me offering my prayers.'⁽¹⁾

In addition, he *peace and blessings be upon him* is entrusted by Allah *the Almighty* to lay down rules and legislations. This point is affirmed by the Quran itself in which Allah says: '...Hence, accept [willingly] whatever the Messenger gives you [thereof], and refrain from everything that he forbids...' (*al-Hashr*: 7).

In this respect, we affirm that we offer all our acts of worship including prayer, almsgiving, pilgrimage, etc. in exactly the same way performed by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, we emphasise that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was the first person ever to apply the teachings of the Quran and the *Sunnah*. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect.' (*an-Nahl*: 44) This verse clearly indicates that Allah *the Almighty* has given Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the responsibility to explain and detail to believers what has been mentioned in general in the Quran. Therefore, we should be fully aware of the fact that we are obligated, under the Quran, to show obedience to him *peace and blessings be upon him*. In addition, the Quran tells that being obedient to him *peace and blessings be upon him* is part of showing obedience to Allah *the Almighty*. This is proven by the Quran in which He *Glorified is He* says: 'Say: Obey Allah and the Messenger...' (*Al-'Imran*: 32). In this aforementioned verse of *Al-'Imran*, showing obedience to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is included as part of being obedient to Allah *the Almighty*. Yet, in another verse of the Quran, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Say: Obey Allah and obey the Messenger...' (*an-Nur*: 54), showing separation between the two orders. Still yet a third verse in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and whatever the Apostle gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, abstain from it...' (*al-Hashr*: 7). As a matter of fact, all of these verse tell us to properly understand that the *Sunnah* has explained a number of topics that were generally mentioned, and not specifically explained, in the Quran. In the same respect, we emphasise that

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari*

the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'O you who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you...' (*an-Nisa'*: 59) indicates that the showing obedience to those in authority is not independent, rather, it is included under the realm of obedience to Allah and obedience to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Back to the verse under discussion, Allah says: 'Yet, your people still reject it even though it is the truth. Say, "I have not been put in charge of you."' (*al-An'am*: 66)

It is quite clear that to deny the Existence of Allah, along with the Quran, means to completely deny the Divine Way of Guidance. As a matter of fact, disbelievers and polytheists deny nothing but the Truth, which never ever changes. In our daily life, when an incident takes place, we find that all those who are called to bear witness to what happened narrate the same story since they are telling about something which actually took place. Yet, in the case of some eyewitnesses who did not see the incident, we would find them giving different and contradictory narrations, which is why a prosecutor tries hard to get information from a witness since the truth is destined to be established even after a substantial amount of time. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* gives us a similar example; He *Glorified is He* says: 'He sends down water from the cloud, then watercourses flow (with water) according to their measure, and the torrent bears along the swelling foam, and from what they melt in the fire for the sake of making ornaments or apparatus arises a scum like it. Thus does Allah compare truth and falsehood! Then, as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it stays in the earth. Thus does Allah set forth parables!' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17)

This aforementioned verse of the chapter of *ar-Ra'd* tells that rainwater falls from the sky by the permission of Allah *the Almighty*. It is by this water that the lives of animals, plants, and man are preserved. The verse also tells that every valley takes the amount of water that suffices it. Yet, when this water flows down in these valleys, it is accompanied by bits of dirt that rise to its surface, exactly as the bits of dirt (dross) rise to the surface of gold when it is melted. Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* assures us in this verse that falsehood is groundless, drawing a similarity between it and the useless scum that rises

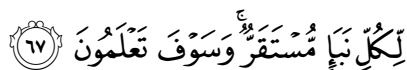
to the surface of water. In the same respect, He *the Almighty* plainly tells us that He *Glorified is He* kept in the earth what is beneficial for people. Therefore, it is clear that denying the Truth, the Quran, and the Divine Way of Guidance by anyone is nothing but falsehood. As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he has not been put in charge of those who deny the Truth. In other words, his mission, first and foremost, was only to deliver the Divine Message to them. Thus, we stress that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who has the Right to hold people accountable for their deeds, by rewarding the doers of good and punishing the doers of evil.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Yet your people still reject it even though it is the truth' (*al-An'am*: 66), the words 'your people' implies a sharp and stern rebuke for them since Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent from among themselves, meaning that they knew with certainty that he never ever told a lie, which is why they must have wondered, 'Is it conceivable that he invented a lie against Allah, although he did not do so with us human beings?!' However, personal desires and whims blinded their insight and sealed their hearts, and this is why Allah *the Almighty* addresses this matter in the Quran: 'Say: If Allah had desired (otherwise), I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have taught it to you. Indeed, I have lived a lifetime among you before it. Do you not then understand?' (*Yunus*: 16) In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say to them, 'Had not Allah willed to send the Quran down upon me to teach and instruct you, I would not have recited it to you.' Therefore, we take into account the fact it is out of Allah's Favour and Bounty that He sent him *peace and blessings be upon him* from among themselves. This fact is recorded in the Quran in which He *the Almighty* says: 'Certainly, a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; grievous to him is your falling into distress, excessively solicitous respecting you. To the believers (he is) compassionate.' (*at-Tawba*: 128)

Despite the arrogance, stubbornness and disbelief of the polytheists of Mecca, he *peace and blessings be upon him* upon migrating to Medina, ordered 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* to stay in Mecca to hand over trusts to their owners. This raises a good question: 'Do you, O, foolish polytheists, think

that he *peace and blessings be upon him* shows you honesty, but in the meantime deceives Allah *Glorified is He?!'*

He *the Almighty* subsequently says:



Every prophecy has its fixed time to be fulfilled: you will come to realize this' [67] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 67)

The Arabic word *An-Naba'* is translated as 'prophecy' which means an important piece of information. We should note that not every piece of information is considered *Naba'*. This is because there are other provocative pieces of information which man will benefit at all from knowing them or even ignoring them. Referring to an important piece of information, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Of what do they ask one another? About the great event, about which they differ?' (*an-Naba'*: 1)

As for the main verse under discussion, it obviously explains that every prophecy will be fulfilled at a fixed time. As for the Arabic word *Al-Mustaqarr*, it is an adverb referring to the place wherein something is kept. It should be noted that adverbs are of two kinds, namely adverbs of time and adverbs of place. That is to say that Allah *the Almighty* has fixed a particular time and place for every event to be fulfilled, yet man will fully realise these fixed times and places only when He wills.

It is quite clear that *An-Naba'* is an important piece of information, which is astonishing. Thus, we must emphasise that there is nothing which is more important than this universal Divine Way of Guidance that is intended to save humanity from the darkness of misguidance which is available during all times and places. In addition, this Divine Way of Guidance saves people from tyrants and oppressors along with driving people's attention to the fact that it is only abiding by it that they could be protected from falling prey to their destructive whims and desires. At this point, we should consider that there is nothing more harmful to humanity than to follow their own whims and desires since when they are under this situation, they will never agree upon a single opinion. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* took the responsibility of

laying down this prefect way of guidance in such a manner that prevents man from following their desires. As for the other matters which may naturally be subjected to different opinions, including the disclosing of the secrets of the heavens and the earth, etc., Allah *Glorified is He* leaves them for the human intellect upon which to decide.

Real events of life affirm the accuracy and veracity of this point, for the human intellect has managed to uncover many of the world's secrets and to make many a scientific discovery. Thus, we must note that all the world's countries have reached similar conclusions concerning various fields of knowledge. For example, all the world's scientists, be they Russian, American, French, English, etc., have the same point of view concerning electricity. In other words, we find in our daily life that the world's different political and social systems agree on the same scientific discoveries, to the extent that some depend on previously made discoveries of other countries. Therefore, it is clear that Allah *the Almighty* leaves the material matters for the human intellect to think over, reflect, and invent to discover the secrets of the universe in such a way that enables them to achieve a comfortable life.

However, we find people differing with each other restlessly on the way of guidance. As a matter of fact, this big conflict of opinions results to people falling prey to deviant whims and desires. In this regard, we find that capitalism is completely different from socialism and that there are huge differences between all ideologies that are the result of personal desires including communism, existentialism, socialism, capitalism, etc. Truthfully speaking, none of these ideologies have been examined in the light of experience or a laboratory which is why many do not have the same opinion on them at all. It is quite unfortunate to find human beings making use of scientific inventions and discoveries they have agreed upon to use them as a means to impose ideologies over which they actually differ.

Truthfully speaking, Allah *the Almighty* has made this matter clear to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah did this by leaving human intellects free in everything that is subject to experience, but He, on the other hand, organised the life of man on earth in the light of the His Way of Guidance. This is due to the fact that Islam came right after

priests and monks tried to impose their influence on the human intellect regarding the secrets of the universe.

We can prove this point by real events from the human history. In the European Dark Ages, Muslims in the east, out of the fact that they firmly adhered to the Divine Way of Guidance, made great progress. This was due to Islam teaching them how to use the intellect in unveiling the secrets of the universe. He *the Almighty* thus sent us this religion, which is the greatest event or gift ever, to make everything clear to us. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying to us, 'Indeed, this religion was weak in its very beginning, and those who believed in it were also a weak minority that were incapable of protecting themselves to the extent that they sought protection from a foreign king in Abyssinia. Despite all of this, they were victorious because they embraced and firmly adhered to this religion.'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* revealed to the disbelievers of Mecca this Saying of Allah being discussed, 'every prophecy has its fixed time to be fulfilled. You will come to realise this.' (*al-An'am*: 67)

The Arabic word *Mustaqarr* means a fixed time in which this particular event will be fulfilled. In other words, Allah *the Almighty* orders believers neither to hasten the fulfilment of events nor to terminate them since He *Glorified is He* had destined that this religion of Islam will spread all over the world but at a fixed time and place. As for the time of the fulfilment of this prophecy on the spread of Islam, it is extended until the end of time. Concerning the place of this spreading of the religion, it is the entire earth. This is due to the fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the seal of Prophets and Messengers, was sent to all of mankind.

In the same respect, this Quranic fact about the fulfilment of every event during a fixed time and place is confirmed by reality. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point. At the very beginning of Islam, those who converted were weak; yet when the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '[Yet] the hosts [of those who deny the truth] shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs [in flight]' (*al-Qamar*: 45), 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Which hosts are these that shall be routed and turn their backs in flight when we cannot even protect ourselves?!' Yet, during the battle of *Badr*, he saw the

defeat of the polytheists of Mecca as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* previously told them. 'Umar Allah *be pleased with him*, said, 'True is the Speech of Allah! The hosts have been routed, along with turning their backs in flight.' In this regard, we find that every Quranic topic is preserved and recorded, so that mankind does not have an excuse against Allah *the Almighty* for He *Glorified is He* says: 'Every prophecy has its fixed time to be fulfilled. You will come to realise this.' (*al-An'am*: 67)

If reality did not confirm that every prophecy has a term set for its fulfilment, then what do the people who receive the Quran think of its veracity? This is why He *the Almighty* mentions every subject matter of the Quran along with its evidence. In the same respect, we should realise that He *the Almighty* does so in order that people would not have any excuse against Him *Glorified is He*.

The entire world has thus become fully aware of the victory of Islam, for Allah *the Almighty* had destined to teach Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his companions, Allah *be pleased with them*, how to cope with the events of life.

In this regard, we know for certain that He *the Almighty* used to send Messengers with religions over different periods of time, especially when corruption became widespread in the earth, He *Glorified is He* sent down His Way of Guidance to a particular Messenger or Prophet to guide mankind to the Straight Path. This is due to the fact that He *the Almighty* has created mankind in such a way in which they naturally achieve balance by themselves, so if one satisfied his unlawful lust in one way or another, we find that he falls under one of two categories: one, his soul might reproach and rebuke him for committing this sin, or two, he might not even view it as something unusual, and thus his soul does not reproach him anymore. Yet, we must stress that in case one's soul no longer reproaches him for committing a sin, this will certainly not be the case with the entire society. In this regard, we find amongst mankind those who bring society back to the Right Path by encouraging others to repent to Allah from their sins. Therefore, we are faced with a very important question: 'What will the situation be in the event the entire society, individuals, and groups are indulged in corruption?'

It goes without saying that it is at this point that Allah *the Almighty* must send a new Messenger with a new Message to get people back to the Right Path.

Thus, we emphasise that no one follows this new Messenger expect the weak minority and those who possess understanding from amongst the powerful. Thus, no one assumes that the weak seek refuge in the religion and incline towards it, due to their weakness. This is to say that Allah *the Almighty* warns believers and says to them, 'Indeed, you are confronting a falsehood that has made mankind tired has along with oppressing and bringing hardships upon them. Truthfully speaking, when falsehood is wide spread in communities in such a detrimental way, none benefits from this but evildoers, whilst the doers of good feel tired. In other words, every act of corruption has a particular class that benefits from it. Yet, when those who benefit from the spread of corruption are found along with the Word of Truth, they take into account that they will certainly lose their authority and power in case this Word of Truth becomes dominant.

In other words, when the Truth is victorious, then corruption along with the authority of the evildoers must come to an end, which is why they, who benefit from the spread of corruption, stand in opposition to the new religion in order to maintain their position in the society.

Censuring non-Muslims while instructing Muslims how to cultivate their manners, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۚ
وَإِمَّا يَنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرِىٰ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

When you come across people who speak with scorn about Our revelations, turn away from them until they move on to another topic. If Satan should make you forget, then, when you have remembered, do not sit with those who are doing wrong [68]

(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 68)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that disbelievers will certainly speak scornfully about the Divine Message with which he was sent. That is why we found the disbelievers of Mecca once alleging that the Divine Message was some kind of magic, while another time we found them alleging that it was nothing but poetry; yet a third time they claimed that it is some kind of soothsaying, and, finally, we found them accusing him *peace and blessings be upon him* of inventing lies. Therefore, we should note that no one will say something like this except those who

benefit from the spread of corruption in the universe. So, whenever there is someone who wants to put people back on track, they will take him as an enemy. This is why you, O, Prophet Muhammad, must take into account two essential points: first, your followers are weak, and thus they may not be able to resist and confront oppressive people, so you should not burden them with more than they can bear; rather, you should be patient with them since every prophecy will be fulfilled at a fixed time; second, when you see those who indulge in blasphemous talk about Allah's signs, you should keep your distance from them, show them harshness, do not approach them, do not befriend them, do not listen to them and do not let your Companions hear them, either. Why is this? It is due to the fact that they are indulging in blasphemous talk about the signs of Allah. However, should they be kept at a distance always? No, they should only be kept at a distance while they are indulging in blasphemous talk and denying the signs of Allah. Yet, when they cease doing so, then you should convey to them the Words of Truth, since there will be a dire need for them to hear it. This is why you should seize the opportunity, when they are not talking blasphemously about your religion or about you, to teach them the glad tidings that you have, along with teaching them the warnings that you have. For if you were to leave them misguided, then they will know nothing about the essence of faith, and you were sent only to convey the Message to people, and Allah *Glorified is He* wants goodness for all of His Creation.

‘When you come across people who *yakhudunna* (speak with scorn) about our revelations, turn away from them until they move on to another topic...’ (*al-An'am*: 68). The word *yakhudunna* (literally wade) used in the original Arabic text of the verse has an important significance, for it denotes ‘going through water or mud’. When one goes through deep water, he cannot see the bottom and, therefore, cannot watch his steps or know where he is placing his feet. His feet may well fall into a cavern, unlike him who moves along a clear path and knows exactly where he is going. He places his feet where they will be firm. Thus, we understand why Allah *the Almighty* describes frivolous or vain talk as *khawd* (wading; the stem of *yahkudun*), for it means talking without guidance, without having solid ground to stand upon in one’s arguments. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘... leave them out, playing in

their wading' (*al-An'am*: 91). 'Playing' refers to any vain occupations that go beyond one's duties. However, if playing is meant to promote skills in any one of life's field, then children should be trained for it over time before they reach puberty. An example of this is when we train our children on swimming, archery, and horseback riding. No sooner does someone reach puberty than he starts to have a mission in life and take on responsibility. He should not waste time playing or doing whatever will distract him from performing his essential duties.

So, Allah *the Exalted* says: 'When you come across people who *yakhudunna* (speak with scorn) about Our revelations, turn away from them until they move on to another topic...' (*al-An'am*: 68). The human soul is subject to change which can make it forget some of what it is supposed well to bear in mind. However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has been promised by his Lord that he would not forget anything of what is revealed to him: '[Prophet], We shall teach you [the Quran] and you will not forget.' (*al-A'la*: 6)

So long as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was guarded against forgetting what Allah taught him, then how should we understand these words of Allah: '...If Satan should make you forget, then, when you have remembered, do not sit with those who are doing wrong.' (*al-An'am*: 68) Sometimes, Allah *Glorified is He* directs to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a command by which He means to teach all the believers. Whenever a command comes down from Allah, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should be the first to heed it, which explains why he is addressed by every command. Meanwhile, whenever any of the believers is overtaken by temporary heedlessness, he should do as Allah commands in this regard. When you remember, and then leave those who indulge in vain talk about Allah *the Almighty* until they start talking about another topic.

Allah *the Exalted* respects His servants, for He is the One Who has created them and Whose Omnipotent Knowledge encompasses all of them. He has created for every person an aptitude for preserving information, an aptitude for remembering and retrieving it and an aptitude for imagination. Each of these aptitudes carries out a particular task. Memory brings back old preserved information in order to make it the focal point of one's consciousness. One cannot make more than a single idea as the focus of his conscious mind, so

for one idea to be focused on, another must be forgotten. This is why Allah has created forgetfulness. One idea has to be removed from the focal point of consciousness to the margin so that another may take its place. This is why one thought must be forgotten for another to be focused on. If one were to continue remembering a certain issue, it would be impossible for him to think of any other. Therefore, one idea remains the focus of one's thought, and all other preserved information remains in the memory and can be retrievable. One may suddenly recall something that happened twenty years ago.

Thus, Allah says: '...If Satan should make you forget, then, when you have remembered, do not sit with those who are doing wrong.' (*al-An'am*: 68) Why does Allah associate forgetfulness with Satan? All the issues of faith are clear in the believer's mind, and if any of them should be absent, this is due to Satan's insinuations. Satan makes his way dazzling before man; he deceives him into thinking of what distracts him from the things that matter most. When Satan leads one to forget a matter related to his religion, and then he remembers what he has forgotten, he should seek refuge with Allah from Satan. When he has remembered, he should no longer sit with transgressing people.

By refusing to sit with them when they are wading in vain talk about Allah, a believer thus draws the attention of transgressing people that faith matters most to them; it is more important than their gatherings or whatever benefit may be taken from being with them. Thus, the believer himself benefits from remembering what Satan has made him forget, and transgressing people are also made aware of the importance of faith and how the believers prefer it to everything else. Allah did not enjoin on believers to totally separate from idolaters, while the believers were still in a state of weakness during the early days of Islam. The believers met in the Sacred Mosque of Mecca, and the idolaters would also go to the *Ka'ba* - prior to the Conquest of Mecca - to perform their pilgrimage. It was not possible, therefore, for Muslims to abstain from meeting at the Sacred Mosque during the early days of the Islamic call. Allah permitted them to meet in the Sacred Mosque, and if those who indulged in blasphemous talk went there, they were commanded to keep their distance from them along with not taking into account what transgressing people said. No one bears the sin of another, as Allah says in the following verse:

وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَكِنْ
ذَكَرُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يُتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

The righteous are not in any way held accountable for the wrongdoers; their only duty is to remind them, so that they may be mindful of God [69] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 69)

This means that if you are with them and they indulge in vain talk about faith, you should leave their gathering so that you are not responsible for what they say. Even if you forget to leave them, but then remember and submit to the command of Allah by leaving their gathering, then you are drawing their attention to the fact that faith matters are far more to you than anything else. Indeed, this is showing respect to Allah's Commands by doing what He ordains and abstaining from what He forbids. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that the righteous; those who are mindful of Him, will bear nothing of the sins or punishment of these transgressors. By leaving them when they overstep the limits set by Allah *the Exalted* a believer thus calls them to reflect so that they may fear Him and spare themselves His punishment and His Wrath. After that, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَعَرَّتَهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا
وَذَكَّرَ بِهِ أَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيٌّ
وَلَا سَفِيْعٌ وَإِنْ تَعَدَّلَ كُلُّ عَدْلٍ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا
كَسَبُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

Leave to themselves those who take their religion for a mere game and distraction and are deceived by the life of this world, but continue to remind them with the [Quran], lest any soul be damned by what it has done – it will have no one to protect it from God and no one to intercede; whatever ransom it may offer will not be accepted. Such are those who are damned by their own actions: they will have boiling water to drink and a painful punishment because they used to defy [God] [70] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 70)

We said before that 'playing' is a useless occupation one practises as a pastime. This is allowed during childhood before one reaches the age of puberty

and therefore, becomes responsible. If playing distracts one from performing his duties, this is frivolity for it diverts him from something that is obligatory and immerses him in an activity that wisdom does not justify. The life of this world does not deceive except straying minds. People of understanding realise that life of this world does not deserve to be treated as an end in and of itself; rather, it is a means to an end. It is a place of work and sacrifice, a way that leads to the Hereafter.

A mature mind would not let this temporary life dissuade him from his mission. The problem with so many is that they treat means as ends, so instead of employing them to reach the ultimate goal, they make them goals in themselves. Allah has brought us to this life to worship Him and work for the prosperity of the earth. Whoever deviates from this path will be punished on the Day of Reckoning.

Mankind's objective in the life of this world is not to live a long life, nor is it to obtain ranks, luxuries, or power. All of these things are subject to change, and they differ from one person to another. These are transient goals, and our shares of them are very different. The ultimate goal, however, is one for all people. It is the life after death, and the success of every action is measured according to how close it brings us to this objective. This is why a true believer would see the way people receive death as foolish, for when a youth of twenty dies, some would lament, 'It is a pity he did not enjoy his youth!' However, this life is not for enjoyment. Enjoying this life is not the objective. The life of the Hereafter is what we should aspire to. Given this view of life and death, whoever dies before the age of puberty which is the time when he becomes responsible for his deeds, has actually been saved from reckoning, and paradise will be his abode where he will receive everlasting blessings. This creed does not support protracted grief. When one is truly focused on his ultimate goal, he will seek to reach it with both diligence and eagerness. Suppose someone wanted to go to Alexandria, for example, would he take a horse, a coach, or a plane to get there? Needless to say, whatever brings him closer to his objective is best.

If Allah orders death to overtake some of His creation while they are still in the wombs of their mothers, then this is His Will. Whoever goes from his mother's womb to the grave has thus gone closer to the ultimate objective. He has thus been spared the stages of this worldly life with all its trials and

tribulations. He went to paradise straightaway. Someone may live to be a hundred years. If he remains upright, despite all trials and tribulations, Allah *the Almighty* will admit him to paradise by His Mercy. Therefore, we should resign ourselves, with love and patience, to everything Allah *the Exalted* decrees for us, whether death or life. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '*Exalted is He Who holds all control in His Hands; Who has power over all things; Who created death and life to test you [people] and reveal which of you does best — He is the Mighty, the Forgiving.*' (*al-Mulk*: 1-2)

Allah does not say, '*...Who created life and death*', but He mentions death first. This is to call our attention to the fact that receiving life does not mean forgetting about death, but thought of the latter, death that brings life to an end, should take precedence in the mind. This is the ultimate objective we all have in common and that we should all focus on. Any other goals or objectives pertaining to this life are temporary and subject to change and, therefore, must not dissuade one from the real goal.

People bring up their children, prepare them for school, encourage them to succeed with high scores, obtain high degrees, build remarkable careers, and become people of importance. This is right, but it must not be the goal in and of itself. This is not for which we are brought up to live. The objective is that after which nothing else comes. We are commanded to work for the prosperity of the world, but this should only be a means to the real objective which is pleasing Allah and succeeding in the Hereafter.

This is why Allah says: 'Bear in mind that the present life is just a game, a diversion, an attraction, a cause of boasting among you, of rivalry in wealth and children. It is like plants that spring up after the rain. Their growth at first delights the sowers, but then you see them wither away, turn yellow, and become stubble. There is terrible punishment in the next life as well as forgiveness and approval from Allah; the life of this world is only an illusory pleasure.' (*al-Hadid*: 20) This is the life of this world. It is not worth sacrificing the Afterlife. Our focus should therefore be on what can bring us deliverance in the life to come, which is the remembrance of Allah; He says: '*...but continue to remind them [with the Quran], lest any soul be damned by what it has done— it will have no one to protect it from Allah and no one to*

intercede...' (*al-An'am*: 70). We are commanded to 'remind' them with the Quran, sent down from Allah and put into practice by His Messenger, and the Sunnah (Teachings) of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. People need to be reminded of the punishment that awaits those who disobey the Ordinances of Allah *the Exalted*. Needless to say, Allah *Glorified is He* would not treat those who are conscious of Him in the life of this world in the same way that He treats those who deviate from His Way. One who slanders others, tarnishes their reputations, and oppresses them is by no means like him who adheres to the way of faith. A sound disposition understands that Allah rewards everyone for their actions, whether in the life of this world or in the Hereafter. It has been reported that Arabs used to say, 'A transgressor may not die until Allah has taken revenge from him.' However, some died, and people did not see them experience the revenge of Allah, so another saying goes, 'By Allah, behind this abode is an abode in which the doer of good is rewarded for his goodness and the doer of evil is rewarded for his evil.'

Thus, Allah says: '...but continue to remind them [with the Quran], lest any soul *tubsala* (be damned) by what it has done...' (*al-An'am*: 70). The root of the Arabic word *tubsala* denotes 'prevention' as a punishment, which means either confinement of the punished person to a limited space in this life, i.e. restricting his freedom of movement or activity, or prevention of the source of life itself by causing this person to perish. Confinement – in human convention – is to detain someone in a particular place preventing him from oppressing others, i.e. to prevent an individual from inflicting evil on society by putting him in confinement. When Islam came, instead of confining the transgressing individual, it orders the entire society to abandon that individual in some cases so he may be allowed freedom of movement, but no one would talk to him, laugh with him or share happiness or grief with him. This is a far severer punishment. An example of this is what happened with the three who lagged behind the Muslim army and refrained from fighting in one of the battles alongside Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. One of them approached his wife, but she refused to let him touch her. A second greeted his cousin, but the latter did not return his greeting, so he sat down and wept! All Muslims abandoned them. The wrongdoers suffered punishment by being cut off from the entire society.

Therefore, Allah says: ‘...but continue to remind them [with the Quran], lest any soul be damned by what it *kasabat* (has done)...’ (*al-An‘am*: 70). The word *kasb* in the Arabic language means an increase on one’s capital. The word has a second derivative, which is *iktisab* (acquisition). Sometimes the two words mean the same thing. Sometimes *kasb* refers to earning without using trickery or incurring unusual hardship. As for *iktisab*, it is to earn with trickery, manipulation, and difficulty. He who does something Allah has forbidden actually needs to go through difficulty and use more of his strength. So, *kasb* means earning lawfully while *iktisab* means earning unlawfully by using trickery and going through much difficulty to obtain something. Some earn what they have no right to and believe it is their right, which is the peak of evil.

This noble verse shows clearly the difference between the two words; Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...for it is (the benefit of) what it *kasabat* (has earned) and upon it (the evil of) what it *iktasabat* (has wrought)...’ (*al-Baqara*: 286). An example of this is when a man looks at his wife. It is his lawful right, and he is not to blame for seeking this enjoyment. However, if a man looks at any other woman who is not lawful for him to enjoy, he has to act stealthily in order to do so. He would not want anyone to see him while he is sneaking to look at her. This is unlawful. Another example is when the mistress of a house goes into her kitchen and takes something to eat. She feels safe on doing so as she eats of the lawful earning of her husband. As for the maid, when she wants to take a piece of meat from the kitchen without permission from the people of the house, she has to act stealthily. She would be in fear of being found out. She would wonder if the mistress of the house has counted the pieces of meat. She would try eating a tiny portion of every piece so as not to be discovered. This would sure exhaust her since attaining an unlawful enjoyment always involves difficulty and unusual hardship.

Allah says: ‘...but continue to remind them [with the Quran], lest any soul be damned by what it has done– it will have no one to protect it from Allah and no one to intercede; whatever ransom it may offer will not be accepted. Such are those who are damned by their own actions...’ (*al-An‘am*: 70). A soul that wrongs itself by committing evil will have no protector or intercessor besides Allah, and no ransom will be accepted from it. A protector is he who helps you if you are in a dilemma, and the dilemma of the Hereafter is indeed

immense. Being with no protection then is severe punishment, indeed. Not only will Allah deprive evildoers from His Protection, but there will be no one to intercede for them with the One Who possesses all Power: Allah Exalted is He. Such is the reward of them who do not take heed and refuse to follow the way of faith. Furthermore, '...whatever ransom it may offer will not be accepted...' (*al-An'am*: 70). So they will be denied all ways of deliverance: Allah will not protect them, nor will He allow anyone to intercede for them, and no ransom will be accepted from them. Their destiny will be this: '...Such are those who are damned by their own actions...' (*al-An'am*: 70). They will be confined in Hellfire, never to be released: '...they will have boiling water to drink and a painful punishment because they used to defy [Allah].' (*al-An'am*: 70)

The original text of the noble verse literally translates as follows '...they will have for their drink boiling water...' (*al-An'am*: 70). When we read 'for their drink', we think they will have something that will quench their thirst. However, when the nature of what they will drink is revealed, which is 'boiling water', we understand that it is not meant to quench their thirst, but to torture them. When evildoers hear this and they are whom Allah is addressing concerning this admonition, they move immediately from hope to despair. When they read '...they will have for their drink...', they expect a form of mercy to be given them, yet by knowing that this drink is nothing but 'boiling water', their expectation is destroyed and replaced by despair. If this truth had come right at the beginning, those being warned would entertain no hopes at all, and fear and grief would directly ensue. However, Allah means to begin with a word that gives hope then destroy it by unveiling the truth for the pain to be twofold: once for the destroyed hope and another for the coming grief.

Here is another example concerning this point: '... and if they beg for water, they will be given water [hot] like molten lead, which will scald their faces...' (*al-Kahf*: 29). When one reads, '... and if they beg for water, they will be given water...', the imagined good news will give hope, but this hope is then immediately crushed by the following words, '... [Hot] like molten lead, which will scald their faces...'. Allah also says: '... *fabashsherhum* [give them the glad tidings] of grievous suffering.' (*at-Tawba*: 34) The Arabic word *fabashsherhum* gives the impression that what is coming is good news.

Then, the news turns out to be of 'grievous suffering'. To give hope of deliverance then unveiling punishment, is one of the disciplinary methods used in the Quran. An example of this is when a tyrant exceeds the limits in transgression. Allah does not take revenge upon him unless he attains unusual power to the extent of thinking he can never be defeated. This is why Allah says in the Quran: 'So, when they had forgotten the warning they had received, we opened the gates to everything for them. Then, as they revelled in what they had been given, we struck them suddenly and they were dumbfounded.' (*al-An'am*: 44)

Allah has prepared for the wrongdoers a double torment: '...they will have boiling water to drink and a painful punishment because they used to defy [Allah].' (*al-An'am*: 70) In this verse, punishment is the just recompense for what they used to defy, and Allah *the Almighty* is never unjust to any of His servants. As for those who have chosen to follow the way of Allah, they will be rewarded with the best reward for what they have done. The natural disposition of human beings is capable of doing both good and evil, and Allah states clearly what one will get for what they do in this worldly life: '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)

Allah says after that:

قُلْ أَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا وَنُرَدُّ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْنَا اللَّهَ
كَالَّذِي اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيَاطِينُ فِي الْأَرْضِ حَيْرَانٌ لَهُ أَصْحَابٌ يَدْعُونَهُ إِلَى الْهُدَىٰ انْقِنَا
قُلْ إِنْ هَدَىٰ اللَّهُ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ وَأَمْرًا لِنُسْلِمَ لِلرَّبِّ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٧١﴾

Say, 'Instead of God, are we to call on what neither profits nor harms us? [Are we to] turn on our heels after God has guided us, like someone bewildered, having been tempted by devils into a desert ravine, though his companions call him to guidance [saying], "Come to us"?' Say, 'God's guidance is the true guidance. We are commanded to devote ourselves to the Lord of the Worlds [71] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 71)

The verse begins with questioning idolatry. What do idols and other false deities do for those who worship them? What do they do to those who do not

worship them? This is the first point of logic that negates ascription of divinity to anyone besides Allah. For example, what does the sun give to those who worship it? How does it punish those who do not? The sun rises over whoever worships it and whoever does not worship it. What do idols do for their worshippers? What harm can they inflict on those who reject them? Idols cannot send punishment upon those who do not worship them. Rather, those who disbelieve in them benefit by their disbelief, for they have employed their minds to know the True God, the Creator of this universe. Thus, benefit and harm come only from the One True God: Allah. What does these words of Allah: ‘... [Are we to] turn on our heels after Allah has guided us...’ (*al-An'am*: 71) mean? A step forward decreases the distance that separates one from his destination. To turn back on one’s heels is to go backwards after proceeding forward along the way. A true believer would not go back on his heels, after proceeding on the way to Allah, by worshipping other than Him. He has already believed and taken several steps along the path of guidance. It is simply not logical for them to turn on their heels and become losers. Whoever does so is: ‘...like someone bewildered, having been tempted by devils into a desert ravine...’ (*al-An'am*: 71). The word ‘devils’ refers to the disobedient jinns. Jinns are the counterpart species of humans. Just as there are obedient and disobedient people, there are also obedient and disobedient jinns. Allah says: ‘Say [Prophet], "It has been revealed to me that a group of jinns once listened in and said, ‘We have heard a wondrous Quran that gives guidance to the right path, and we have come to believe it — We shall never set up partners with our Lord.’”’ (*al-Jinn*: 1-2) This noble verse proves that some of the jinns are believers and some are not. We do not see jinns, but of course they do exist. They are part of the unseen world, as Allah tells us in the Quran. There is a logical and philosophical difference between the existence of a thing and our ability to perceive that thing. We believe jinns exist because Allah tells us so. If we cannot see a thing, it does not mean it does not exist.

‘Say, "Instead of Allah, are we to call on what neither profits nor harms us? [Are we to] turn on our heels after Allah has guided us..."’ (*al-An'am*: 71). This concept comes in the form of a question posed by believers themselves. It is indeed worth wondering! When Allah has guided us to the Straight

Path, is it plausible to turn back on our heels and slide into deviation and misguidance after having been rightly guided?! Is it wise, after having been called to worship the One God, to call besides Him other deities that can neither benefit nor harm us? What a confusion this is! Indeed they are: ‘...like someone bewildered, *istahwathu* (having been tempted) by devils into a desert ravine...’ (*al-An‘am*: 71). The Arabic word *istahwathu* denotes ‘enticement’. The Arabic prefix *ist-* means ‘to seek’. Thus, *ist-* added to *huwiyy* (falling; ruins) makes up the word *istahwa* which means to seek to make someone fall or be ruined. It means to entice someone to make him go astray. It is to tempt someone into doing a thing without even having any argument that proves the logic of what you call him for. The root *h-w-a* has many meanings. One of its derivatives is *hawa’* which means ‘the air we breathe’. Another derivative is *hawa* which is the inclination of the soul towards something; it denotes ‘whim’, ‘caprice’ or ‘prejudice’. A third derivative is *huwiyy* which denotes ‘falling’ or ‘devastation’. Thus, we understand that the word *istahwathu* mentioned in the verse means devils have taken advantage of his own desire and enticed him to his downfall. Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘Devote yourselves to Allah and assign Him no partners, for the person who does so is like someone who has been hurled down from the skies and snatched up by the birds or *tahwy* (flung) to a distant place by the wind.’ (*al-Hajj*: 31) Such is the result of following one’s *hawa* (desire; prejudice). It always drags one to error and causes him harm. Therefore, one should not submit to it unless it is in accordance with what Allah commands. Otherwise, if one follows his *hawa* (desires), they will inevitably lead him to *huwiyy* (falling).

Allah says: ‘...like someone bewildered, having been tempted by devils into a desert ravine...’ (*al-An‘am*: 71). Bewilderment denotes hesitation between one matter and its opposite. Such is the state of whoever turns back on his heels after having been rightly guided. However, he has companions who call him to guidance. Thus he is stuck between devils enticing him and pious companions calling him to the right way, and this is why he is confused. When something falls down, it has no stability or direction, which makes the image presented in the noble verse very expressive of the state of confusion of him who is hesitant between right guidance and deviation. After depicting this perplexity, Allah states the way out of it: ‘...”Allah’s guidance is the true

guidance...' (*al-An'am*: 71). Guidance is the way that leads to the desired objective. The maker of a machine is him who can set it right. It does not know how to maintain itself. Only its maker can make it function properly. Likewise, no one can dispose people's affairs except the One Who has created him. What sows corruption in the life of this world is that Allah has created mankind, but they want to govern their lives by their own laws, not those set by their Creator. Indeed, '..."Allah's guidance is the true guidance...' (*al-An'am*: 71). When we all act as servants of the One God, our personal desires would not interfere with the laws governing life since we all will then act on the sublime laws set by Him, and no conflicts can thus ensue. When we all submit to the law of Allah, none of us will be able to humiliate another, for we are all servants of Allah, and there is no servitude to any but Him. Legislators enslave people by the laws they make for them. Such manmade laws may be tailored solely to further the interest of a certain group and make all others subservient to it. This is why true guidance is when we all submit to the One God. Society can only be set to rights when desires of its individuals are directed towards pleasing Allah *the Exalted* by following His way.

'But if the truth were in accord with their own likes and dislikes, the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into ruin...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71). This is why Allah sent down His Ordinance. His Law does not contain anything that is against mankind. We all remember the story of the Queen of Sheba (Bilqis) and Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* when she said: '...But [now] I have surrendered myself, with Sulaiman (Solomon)...' (*an-Naml*: 44). She did not say, 'I have surrendered myself *to* Sulaiman', but rather 'I have surrendered myself, *with* Sulaiman, to Allah...' (*an-Naml*: 44). It was not to Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* but to Allah she has submitted herself. When laws come from Him, it befits us to comply with the Will of Him Who has created us. In being true servants of Allah *Glorified is He* no one can enslave us, for we all become equal in our servitude to Him. Right guidance is to have faith in Allah as the One God, and faith is attained when we employ our minds to ponder the signs Allah has created in the universe. So we attain faith through reflection, and once we believe in Him, we submit our affairs to Him since He knows best what is good for us: 'We are commanded to devote ourselves to the Lord of the Worlds.' (*al-An'am*: 71)

Allah says in the following verse:

وَأَنۢ أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَقُواهُ وَهُوَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

**to establish regular prayers and be mindful of Him.' It is to Him that you will all be gathered [72]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 72)**

In this verse, we find a command to do three things: to submit to the Lord of the worlds, be constant in *salat* (prayer) and be mindful of Him in whatever we do or say. Embracing faith comes first then all we do must be in accordance with this faith. It starts in the heart: if firm belief is established in there, all the body will comply to the commands of the One the heart believes in. Submitting to Allah means to do what He enjoins on us and abstain from what He forbids. So worship includes active and passive things. Performing what we should, like being constant in observing *salat*, is an active act of worship, and avoiding what we are commanded to avoid is a passive act of worship; in other words, we worship Him by doing certain things and not doing certain other things. This is what it means to be mindful of Allah *Exalted is He*. Right guidance is to submit to the Will of the Creator, do what He ordains and avoid what He prohibits, and this is the essence of faith and submission: 'We are commanded to devote ourselves to the Lord of the Worlds.' (*al-An'am*: 71)

When Allah enjoins or forbids something, He knows that all His commands fall within our capacity. We are capable of both doing and refraining from what He commands. Allah has created within us the ability to obey or disobey Him, and He has given us free will to choose. He has given us the ability to do right or wrong, or the notion of obligation would be utterly nonsensical. Allah would not enjoin or forbid anything unless we had the ability and freedom to do or not to do it. Allah has distinguished mankind by the freedom of choice which is not given to other created beings in the universe. The sun, for example, does not have the freedom to rise or not. The wind does not have the freedom to blow or not. The earth is not free to grant or withhold the elements and nutrients Allah *the Almighty* has created inside it. Mankind, on the contrary, is endowed with the ability to choose between

alternatives. Error occurs when one commits what Allah forbids or neglects what He enjoins. A true believer is he whose deeds and words are in compliance with the Ordinance of Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* has sent down guidance that perfectly fits the natural disposition of His servants and can perfectly set their affairs to right. He has created in us certain things that we share with inanimate objects, plants and animals, but we are superior to all of them due to our ability to choose and act based on our free will. This is how Allah *the Exalted* has made us unique. Consider this example: suppose someone fell off a high place, could he stop himself from falling? In this case, one becomes as helpless as an inanimate object. He has no freedom to choose to fall or float in the air! Take another example: it is that of growth. You grow up and your body changes through time without any control or interference on your part. You cannot say, 'Today, I want to increase in height by half a millimetre!' This is out of your scope. You do not know how your heart beats or your wormlike intestines function. You do not interfere with the activity of your stomach or liver. You do not control your breathing mechanism, which is an essential source of life. These are all matters that you cannot control. This is a Mercy from Allah *the Exalted*; were it in the hands of people to control such essential matters, they would kill each other! Allah *Glorified is He* has given us free will to choose in matters pertaining to His obligations and prohibitions. We will be held accountable for what we do, not what is done to us (like the aforementioned examples). We are responsible for the matters in which we have freedom to contemplate, and then decide to do or not to do. Since responsibility requires maturity and freedom, Allah *the Almighty* does not hold one accountable for his deeds unless he is mature (past the age of puberty), sane and free. As for him who is insane, he has no juristic responsibility since he has no power over his mind to think of what he says or does. The same goes for him who is not mature, or under the age of puberty since his capacity to understand is not yet complete. Likewise, one is not to be held accountable for what he is forced to do by a compelling power or authority.

After stating those three commands, Allah closes the verse by saying: 'It is to Him that you will all be gathered.' (*al-An'am*: 72) If faith were a superficial matter that has nothing to do with the reality of people, there would be no outcomes of embracing or forsaking it. However, Allah *the Almighty*

draws our attention to the sublime end of faith that we should reach for. Let me give you an example – just for illustration, for Allah *Glorified is He* is elevated above all comparison. What a student does in his studies shows in the results of his exams. Whether or not he attends his classes, listens attentively to his teachers, revises his lessons, etc. must be reflected in the results he gets in the end. Thus, one must be recompensed for what he does since Allah *the Almighty* has given us freedom of choice to do good or evil. This is how faith guides you to righteous deeds because it directs you to a particular objective. So long as one believes there is Allah before Whom he will stand and receive his reward for his deeds in this life, one will be mindful of Him and keen on avoiding what He forbids, for fear of being punished for it on the Day of Judgment.

Allah says in the following verse:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ
كُنْ فَيَكُونُ قَوْلُهُ الْحَقُّ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ
عَلِيمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ

It is He who created the heavens and the earth for a true purpose. On the Day when He says, 'Be,' it will be: His word is the truth. All control on the Day the Trumpet is blown belongs to Him. He knows the seen and the unseen: He is the All Wise, the All-Aware [73] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 73)

Allah is the One Who does not ever change. From Him comes the truth. He says about His creation of the heavens and earth: 'Allah keeps the heavens and earth from vanishing...' (*Fatir*: 41).

He raises the heavens '...with no visible supports...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 2). Such is the work of All-Capable God. The creation of man is just amazing, and what is even more amazing is the creation of the heavens and earth, as Allah says: 'Greater indeed than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth...' (*Ghafir*: 57). When we look at the formation of the human body, we find endless wonders, and to this Allah directs out attention in the

Quran: 'On earth there are signs for those with sure faith – and in yourselves too. Do you not see?' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 21)

When you contemplate the sky and the earth, you find the wondrous precision of Allah's creation. Your own body is like a miniature of this amazing universe, a miniature of the wonders of Allah's work. Every day brings a new breakthrough in science and unveils new secrets in the miraculous creation of the human body, secrets that were unknown to those who lived in the past; those who will live after us will be guided to other secrets of which we know nothing.

Scientists have found out, for example, that a homogenous fluid reaches equal levels in communicating tubes, no matter how different in size or design the tubes are. We pour the liquid in, and it rises and reaches the same level in all of them. The law of thermal equilibrium was also amazing when it was first discovered. It is the secret why a stove sends warmth in all directions of a room in a cold winter night. However, this law is suspended in the bodies of the warm-blooded. The internal temperatures of our bodies remain thirty-seven degrees whether one is in the North Pole or the hottest spot on earth. How come your body temperature does not change with the weather? This is quite symbolic; it is one of the signs proving that Allah *the Exalted* has made the human being independent and unique in this vast universe. This is amazing. What is even more amazing is that the different parts of your body have different temperatures. If the temperature of the eyes were thirty-seven degrees, they would melt. This is why we find that the temperature of the eyes is only nine degrees. Temperature of the liver is forty degrees. The organs of your body have different temperatures, yet the overall temperature is the same. Allah's creation is miraculous indeed: 'On earth there are signs for those with sure faith– and in yourselves too. Do you not see?' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 21)

What happens when a speck of dust enters the air passage? One involuntarily enters into a fit of coughing in order to force this speck out. Coughing then is not your own decision; it is an involuntary reaction that is part of the precise system made and governed by the All-Wise Creator. The liver is enclosed within successive layers in order to maintain its relatively high temperature of forty degrees. It can only carry out its function at this temperature. The ears are quite sensitive to cold, more than the other body

parts because their temperature is low. The creation of *the Almighty* Lord is full of wonders we still know nothing of. 'It is He who created the heavens and the earth for a true purpose...' (*al-An'am*: 73). He has created the heavens and earth according to fixed laws that do not change except by His will. He says: 'The sun cannot overtake the moon, nor can the night outrun the day. Each floats in [its own] orbit.' (*Ya Sin*: 40)

If you think order is a form of evidence for the existence of an All-Wise Creator, look then at the perfect order of the universe. If you think anomalies are forms of evidence for the existence of an All-Powerful Lord, look at the instances when norms are suspended or reversed. Allah maintains perfect order in the system of the universe since any disorder or anomaly in this system would lead to destruction. However, when there is one blind person out of a thousand, this does not represent an imperfection in the universe. What appears to us to be an anomaly is actually an alternative among others that Allah *the Exalted* has willed for a reason. In cases where there are no alternatives, order is constantly maintained; the sun must rise every day, for example, and Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... On the Day when He says, "Be", it will be: His word is the truth...' (*al-An'am*: 73). Allah has brought us into existence in truth, and when He demolishes the sky and the earth and brings life to an end, it is in truth, too. When the sky moves from side to side and celestial bodies are scattered about and fall down, it will be in truth. It is not just the act of creation and bringing people and things into existence that proves the Majesty and Power of the Creator. Rather, the obliteration of this creation and elimination of all existence also constitute a proof of His Majesty and Power. At the beginning, Allah *the Almighty* said to the universe, 'Be', and it was. In the end, He will say to the end, 'Be!', and all creation will come to an end so the doer of good can be rewarded for his goodness, and the doer of evil can be given his due. A righteous person may suffer because of his uprightness throughout his life, and an evildoer may never be truly recompensed in this life. In the Hereafter, reward and punishment await, and all will be recompensed in accordance with what they have done. Thus, when the world is brought to an end, this is also a proof of the Greatness and Wisdom of the Creator, for then the Day of Judgment will come, and everyone will be given their reward. So, when Allah brought us into existence, it was for a reason, and when he

removes us from existence, it is for a reason too. All His actions are in truth, and He is the One Who has always existed with no beginning and no end.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...All control on the Day the Trumpet is blown belongs to Him. He knows the seen and the unseen. He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware.' (*al-An'am*: 73) Has control ever belonged to other than Allah? In the life of this world, Allah *the Almighty* has distributed properties among His servants, so each has control in his limited dominion. He has also granted authority and power to some of His servants, so they also have control over their subjects. Thus, Allah allows His servants to exercise some control in this life, but in the Hereafter, everyone will be stripped of whatever he possessed or controlled in this worldly life; this is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: '..."Who has control today?" Allah, the One, the All Powerful.' (*Ghafir*: 16) In the life of this world, He grants us means to employ and reap the fruits of our work. He has created causes that, if we use, will yield the outcomes expected of them. He gives us the power and ability to have limited control over things. An employer has power over his employees whom he pays for their work. A cook has the ability to prepare food, a tailor to make clothes, and so on. However, in the Hereafter no one will be in a position to do anything for anyone; all power and control will belong to Him alone: '...All control on the Day the Trumpet is blown belongs to Him. He knows the seen and the unseen. He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware.' (*al-An'am*: 73) Control already belongs to Him in the life of this world, but He has given us means to employ and exercise control over so we can achieve the results we want, yet means do not work except by His Will and Permission. Allah *Glorified is He* has willed the earth to be a place for struggle in this worldly life, while the Hereafter is when we return to Him to receive our recompense. 'One Day— when the earth is turned into another earth...' (*Ibrahim*: 48).

The earth that we live on is created for us to settle in. We cultivate parts of it to get food, build houses on other parts, and exhaust the possible means Allah has created in it to make the world prosperous. In this life, Allah has created causes that we must make use of to gain desired outcomes. Land must be ploughed to grow plants. Mines must be built to extract iron. Special tools and machines must be used to find oil. These means and causes can never be

in the hand of any one person, but Allah *the Exalted* has distributed them amongst His servants for each to be in control of a certain aspect of this life. When the means fall short, when there is nothing one can do to achieve the desired outcomes, the Creator of all means stretches out His Hand to His servants to assist them. He has made the means for you to work, and results and success come from Him only. He may also strip you of all the means so you resort to Him and ask Him for help. Thus, they are not the means and causes that lead to results by their own power, but they are all in the Hand of Allah and they work and yield results by His Power. Everything in the world points to Him and bears witness to His Majesty. A little child may believe that the small switch on the wall is responsible for producing light. An older child would know that it is the wire that connects the switch to the electricity box that brings light. Someone who has greater knowledge would understand that electricity is produced by generators powered by waterfalls. Therefore, behind every result, there is a series of causes that lead to it, and all the causes point to the Creator and spell His Might and Wisdom. He has honoured us by allowing us control of causes and means, but this control does not really belong to us, or no one would be able to strip us of it. This is all the manifestation of His Bounty, the One to whom all control belongs: 'Say, "Allah, Holder of all control..." (Al-'Imran: 26). Whatever powers He has granted to us in this life will be returned to Him on that Day: '...All control on the Day the Trumpet is blown belongs to Him. He knows the seen and the unseen. He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware.' (al-An'am: 73) Blowing into the trumpet is an announcement that something is about to happen. After the first blow, whoever is alive will die, and after the second blow, the dead will rise. Allah says: '...He knows the seen and the unseen...' (al-An'am: 73). As long as He knows the unseen, then obviously He must know the seen as well. The expression in the verse implies emphasis. Since He knows everything, He grants rewards based on His Wisdom. Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: '... He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware.' (al-An'am: 73) The All-Wise is the One Who puts everything in place, and the All-Aware is the One Who knows everything and possesses Omnipotent Knowledge. He does not need to oppress anyone because the one who oppresses another only does so to benefit from something the oppressed person has. Allah is in no need of anyone;

rather, we all are in need of Him. He does not benefit from anyone, but it is He Who endows everyone with benefits. This is why servitude to Him is an honour. The word 'servitude' is hated by people, and wars have been fought for liberating human beings from being enslaved by other human beings. A master would always want to make as much profit as possible through his slave. It is He Who gives us everything and never wants anything from us, even though we are His servants. This is how servitude becomes an honour. Ponder this verse: 'Glory to Him Who made His servant travel by night from the sacred place of worship [in Mecca] to the furthest place of worship [in Jerusalem], whose surroundings We have blessed...' (*al-Isra'*: 1). By describing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as 'His servant', Allah means to praise and honour him. He *peace and blessings be upon him* was sincere in his servitude and devotion to Allah *Glorified is He* so He elevated him and bestowed on him abundant blessings.

Thus, there is a message for everyone: cast worries aside since you have a Lord Who is never overtaken by slumber or sleep and He is the Self-Sufficient Who protects and sustains all that exists. Whatever you need is in His Hand, so just call on Him, and He will be there for you and will respond to your invocations in the manner that best suits you. Is this not an honour?

Allah says in the following verse:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ ءَازَرَ اتَّخِذْ أَصْنَامًا ءَالِهَةً إِنِّي أَرَأَيْتَكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٧٤﴾

Remember when Abraham said to his father, Azar, 'How can you take idols as gods? I see that you and your people have clearly gone astray' [74] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 74)

Allah *the Exalted* revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stories of previous Prophets to console him and give him patience to deal with the difficulties of calling to Islam. At the dawn of his call, the burden was really heavy for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions, Allah *be pleased with them*, so He told them what happened to previous Prophets to make their hearts stronger and firm their faith. In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* mentions some information regarding Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: 'Remember when Ibrahim (Abraham)

said to his father, Azar, "How can you take idols as gods..." (*al-An'am*: 74) The word *idh* (when and or thus) is an adverb denoting place or time, i.e. remember well the time when *Ibrahim* (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said to his father Azar, 'How can you take idols as gods?' If you remember that, it will support you in your call to Islam.

Scholars have been dissenting whether Azar is the actual father of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* or is it Tarikh [son of Nahour, grandson of Prophet Ismail (Ishmael)]. I have previously stated that fatherhood represents the forefathers of an individual; so the father, the grandfather, the great-grandfather, etc. are all considered fathers. Moreover 'fatherhood' (*ubuwwa*) can also apply to someone who is equal to the father, such as a paternal uncle. There is an example of this in the Quran where the Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Or were you witnesses when death approached Ya'qub (Jacob)? When he said unto his sons, "What will you worship after me?" They said, "We shall worship your God, the God of your fathers..."' (*al-Baqara*: 133).

'Fathers', or *abā'*, in this verse, is in the plural form. Thus, if we count the 'fathers' in the rest of the verse, we find them to be Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon them*. Note that the verse is about Ya'qub (Jacob), whose father was Ishaq (Isaac), son of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them*. Nevertheless, Ismail (Ishmael) is mentioned together with those 'fathers'. If you break it down, Ibrahim (Abraham) is the father, leaving us with two names, Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon them*. Since Ismail (Ishmael) is the brother of Ishaq (Isaac) and the Quran is articulating the word 'father' (*ab*), the relationship of paternal uncle can applied.

A Noble Hadith states: 'I came out of marriage, and I did not come out of fornication: from Adam until my father and mother gave birth to me. I was never affected in the slightest by the fornication of the Days of Ignorance (*jahiliyyah*).'⁽¹⁾

It is like the Prophet *peace and blessings upon him* is saying that his entire lineage is free from idolaters.⁽²⁾ Azar was an idol maker, and Allah *the Exalted*

(1) Narrated by Ibn 'Uday in (*Al-Kamil*) and narrated by At-Tabarani in (*Al-Awsat*) from 'Ali.

(2) The Hadith clearly refers to purity of the reproduction in his lineage and not his ancestor's beliefs, and there are many authentic Hadiths where the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* mentions that his parents are going to hell-fire.

says in another verse: ‘...Those who ascribe partners to Allah are truly unclean...’ Then, if Azar were the true father of Ibrahim (Abraham) then Muhammad *peace and blessings upon him* would be from his progeny. I am of the opinion that he was his uncle because Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings upon him* also said, ‘I have come from the loins of pure men and the wombs of pure women.’ This is a statement showing that his lineage is noble and free from the impurity of idolatry on both the father’s and mother’s side. Therefore, it is not correct to believe that Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) father was Azar since he was an idolater. Then, how do we explain Allah’s statement: ‘...Ibrahim (Abraham) said to his father Azar’ (*al-An'am*: 74)? We must check the use of the word *ubua*, or fatherhood, in the Quran and the Arabic language. The Quran is unequivocal that just as fatherhood applies to the actual father from whose loins the son comes; it also applies to the brother of the father or the uncle. As mentioned, the evidence is that the Quran, which states: ‘... to his father Azar...’ also states: ‘Were you [Jews] there to see when death came upon Ya’qub (Jacob)? When he said to his sons, "What will you worship after I am gone?" They replied, "We shall worship your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), and Ishaq (Isaac), the one single God. We devote ourselves to Him."'’ (*al-Baqara*: 133)

Fathers (*abā'*) is the plural of father (*ab*), and a plural in Arabic must be at least three: Ibrahim (Abraham) and then Ismail (Ishmael), the uncle, are both described as fathers, along with Ishaq (Isaac) who is the direct father of Ya’qub (Jacob) *peace be upon them*. They are the three fathers mentioned in this verse. Ismail’s (Ishmael’s) fatherhood in relation to Ya’qub (Jacob) is not that of an actual parent, but the paternal uncle since Ismail (Ishmael) was the brother of Ishaq (Isaac), who was Ya’qub’s (Jacob’s) parent. Therefore, the word *ab* can be used to refer to an uncle.

Another proof is in the statement of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings upon him*. When his uncle al-‘Abbās was taken captive and he demanded: ‘Return back my father to me.’ In this statement, ‘my father’ meant his uncle Al-‘Abbas, *Allah be pleased with him*.

Let us see how the word *ab* is conventionally used in the Arabic language we speak, which is one transmitted by hearing, fixed in our ears and

articulated by our tongues. Although colloquial language has caused it to lose its eloquence, the roots of the pure language can still be traced back to our ancestors. It was known and accepted by them that whenever the real father was intended, he was referred to by 'father' only, without mentioning his name. If someone came up to you and asked, 'Is your father here?' and does not mention your father's name, then he means your actual parent. However, suppose the questioner wanted your uncle, he would ask: 'Is your father John here?' When the proper noun is mentioned, you know that the uncle is intended due to the fact that if the real father was intended, his name would not need mentioning. Merely asking for the father would be sufficient. Therefore, if Allah had said: 'when Ibrahim (Abraham) said to his father' without mentioning the proper name, then we could have concluded that Azar was the father of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and not his uncle, which would also make him a great grandfather of our Messenger *peace and blessings upon him*. However, the Quran mentioned him by name and stated 'his father Azar' the first name excludes the actual father from the word *ab*, and with that, the controversy surrounding this issue is put to rest.

Now, why does Allah *the Almighty* ask his Messenger *peace and blessings upon him* to remember 'when Ibrahim (Abraham) said to his father Azar'? (*al-An'am*: 74) The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* came onto the Arab nation headed by Quraysh, the nation that confronted the call to Islam right at its beginning. Although Muhammad *peace and blessings upon him* came after an interval of cessation of Messengers, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was still central to the creed of the Arabic people since all of his rituals were extant in Arabia. For example, the imminent slaughtering of his son and the ransom from the sky took place there along with Ibrahim's (Abraham's) raising of the *Ka'ba*'s foundations was completed there. Allah *the Exalted* wants to make it clear to the Quraysh that the authority they assumed over the Arabs was only due to the *Ka'ba*, the House, being there. If this House, the *Ka'ba*, had not existed, you (Quraysh) would merely be a tribe amongst the other tribes. You would not have had any respect or domination, or special rank. However, you know that your merchandise goes to the north and south, and no one dares to intrude upon it. This is merely due to the fact

that whoever would attack your merchants must come someday to the *Ka'ba* for pilgrimage, and you would have control over them during their stay in the House. In the chapter of *al-Fil*, we have seen how it was followed by the following verses: 'For the protection of Quraysh; their protection during their trading caravans in the winter and the summer' (*Quraysh*: 1-2). If the House had been destroyed by Abreha (Abraha)⁽¹⁾, the Abyssinian, the prestige of Quraysh would have vanished. Allah gave them victory so that their journeys would continue in the winter and the summer. Therefore, Allah said: 'So let them worship the Lord of this House who feeds them against hunger and gives them security against fear.' (*Quraysh*: 3-4)

Indeed, the Lord of this House is the One Who honoured and protected the Quraysh by the very existence of this House, built by Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. So, despite their worship of idols, the people had a doctrinal link to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to touch their hearts with the mention of the man who was the cause of their dignity. Since their first doctrinal confrontation was also that of idol worshipping and Ibrahim (Abraham) also confronted the worshipping of idols, there was much social relevance.

'Remember when Ibrahim (Abraham) said to his father Azar, "'How can you take idols as gods?'" Idols, or *asnam*, are stone-made images shaped like a living being, whereas a *wathan* is a sanctified raw piece of stone that has not been shaped, treated, or manufactured. This is the difference between *sanam* and *wathan*. However, from where did the idea of idols, or *asnām*, first come? People have always recognised causalities in life. Man needs light and sees the sun and then moon at night. He finds strength and rigidity in mountains; so he builds houses inside them. Thus, there are things in which man sees a causal quality, and then he starts believing they are immediate agents in producing effects. This leads to sanctifying objects such as the sun or the

(1) **Abraha** (also spelled **Abreha**) (died after AD 553. 525—at least 553), also known as '**Abraha Al-Ashram** (Arabic: أبرهة الأشرم), was an Ethiopian general then the viceroy of southern Arabia for the Kingdom of Aksum, and later declared himself an independent King of Himyar. Abraha ruled much of present-day Yemen and Hijaz from at least 531 -547 AD to 555 - 565 AD.

moon. People have worshipped celestial bodies before idols or *asnam*. In fact, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'How can you take idols as gods?' (*al-An'am*: 75). Then, He mentions the history of idols in the discussion: 'When the night grew dark over him he saw a star...' (*al-An'am*: 76). So, there is a connection between idols (*asnam*) and celestial bodies. It all starts when man sees something that benefits him, thus he attributes every other benefit to it. He starts thinking that it has some power that he should respect. Unaware of the fact that the Creator of all these objects is unseen, he starts worshipping that which is observable to him. When celestial bodies set, some people said: 'Let us make idols (*asnam*) to remind us of them.' Then, there came to be an idol (*sanam*) resembling the sun, an idol (*sanam*) resembling the moon and another resembling some star. The idols (*asnam*) were made to remind people of the original celestial bodies. Therefore, I always give the following advice: 'People must not be heedless of the Original Cause because He is behind all causes.' If the mind goes through a causal sequence, it will eventually reach a cause for which there is no (observable) cause, and that is when the capacity of the creation ends and the submission to its Creator should begin. Those who are fascinated by the means are the ones who see them efficient in and of themselves.

When people started becoming heedless of religion, they started to worship any object they perceived as being beneficial around them. People used to make pilgrimage to the *Ka'ba*, and they loved it even before the Message (of Islam). On their journeys to other countries, it was a custom to take along a souvenir piece of stone that was the same type as that of the *Ka'ba*. It served as a comfort to them until with time, these souvenirs were themselves labelled as holy with disregard to their origin.

Ibrahim (Abraham), the close friend, or *khalil*, of the Most Merciful, was not only honoured by Arabs, but also by the people of the Book. They were honoured so much so that they claimed he was affiliated to them by saying, 'Indeed, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was a Jew' or 'He [Ibrahim (Abraham)] was a Christian.' In confronting the Quraysh as well as the people of the Book, the Quran mentions the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to remind them of someone they already respected, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Remember when Ibrahim (Abraham) said to his father

Azar, "How can you take idols as gods? I see that you and your people have clearly gone astray." (*al-An'am*: 74)

To go astray (*dalal*) means to pursue a goal but stray off the path that leads to it. During those days, people had a 'goal' to sanctify, appreciate, and praise whoever grants them blessings. Unfortunately, they strayed off their path by failing to see the 'Efficient and Original Cause' behind all causes and falling into a vicious cycle of created causes. This is 'clearly going astray' (*dalal mubeen*) as it is the state of a created being deceived by another created being. The first man came into a world created for him, with the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars; the clouds send water down as rain, while the mountains provide food. He should have paid attention to the following issue: he did not create these things, nor has anyone claimed to have created them. Therefore, should it not have occurred to man that there is a Creator for all this? After all, even the most trivial of things have their maker. For example, no one ever observed a cup of water forming itself. In fact, there were many stages that led to its development. Someone must have discovered the suitable raw material, and another had to chemically change it; also, someone must have provided the funding until it finally became a cup. The same goes for a lamp. Just think of all that is involved in its making, whether financially or scientifically along with the elements of earth that have been used to make it. Even a lamp has been developing into different styles and shapes since the day it was first invented. Now consider the sun that illuminates half of the earth for a period of time and then the other half for another period of time. It does not require any technical support, nor has it ever failed in its task. Edison, the man who invented the lamp, studied in schools, and his story has gained much admiration by writers of his biography. However, has anyone related – with admiration and with faith – the story of the sun's creation that illuminates the whole universe? We need to stop being superficial and look deeper behind the observable causes to finally conclude there must be an Original Cause that has no cause behind it. We must also listen carefully and obey those (Messengers) who solved this mystery for us by the giving the following explanation: Allah *the Exalted* has created this universe for us. There is no resemblance to Him in His Attributes, nor in His power and absolute wisdom. What He wants from us is to follow His Way. Messengers were sent

as a mercy to rescue us and to explain this mystery (of the creation). Allah *the Almighty* says through His Messengers: 'I am the One Who created the heavens. I am the One Who created the earth. I am the One Who made you in control of everything in the universe.' This is a claim that is either true or false. If true, then you must declare your faith in Him. On the other hand, if false, then we need to ask ourselves, 'Who else, besides Allah, has created the universe? How come he has not told us of his attributes nor has he sent us any messages to tell us about him? Also, since no one else has done so, the divinity must be declared to the only One Who has informed us of His Essence, His Attributes and His creation via Messengers, and no one has ever opposed Him. Then, we believe His claim to be the sole Creator of the universe and the One Who has given us control over it. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to prevent us from stopping merely at the causes, from 'clearly going astray.'

وَكَذَٰلِكَ نُرَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ وَلَيَكُوْنُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾

**In this way We showed Abraham [God's] mighty
dominion over the heavens and the earth, so that he
might be a firm believer [75] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 75)**

Because Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* could see that the worship of idols (*asnam*) was clearly a way to go astray, Allah showed him His dominion (*malakut*) over the heavens and the earth. Since he discovered that there is a True God; that True God revealed to him the secrets of the universe.

The word *malakut*, or 'greater dominion', is hyperbolic for *mulk*, or dominion, just as *rahmut* is hyperbolic for *rahma*, or mercy. The expression 'greater dominion' (*malakut*) implies the unseen facts. Whoever follows only the senses, like seeing and touching, merely perceives the dominion, or *mulk*. However, the 'greater dominion', or *malakut*, includes everything that is unobservable. Hence, the difference between *mulk* and *malakut* is that *mulk*, or dominion is all that one observes in front of himself, while *malakut*, or 'greater dominion' is everything behind this dominion, or *mulk*. To clarify that, let us consider how Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* negates Allah having any partners. 'Ibrahim (Abraham) said, 'Whatever you have worshipped, you and your forefathers, are my enemies, not so the Lord of the Worlds Who

created me. It is He Who guides me and He Who gives me food and drink. And when I fall ill, it is He Who cures me, who will make me die and then give me life again.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 77-81).

Note how the style changes in 'Who created me...' not 'He Who created me'. It is followed by 'It is He Who guides me'. Since no one ever claimed to have created man, it is a matter attributed solely to Allah *the Exalted* and does not need emphasis. On the other hand, some people claim to guide mankind, and whatever is claimed by humans is emphasised with the word 'He' (*huwa*). For any other matter that humans do not attribute to themselves, like creation, causing death and bringing back to life, 'He' is not mentioned. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* continues: 'He (*huwa*) Who gives me food and drink'. Then, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* again disregards all observable causes and defines an unseen reality: 'And when I fall ill, it is He (*huwa*) Who cures me'. Thus, he distinguishes between the means to a cure, provided by doctors and their prescriptions, and the Greatest Curer Who is Allah *Glorified is He*. People are often deceived by the means and think that the doctor is the one who cures. This is how Ibrahim (Abraham) disregards the observable means and focuses on the reality behind them. He disregards the observable (*mulk* or dominion) and focuses on the deep (*malakut* or greater dominion) to emphasise that indeed a doctor treats his patients, but he cannot cure them. In fact, there have been incidents where a patient goes to a doctor and dies of an injection given by the doctor. In such cases, the doctor turns into a cause of death instead of cure.

Glorified is He who inherits the doctor and his medicine

And lets the patient witness the death of those who gave up on him

Thus, 'it is He Who cures me', means the cure comes from Allah through the treatment by doctors. Furthermore, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* emphasises with 'He' (*huwa*) anything of which the cause might be deceiving.

When it comes to creed, Ibrahim (Abraham) has reached a high status acknowledged by all other Prophets. Allah *Glorified is He* refers to him by 'Ibrahim (Abraham), who fulfilled his duty.' (*an-Najm*: 37). And He *the Exalted* says: 'When Ibrahim's (Abraham's) Lord tested him with certain

commandments, which he fulfilled, He said, I will make you a leader of people...' (*al-Baqara*: 124).

You, Ibrahim (Abraham), are trusted to be a (religious) leader for people. Then, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* asked Allah *the Almighty* to make his descendants (religious) leaders as well. He asked for that because he was only human, and was still in the stage of looking only at the *mulk*, or dominion. Ibrahim (Abraham) asked, "And will You make leaders from my descendants too?" He answered, "My pledge does not hold for those who do evil." (*al-Baqara*: 124) This is due to the fact that [religious] leadership is not an inheritable title. Only those who deserve it could obtain it.

Ibrahim (Abraham) migrated with Hajar and their son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them* to a barren valley next to the Sacred House where he left them to settle. The Quran relates Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* saying: 'Our Lord, I have established some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley, close to Your Sacred House, Lord, so that they may keep up the prayer. Make people's hearts turn to them, and provide them with produce, so that they may be thankful.' (*Ibrahim*: 37)

Ibrahim (Abraham) grasped that Allah *Glorified is He* was teaching him the secrets of the *malakut*, or greater dominion, and his mind realised that (religious) leadership is not bestowed upon those who do evil. Then, Allah *the Exalted* made it clear to him that he must distinguish between the succession of prophethood (religious leadership) and the Lord's granting of various foods. This is clarified when Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* supplicated: 'My Lord, make this land secure and provide with produce those of its people who believe in Allah and the Last Day...' (*al-Baqara*: 126).

When Ibrahim (Abraham) was asking for the sustenance of produce to be given (only) to those who believed in Allah and the Last Day, he was not bearing in mind the difference between the covenant of prophethood and leadership and the necessities of life. Thus, '...He said, "As for those who disbelieve, I will grant them enjoyment for a short while"...' (*al-Baqara*: 126). This means that He will indeed provide nourishment to those who believe as well as those who disbelieve.

Nourishment and the essentials of life are among the gifts of Lordship unlike (religious) methodologies which are among the gifts of Divinity. Allah is a Lord to all people since He is the One Who summoned them all: believers and disbelievers, obedient and disobedient. Furthermore, since He is the One Who summoned them all to existence, He will not deny them sustenance. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'In this way, we showed Ibrahim our greater dominion (*malakut*) over the heavens and the earth, so that he might be a firm believer.' (*al-An'am*: 75).

Whoever follows the footsteps of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* will end up being connected and attached to the True Lord's Essence *Glorified is He*. There is also a difference between being connected and attached to His Essence and being connected and attached to His Attributes. Those who worship Allah *the Exalted* because He is the All-Provider or because He is the Enricher are attached to His Attributes. On the other hand, those who are attached to Allah simply because He is God, and even if He made them poor, are attached to His Essence. When Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* purified his soul from all previous beliefs, then Allah entrusted him with universal secrets, along with granting him abundance as He grants anyone who is sincere in their attachment to their Creator; they are granted insight into universal secrets. Furthermore, there are many examples of that in the Quran, like: '... Be mindful of God and He will teach you...' (*al-Baqara*: 282).

As long as a person maintains the Trust of the Ordinance of the True Lord and follows His Rules, they are considered trustworthy with His Secrets (His Wisdom), and He gives them even more and more. 'Being mindful' (*tattaqi*) means to adhere to the True Lord's methodology, and this leads to receiving endless bounties from Him. When one is with Allah *the Almighty*, He certainly bestows gifts of His attributes upon them by bringing them closer and making them trust the more in Their Lord. An example of this is what happened during the emigration from Mecca to Medina. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings upon him* and his companion Abu Bakr Allah *be pleased with him* were hiding in the Cave of Hira, and Abu Bakr said, 'If any of them looks down at his feet, he will definitely see us.' This was certainly a logical conclusion, or an idea that made perfect sense. However, the Messenger *peace*

and blessings upon him responded on a completely different level, away from the material universe to the pure world of the (*malakut*). He replied, 'Abu Bakr, what do you think of two when Allah is their third?'⁽¹⁾

What the Prophet is essentially saying is the following, 'Be reassured. No one will see us because we are in Allah's company, and He is invisible to sight.' When someone weak is in the company of someone strong, then the law of energy is in effect and the weak is no longer weak. The same applies to a boy who may be bullied by children of his age, but when he is seen holding his father's hand, not a single one of those children dares to approach him. People cannot be harmed by others unless they fail to be in Allah's company since no one ever dares to harm someone who is in His Company.

Allah *Glorified is He* has also communicated a message about the dominion (*mulk*) and the greater dominion (*malakūt*) in the story of one of the great Messengers who was in the company of a righteous slave whom Allah bestowed His knowledge upon due to his being mindful of Him.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And found one of Our servants – a man to whom We had granted Our Mercy and whom We had given knowledge of Our own.' (*al-Kahf*: 65) This pious man had obeyed the earlier Messenger of his time and completely implemented his methodology until he became attached to the True Lord Who gave him Knowledge of His own, or imparting some of His Divine Knowledge. It is truly amazing how Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is thinking within the laws of the dominion (*mulk*), whereas the one whom Allah has given Mercy and Knowledge from Him is thinking within the laws of the greater dominion (*malakut*), and each of them is excused since they are thinking within different realms. This is why the righteous slave explains later: '... I did not do [these things] of my own accord...' (*al-Kahf*: 82). It was not his own doing; rather, he was commanded to do it. Both men could excuse one another, 'The man said, "You will not be able to bear with me patiently."' Thus, the righteous slave understood what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them* was thinking, so he added: 'How could you be patient in matters beyond your knowledge?' (*al-Kahf*: 68) The Noble

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

Quran relates: 'Musa (Moses) said, "Allah willing, you will find me patient. I will not disobey you in any way."' (*al-Kahf*: 69)

In these verses, a Messenger who has come to lead the way is now obeying a righteous man who has been truthfully following the way of a previous Messenger along with implementing his teachings as Allah *the Exalted* desires. This is Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* whom Allah is telling us about; he is one of the great Messengers and one of those most determined among the Messengers. He then receives the command from the righteous slave: 'The man said, "If you follow me, then do not query anything I do before I mention it to you myself."' (*al-Kahf*: 70)

Why is this? The reason is that the righteous slave knows that Musa (Moses) will be talking from the perspective of the dominion (*mulk*), while he is talking from the perspective of the greater dominion (*malakut*). When they get on the boat, the righteous slave puts a hole in it, which is a visible damage from the perspective of the dominion (*mulk*); Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* points out that this act is a violation of the law. How could the righteous man do such a thing to the boat? 'He replied, "Did I not tell you that you would never be able to bear with me patiently?"' (*al-Kahf*: 72) Musa (Moses) is reminded, and then there are the stories of the boy and of the wall.

These stories are showing how the *malakut* (greater dominion) corrects the anomalies of the *mulk* (dominion). Putting a hole in the ship was visible damage, but Musa (Moses) did not know there was a king who was forcefully taking away usable, seaworthy ships. This ship belonged to needy people who were working at sea, and the righteous slave wanted to preserve their ship for them so he put a hole in it that would cause the brutal king not to take it from them; when the brutal king sees a damaged ship instead of a seaworthy one, he would not take the damaged one. The owners would be able to fix their ship later. If Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had known that, would he not have been the one to have damaged the ship himself? He certainly would have damaged it. Therefore, if the one using laws of the *mulk* (dominion) had knowledge of the secrets of the *malakut* (greater dominion), he would have acted differently.

When it comes to killing a boy, one must ask, 'What did the boy do wrong?' The righteous slave explains: 'The young boy had parents who were people of faith, and we feared he would overburden them by transgression and disbelief.' (*al-Kahf*: 80). The parents might have spoiled this boy and feed him from unlawful wealth, so he would have become a tribulation for them. Thus, the boy was killed so that they would remain believers, and the Lord hastened the boy directly into paradise.

As for the wall, we also see the difference between the perspective of the *mulk* and that of the *malakut*. As it appears, the two of them came onto a village and asked its people for food. Asking for food is a sign of the veracity and extent of one's need since it is not a request for money. Someone might ask for money to save it up, but someone asking, 'Give me a loaf of bread to eat,' this is a sign of his sincere need. The people of the village refused, however, to accommodate them, which means they were wicked and not good-natured. The righteous slave saw a wall that was on the point of tumbling down so he repaired it. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* became frustrated, and his frustration was justified. Why would the man voluntarily rebuild a wall for them when they would not even give them food? It would have been right for him to ask for something in return. Musa (Moses) was frustrated for a seemingly valid reason, but the righteous slave explained the situation. He rebuilt the wall because there was a treasure underneath it belonging to orphans. Since the people of the village were wicked and did not provide food, then if the wall had fallen, those wicked people would have stolen the treasure from its rightful owners who were still children. The righteous slave built the wall with faithful engineering that Allah *the Exalted* had inspired in him such that the wall would fall just as the boys attained maturity. Therefore, it was a temporary repair similar to setting an alarm to ring at a specific time. Likewise, the wall was set to fall when the boys had attained maturity so that they could take their treasure. This clarifies the contrast between the perspective of the *mulk* (dominion) and that of the *malakut* (greater dominion). The perspective of the *malakut* (greater dominion) sees the real causes hidden behind the outwardly causes. 'In this way, we showed Ibrahim (Abraham) Our greater dominion over the heavens and the earth, so that he might be among the certain [in faith].' (*al-An'am*: 75).

Therefore, did he become certain or not? The word *muqinin*, meaning people who are certain in their faith, is the plural of *muqin* with the plural in the Arabic language indicating at least three. There are three successive levels of certainty (*yaqin*) that people can obtain: certainty of someone's knowledge whom you trust that would not lie (*'Ilm al-yaqin*), certainty of seeing something with your own eyes (*'Ayn al-yaqin*) and certainty of the truth of something or the certain truth (*Haq al-yaqin*). The True Lord presents this matter in the chapter of *at-Takathur*: 'Striving for more distracts you until you go into your graves.⁽¹⁾ 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' (*at-Takathur*: 1-5).

What Allah is informing us is a statement out of His Own Knowledge, and we must be certain of the truth of His Knowledge. 'No indeed! If only you knew for certain you will most definitely see Hellfire, you will see it with the eye of certain.' (*at-Takathur*: 5-7). In the Hereafter, we will see hellfire with our own eyes (*'Ayn al-yaqin*).

The certain truth (*Haq al-yaqin*), however, is not mentioned here, but it is mentioned in the chapter of *al-Waqi'a*: 'If he is one of those on the Right, [he will hear], "Peace be on you" from his companions on the Right. However, if he is one of those who denied the truth and went astray, [he will be welcomed with scalding water. He will burn in Hell. This is the certain truth.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 90-95).

Throughout his life, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was truly amongst the people who are certain in their faith (*muqinin*); this was due to the fact that early on Allah *the Almighty* gave him insight into what is behind the outwardly aspects of the dominion (*mulk*), in other words, what is behind the outwardly aspects of things and their consequences. For example, Angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* came to him when he was about to be thrown in the fire by his people and asked him, 'Do you need anything?' Ibrahim (Abraham) replied, 'Not from you!'

He refused Angel Jibril's (Gabriel's) help although he knew well that fire burns, but this is an outwardly aspect of the dominion (*mulk*) or an outwardly

(1) Literally 'until you visit the graves'... Their stay in the grave is like a short visit.

aspect of fire. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was also aware that the One Who created fire is the One Who gave it its burning property. Therefore, He is also the Only One capable of making it stop burning. Ibrahim (Abraham) was certain of His Lord. That is why Allah *the Exalted* did not put out the fire as that would have been a visible cause; He rather used it to confuse his enemies. Thereby, He clarified, 'O, fire! I have created within you the power to burn and I am telling you now: Do not burn!' 'But we said, "Fire, be cool and safe for Abraham."' (*al-Anbiya'*: 69) Thus, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* already knew such hidden truths behind the outwardly dominion (*mulk*) although this was one of the first tests in his life. He could have given another type of response to Angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* when he offered him help before they threw him into the fire.

Then, towards the end of his life, he was tested with the command to slaughter his own son. Every person goes through phases of forming his personal identity, and at some point his own personal identity is the one controlling him. However, once he has children, their identity becomes more important than his own; in other words, he loves his children more than he loves himself. He wishes to offer his children everything he missed. At an old age, Allah *the Almighty* finally granted Ibrahim (Abraham) a son *peace be upon them*. Then there came the trial to slaughter this son when he was just a boy. This was a severe and harsh test, and it did not come through revelation, rather, it came through a dream. Furthermore, we all know that Prophets' dreams are true. However, Ibrahim (Abraham) was aware that the True Lord does not want anything from His creation except their submission to His ordainment. Thus, when someone's affliction has been extended upon him by his Lord, be it an illness or be it his wealth or in anything else, then be certain that he has not come to accept his affliction. For if he had come to accept it, the affliction then would end. An affliction is not lifted until one comes to accept it. No one is capable of pressuring his Creator. People are the ones who prolong their own afflictions. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* also knew that; he understood the perspective of the greater dominion (*malakut*). When it was said to him, 'Slaughter your son', he did not want his son to go through a period of rage against his father. Had he taken his son by one hand while holding a knife in the other, such a moment would have been filled with

rage by his son causing him to miss the reward? Therefore, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* clarified the situation as the Quran relates: '...Ibrahim (Abraham) said, "My son, I have seen myself sacrificing you in a dream. What do you think?"...' (*as-Saffat*: 102)

This proves Ibrahim's (Abraham's) love for his son since he is keen on him obtaining the reward of submission. Then, what was Ismail's (Ishmael's) response? '...He said, "Father, do as you are commanded and, Allah willing, you will find me steadfast."' (*as-Saffat*: 102) Then the Quran confirms Ismail (Ishmael) and Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them* both accepting Allah's affliction: 'When they had both submitted to Allah, and he had laid his son down on the side of his face.' (*as-Saffat*: 103) This accepting of an affliction is what lifts it. The Quran continues: 'We called out to him, "Ibrahim (Abraham), you have fulfilled the dream." This is how we reward those who do the good.' (*as-Saffat*: 104-105)

Allah *the Exalted* ransomed Ismail (Ishmael) with a tremendous sacrifice. Not only that, but He also granted Ibrahim (Abraham) a second child since he understood the *malakut* (greater dominion) of the heavens and the earth, along with having great wisdom to know where everything is coming from.

So, whenever someone is afflicted, all they need to do is accept it and think: 'If I am afflicted with something out of my hands and there is nothing more I can do about it, and then I need to be reassured that My Creator has brought this upon me, and it is a test from Him. I must be reassured that no creator would destroy his own creation. There must be wisdom behind all this, and even if I do not understand it, I trust in His wisdom.' The way a believer can rid himself from any calamity is to accept it, and then it will end. If someone is afflicted with the death of his son and choses to keep his house gloomy and sad, with the mother crying whenever she sees a boy the same age as her deceased son, then the door will never be closed for that grief. If they want Allah *the Almighty* to remove this test and to ease the pain, they must close the door on grief by learning to accept whatever happened. Every believer must know that whatever is taken away from him, will be replaced with a great reward that is better than his loss. Also, those taken by death are in a much better place than they were in this life. The following saying

applies: 'The afflicted (*musab*) are not those with an affliction or whose loved one passed away, rather the (*musab*) are those who have been denied the reward for their affliction.'

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى الْكَوْكَبَ قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْآفِلِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾

When the night grew dark over him he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord,' but when it set, he said, 'I do not like things that set' [76] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 76)

The word *janna* means covering or concealing; it is the root for *junun*, or insanity, since it is like having a covered intellect. *Janna Al-Layl* (the night covered you) means that it became dark and concealed the things around you; it was so much so that you could hardly see anyone else and they could hardly see you. The word *jannah*, or a garden, is given this name because it contains trees and other things that cover up the person who walks inside it. Thus, *janna* is a root from which all derivatives indicate any type of covering.

The word *kawkab*, or planet, indicates that it reflects light from a star. We understand from the verse that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was in pitch darkness so when a planet rose, he could immediately see it. Later, the planet changed its position, set, and then disappeared. During earlier days, people worshipped stars and celestial bodies, so Ibrahim (Abraham) was showing them an example of the same type of things they worshipped and said, 'I do not like the things that set.'

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِعًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِنْ لَمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

And when he saw the moon rising he said, 'This is my Lord,' but when it too set, he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be one of those who go astray' [77] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 77)

In this verse, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was actually saying, 'This is my Lord.' Scholars have been confused and have wondered, 'How could Ibrahim (Abraham) have said, 'This is my Lord' as a statement? How

could Ibrahim (Abraham) have uttered a phrase of polytheism?' Scholars strove to rid Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* of this statement. I say, 'May Allah reward you for that, but there is a very simple explanation to what he said. The One Who told us Ibrahim (Abraham) said, 'This is my Lord' is also the One Who said about him: 'When Ibrahim's (Abraham's) Lord tested him with certain commandments, which he fulfilled, He said, "I will make you a leader of people..." (*al-Baqara*: 124).

Thus, his statement 'This is my Lord' does not affect the loyalty of his faith. There must be an explanation to it. As stated previously, Ibrahim's (Abraham's) people were worshipping celestial bodies, and he wanted to draw their attention to the falsehood of their beliefs. If he had started off by calling them names like 'O liars!', 'O, people of misguidance!' and kept insulting them, they surely would not have paid attention to him or listened to him. In fact, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* used a strategy in debates called 'siding with the opponent' to borrow their ears and touch their hearts. It is also a way to prove to them that he is not biased against them from the outset. He' is slowly taking them by the hand. An example from our daily lives can be a man who is presenting a potential spouse to his daughter. The candidate is very short, while the girl – Allah knows – is quite tall! When the candidate comes to see her, she says to her mother: 'This is my suitor?' This statement means that she is denying that this short man could be her partner. So, when Ibrahim (Abraham) said 'This is my Lord', he was refuting that anything like a star or the moon or the sun could possibly be the Lord. Also, note how he marks out to them the conclusion for those who worship such planets. 'He said, "If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be one of those who go astray."' (*al-An'am*: 77) This statement implies who is guided and who is going astray. Therefore, 'This is my Lord' is a form of mockery like when the Quran mentions them saying: '...Is this the one who speaks [so contemptuously] of your Gods...?' (*al-Anbiya*': 36)

Therefore, it is as though Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, 'Let us say that it is your lord, but it sets and disappears from you.' Furthermore, saying 'I do not like things that set' indicates that he is not biased against the people themselves.

Likewise, when Allah says:

فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسُ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ
فَلَمَّا أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يُقَوِّمُ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

Then he saw the sun rising and cried, ‘This is my Lord! This is greater.’ But when the sun set, he said, ‘My people, I disown all that you worship beside God [78] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 78)

Thus, he has proven that every celestial body – even the sun – ends up setting, so he logically concluded, as they watched, that the worship of celestial bodies is not valid. He used their own logic to have them listen as he finally negated this lordship.

Allah has accepted some cases as a justified reason to do many things, and we can compare some of them with others, such as when the True Lord says: ‘...those who reject Allah after believing in Him and open their hearts to disbelief...’ (*an-Nahl*: 106). It comes after His statement: ‘With the exception of those who are forced to say they do not believe, although their hearts remain firm in faith.’ (*an-Nahl*: 106)

Allah *the Exalted* has permitted that a word of disbelief be uttered by a believer, who is firm in faith, to save his own life, and he is just an individual. Therefore, is it not acceptable for Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to say in whatever manner, ‘This is my Lord’ to save an entire nation from worshipping idols?

Allah Himself says He will be asking sarcastically in the Hereafter: ‘On the Day He asks them, "Where are my partners?"’ (*Fussilat*: 47) Of course, Allah *the Almighty* knows He has no partners, but some people used to associate partners with Him. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings upon him* would call out among his people, ‘O God of the Gods!’ since he knew that people had deified some favourable natural phenomena, and he wanted to clarify to them that there is only One True God. The Quran describes how pointless it is to associate partners in worship: ‘Allah has never had a child. Nor is there any God beside Him– if there were, each God would have taken his creation aside and tried to overcome the others.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 91)

He also says: 'Say, "If there were other Gods along with Him, as they say there are, then they would have tried to find a way to the Lord of the Throne."' (*al-Isra'*: 42) The True Lord will also say to a disbeliever who used to take pride in his rank in this life: 'It will be said, "Taste! Indeed, you are the honored, the noble!"' (*ad-Dukhan*: 49) Is this an acknowledgement that a disbeliever is honourable and noble, or is it sarcasm? It is just sarcasm because if a disbeliever were really noble and had honoured himself, he would not have disbelieved, nor would he have ended up in Hellfire.

In the Arabic language, the sun is feminine noun, but in this verse, the masculine pronoun *hadha* has been used instead of *hadhihi*: 'This (*hadha*) is my Lord'; it was also used in reference to the moon and other celestial bodies. The reason may be to keep the sentence uniform, or to avoid adding any suffixes to the word 'Lord' since in Arabic grammar nouns are originally masculine, and femininity is a branch. Also, the sun is grammatically feminine and not literally so. Taking this into consideration, scholars do not use the feminine form of any Attributes of Allah, even though it is sometimes the more hyperbolic form, as in the word '*allamah*. To give someone the attribute of knowledge, one says, 'So-and-so is knowledgeable ('*alim*).' If that person's knowledge of things becomes like second nature, one says, 'So-and-so all knows.'

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... Above everyone who has knowledge, there is the One who is All Knowing ('*aleem*).' (*Yusuf*: 76). If the knowledgeable becomes a master of his knowledge in a way that has never been perceived, we say 'of full knowledge' ('*allaam*), as the True Lord is described by 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*: '...You alone have full knowledge ('*allaam*) of things unseen.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116). Although the word '*allaamah* is the most hyperbolic, it is never used to describe Allah since it is in the feminine case.

When the sun set, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said: '...My people, I disown all that you worship beside Allah.' (*al-An'am*: 78). He explicitly said that at that time since it had been preceded by a gradually built argument that any sensible person would agree with. When the mind is awakened by the gift of guidance from Allah, a true believer, just like Ibrahim (Abraham), ceases to fool himself and thus cannot fool his people.

One can begin to engage in righteous actions only after ridding himself of corruption. Therefore, after ridding himself from worshipping anything but Allah, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* can now declare.

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

I have turned my face as a true believer towards Him who created the heavens and the earth. I am not one of the polytheists' [79] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 79)

The heavens and the earth were the first scenery that man perceived when he came onto the world, where he then found out how Allah made him capable of controlling so much. However, Allah *Glorified is He* does not want us to think He created mankind only, for He has also created the whole universe: 'The creation of the heavens and earth is greater by far than the creation of mankind, though most people do not know it.' (*Ghafir*: 57)

Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* presented his proven belief to his people, why he worshipped only Allah who created the heavens and the earth. Furthermore, he rejected all corrupt beliefs in the universe since he was *hanif*, meaning by nature upright and a true monotheist. The root *Hanaf* literally means clubfoot, which is a twist in one or both feet making the affected foot appear to have been rotated internally at the ankle. When corruption overflows in the universe, the Heaven intervenes by sending messages. A Messenger can be said to 'twist himself' away from corruption, thus the root of a twisted foot or clubfoot. Also, when one twists away from a corrupt path, he is walking on a straight, upright, and correct path.

وَحَاجَّهُ قَوْمُهُ قَالَ أَتُحِبُّونِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

His people argued with him, and he said, 'How can you argue with me about God when He has guided me? I do not fear anything you associate with Him: unless my Lord wills [nothing can happen]. My Lord encompasses everything in His knowledge. How can you not take heed? [80] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 80)

To argue, or *haajja*, is short for *hajaja* where the two *ja* have been joined together. It means one side throws an argument, or *hujjah*, at another, who

throws his own argument to refute it. If a discussion ends up with people refuting one another's arguments, it is called a debate *hijajj*, with opposing arguments. 'His people argued with him *haajja*, and he said, "How can you argue with me about Allah when He has guided me...?"' (*al-An'am*: 80); *Ibrahim* (Abraham) *peace be upon him* made it difficult for his opponents to argue against him since he was arguing with them by siding with them, and then proving them wrong. It is like the sole purpose of their debate was to turn *Ibrahim* (Abraham) *peace be upon him* away from his monotheistic (*hanif*) religion, which he was led to through contemplation: 'I have turned my face as a true monotheist (or by nature upright) (*hanif*) towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth. I am not one of the polytheists.' (*al-An'am*: 79).

He responded, 'How can you argue with me about Allah when He has guided me?' (*al-An'am*: 80). In other words, the issue of faith has been finalised. *Ibrahim* (Abraham) *peace be upon him* believed in Allah *the Exalted* and was thus announcing to his people with courage: 'I do not fear anything you associate with Him: unless my Lord wills [nothing can happen].' This indicates that they threatened him since the word 'fear' was mentioned and he negated it. *Ibrahim* (Abraham) announced with strength: 'I do not fear anything you associate with Him...' (*al-An'am*: 80). I do not fear a celestial body that sets, be it a star, a moon, a sun, even idols (*asnam*) you worship. None of the idols can bring benefit or cause harm which are solely caused by Allah *Glorified is He*. Hence, the detailed exception in *Ibrahim's* (Abraham's) doctrine, '... I do not fear anything you associate with Him, unless my Lord wills [nothing can happen]. My Lord encompasses everything in His knowledge. Will you not remember?' (*al-An'am*: 80)

If the True Lord wills, He can send down upon a slave a celestial body that could strike or burn him. The celestial body is subject to the command of the One Who benefits and harms. It has no say and neither do those who worship it. If Allah wills, He sends down harm, and if He wills, he sends benefit. '...Unless my Lord wills...' (*al-An'am*: 80). There is a huge difference between the action and the one carrying it out. The instrument involved in the action is being operated by Allah *the Almighty*. If He wants to make a celestial body or a boulder fall on someone, it is not the celestial body or the boulder

that makes itself fall. The doer is only Allah: 'My Lord encompasses everything in His Knowledge. Will you not remember?' (*al-An'am*: 80)

His statement 'Will you not remember?' shows that creedal teachings are a natural disposition, which is suppressed when a soul gives in to its passions. It is not required of man to come up with any doctrinal ideas. Rather, one only needs to be reminded which is an inherent ability in human nature. When Allah *the Exalted* brought Adam onto Earth and gave him the authority to rule it, He also taught him the theological doctrine with which he is supposed to rule. We all came from Adam who passed down the doctrine to his children who passed it down to their children. However, through time, people's personal desires interfered and doctrinal teachings were intentionally ignored because they demand people to take control of their desires and stay moral. Since doctrinal teachings can and are often forgotten, Allah *the Exalted* sent Messengers to remind people of the original teachings that were passed on to Adam. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* then declares:

وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُم بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

Why should I fear what you associate with Him? Why do you not fear to associate with Him things for which He has sent you no authority? Tell me, if you know the answer, which side has more right to feel secure? [81] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 81)

Our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said to them, 'I fear none but Allah, and I do not fear what you associate with Him, something that does not harm nor benefits.' The word *kayf* (why) is used to indicate astonishment since it is only logical that we fear solely Allah, the One Who harms and benefits. When an argument goes back and forth, the personality of the debater in each party begins to emerge, and there are those who scorn the truth not because it is true but due to fearing being defeated in front of someone equal to them. Whoever wants to arrive at truth without superiority will not give an opinion that will provoke his opponent's ego. For this reason, our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did not say, 'Is it you or I that has more right to feel secure?' Rather, he said: '...Tell me, if you know the

answer, which side has more right to feel secure?' (*al-An'am*: 81). A similar example of this expression is what the True Lord taught His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say: '...And most surely we or you are on a right way or in manifest error.' (*Saba'*: 24)

This is the highest degree of impartiality in debate, for he did not declare that their way was misguidance and that his way was the correct and straight path; he trusted that when they examine his way and examine their way, they will conclude that he is upon guidance and that they are upon misguidance. This is a progressive debate. A similar example is what the True Lord taught His Messenger to say to his opponents: 'Say, "You will not be questioned about our sins, nor will we be questioned about what you do."' (*Saba'*: 25)

Was it possible that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would commit a sin? Allah forbid, for he was a flawless person. It is as if the Messenger is saying to them, 'Ask about me if I have committed a sin.' He did not describe their actions and say to them, 'We will not be asked about the sins you have committed.' Rather, he said: '... nor will we be questioned about what you do.' (*Saba'*: 25). He did not attribute sinning to them, but he attributed it to himself since he is certain that if they go back and study the matter thoughtfully, doctrinally, and devotedly, they will end up believing in his way. This is the highest degree of subtlety in debate. The subtlety of debate becomes clear in the True Lord's statement: '...Tell me, if you know the answer, which side has more right to feel secure?' (*al-An'am*: 81)

Knowledge is a factual issue that you believe in and can prove. If any condition of these is not fulfilled, then this is not knowledge. An example of this is the lexical items of a language. Every lexical item has a meaning, and when you hear a lexical item and you know the language, you understand the meaning. When I say 'the sun', you picture the sun in your head, and the same goes for the earth, water, mountains, etc. You know the meaning of these lexical items without them being related to something else. We know that there is a difference between the meaning of a single lexical item on its own and what it can mean if it is related to something else.

If the lexical item is related to something else, then there must be a point in question. If we say that the sun is covered by clouds, then this is a point in

question. Or we say, 'The sun is setting.' This is another point in question, and in this case, we have related something to something else. However, before we mention relative points in question, the lexical item must have a meaning itself, and this is what is called the meanings of language. Through this, one lexical item is joined to another lexical item, and this is how a point in question or a reference is formed, on condition that we know the meaning of each single item or word. After that we know the relationships, so, we say that this is a subject and that is a predicate, or a subject doer and a verb, i.e. something is related to something else.

Knowledge is a factual issue, or point in question, that you believe in and can prove. If any condition of these is not fulfilled, then this is not knowledge. If you believe in something, but it is not real, then it is a lie. When I say, 'Indeed, there are those who believe that the earth is spherical', is it really like that or not? If you believe something that is real, but you are not able to prove it, then this is *taqlid* (imitation). If the thing you believe in is not certain and both parties are equal, then this is *shakk* (doubt). If one party is more likely than the other, then, this is *zhann* (conjecture). The party that is preferred over is called *wahm* (fancy). All relative issues fall within these categories.

Ibrahim's (Abraham's) statement: 'Tell me, if you know the answer...' (*al-An'am*: 81) means that if you are certain of a relative issue that is real, you will believe in it and be able to prove it.

The True Lord says after that:

الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْآمَنُونَ وَهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

**It is those who have faith, and do not mix their faith with idolatry,
who will be secure, and it is they who are rightly guided' [82]**

(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 82)

When the Companions of Allah's Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard this verse they were concerned about themselves since they examined their actions and found that they were not free of iniquity, so they feared that they would not be included in those '... who will be secure...' (*al-An'am*: 82). This troubled them, thus they took their concern

to our master Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he reassuringly clarified, 'Indeed, Allah says the following about this iniquity: "Most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity"' (*Luqman*: 13).

This verse shows clearly that this iniquity is related to faith, and not to action. Furthermore, we know that man's relation with his Lord is conditioned primarily on the summit of one's faith, which is to bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is His Messenger. This means that none deserves to be worshipped except Allah. No one possesses any command in Allah's creation except Him. No one does any action from Allah's creation except from Him. No one provides power, knowledge, wisdom, constrictions, or revealing of bounty except Allah, and this is the sphere of doctrinal faith.

The True Lord says: '... and do not mix their faith with iniquity...' (*al-An'am*: 82), so it is as if this matter is the scope of iniquity. As for action, He has differentiated for us between the faith which leads to action and the action which leads to potentials. He said: 'By the declining day, man is [deep] in loss, except for those who believe and do good deeds...' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3). The phrase in His statement: 'except for those who believe and do good deeds...' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3) needs to be broken down. Belief is one thing, and good deeds are something else. Thus, faith is an action that stems from the heart, while action leads to adhering to that which faith has legislated. The believer must understand that Allah *the Exalted* is One in His Essence, One in His Attributes and One in His Actions. He *Glorified is He* has no equal or partner. If you find that Allah has an attribute and you have a similar attribute, then you must understand that Allah's attribute is within the range of '... there is nothing like unto Him...' Thus, there is no power like His Power, no entity like His Entity, no action like His Action, and if something is missing from one's certainty in this, then this is iniquity in one's faith. For example, you do things utilising the capabilities that have been granted to you by Allah *the Almighty*. Before you do any action, it has to be assessed in your mind before it develops into saying or deed. This is the work dependent on you, and it is required of you. As for the works that you do not consider in your mind, you will not be asked about them. For example, you walk down a road, and you see a hole into

which you almost fall. Self-preservation is something innate within man, so his feet avoid the hole, while his mind is incapable of considering it. These actions are what we call instinctive, or natural or coercive. This is why the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessing be upon him* said, 'Every matter of importance which is not begun with "In the Name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy" is devoid (of blessings).'(1) He also said, 'Every matter of importance which is not begun with "Praise be to Allah" remains defective.'(2)

The term *dhu bal* (of importance – literally goes through the mind) refers to everything considered in your mind before doing, and Allah's name must be mentioned therein. Many people are heedless of this matter, and we say to them, 'It makes sense that you must consider this matter in your mind since the actions that you do not consider are those which Allah has given to your natural inclinations – without you doing anything.' For example, if someone is eating and something goes down his windpipe, we see him coughing, without thinking, until this thing comes out. It is a coercive process. As for the matter that is *dhu bal*, you consider it in your mind before saying it if it is a statement or doing it if it is an action. What is required of you is that you begin with Allah's name; since the True Lord asks that we do not let the means preoccupy us from the Original cause.

For example, when you want to cultivate land, you plough it. Then, you plant a seed and cover it. After that you water it, and then crops grow. Do you have anything to do with this? You are doing nothing but bringing together the actions. The seed is created by Allah. The soil that you placed the seed in is created by Him. The elements in the earth that nourish the crops are created by Him *Glorified is He*. The nature of the seed allows it to suck up something that extends its roots, leading to the splitting of the seed; you will never have anything to do with these means. In spite of this, Allah *Glorified is He* considers what you do, for He says: 'Have you considered what you sow?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 63). Then, He says: 'Is it you that cause it to grow, or are We the causers of growth?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 64)

(1) Narrated by 'Abd al-Qadir Ar-Rahawi in (*Al- 'Arba'in*), from Abu Hurayra

(2) Narrated by Ibn Majah and Al-Bayhaqi in (*As-Sunnan*), from AbuHurayra

It is a characteristic of faith that when you are about to do something after you ponder over it in your mind, you do not forget the One Who subjugated it for you. It is not within your power to do anything for yourself or with yourself without Allah's Will. If you do not do this and remember who subjugated this for you, then you have forgotten that the entire matter belongs to Him.

In our positive laws, when the judge presides in order to judge between people, there is an authority that enforces this ruling, so, he says, 'In the name of the people' or 'In the name of the law'. Thus, the people or the law is that which gives him the mandatory power to judge. Then, what is the power that enables you to judge whether things would respond to you or not? Therefore, you must say, 'In the Name of Allah Who subjugated this for me.' If you embark upon an action without saying this, you will be a ruiner, a fabricator and a claimer of something you are not capable of doing since it is not in your power to subjugate other created beings to you.

Indeed, the True Lord is the One Who has subjugated other created beings for you. You must remember the True Lord's name to compel other created beings to respond to you. Whoever is heedless of this has obscured their faith and mixed it with iniquity. If you see the fruits of your endeavour, beware of saying like what Qarun (Korah) said: 'I have been given this only on account of the knowledge I have.' (*al-Qasas*: 78) Rather, you should remember Allah and say, 'It is as Allah has willed' (*al-Kahf*: 39) because the reason for this is that if you were to say, 'I was given it by virtue of the knowledge that I have', the True Lord could cause you to suffer the same fate as Qarun (Korah): 'Thus, We made the earth to swallow up him and his abode...' (*al-Qasas*: 81). What happened to Qarun's (Korah's) knowledge that he had mentioned?

Thus, every matter must be attributed to Allah *the Exalted*. If there is any fault in you concerning this, then you have been subjected to confusion and you have obscured your faith and have mixed it with iniquity. The True Lord requires this from us so that His favours become truly blessed, while we are seeking them or reaping their fruits. Nothing results from an action that is begun with 'In the Name of Allah' except that which will help you obey Allah, be righteous, do good deeds and utilise His favours while

enjoying well-being. Afterwards, when all these things are gathered, this will qualify you, in all your activities and actions, to gain another kind of security that is more comprehensive, complete and perfect than the security of the this worldly life. Indeed, you will attain the security of the Hereafter when you enter paradise.

Thus, those ‘... who will be secure...’ are people who have not obscured their faith with iniquity. The True Lord wants us to constantly stick to His Way since Allah’s provisions are continuous, and His mercy as well as His manifestations for His creation is ceaseless. This is due to the fact that He is All-Sustaining, in other words, with His absolute Power, His comprehensive sustenance for all existence and His Wisdom, He takes care of the means of His creation. Thus, you should always be in the company of the All-Sustaining, so that He can manifest Himself to you with the attributes of His preservation, the attributes of His Power, the attributes of His Knowledge and the attributes of His Wisdom. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Bilal *Allah be pleased with him* ‘Tell me about the best deed (i.e. one which you deem the most rewarding with Allah) you have done since your acceptance of Islam because I heard the sound of the steps of your shoes in front of me in *Jannah* (paradise).’ Bilal said, ‘I do not consider any deed better than that whenever I make ablution during day or night, I pray as much as was written for me after it.’⁽¹⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also said, ‘When a Muslim or a believer washes his face in ablution, every sin which he committed with his eyes will be washed away from his face with water, or with the last drop of water. When he washes his hands, every sin which is committed by his hands will be erased from them with the water, or with the last drop of water. Also, when he washes his feet, every sin his feet committed will be washed away with the water, or with the last drop of water; until he finally emerges cleansed of all his sins.’⁽²⁾

So, the True Lord wants us to be firmly attached to His Way, in order to give to us, not to take from us since the difference between the slavery of a

(1) *Agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim and the wording is that of Al-Bukhari*

(2) *Narrated by Muslim*

human being to a human being and pure slavery to Allah is that the human being takes the good of his slave, whereas our slavery to Allah gives us His goodness from storehouses that are never exhausted. We take more from Him whenever we increase in our slavery to Him. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* always wants to make us connected to Him. The phrase 'who will be secure' (*al-An'am*: 82) means that some will have security in the life of this world along with security in the Hereafter.

Someone might say that there are people who do not start their deeds with Allah's name, and the thought of Allah *the Almighty* does not even occur to them. Yet, they move about using and enjoying the powers and materials provided in the earth, along with happily enjoying what others invent by using these materials. We say that this is true, since, after exerting effort, there is a difference between enjoying a bounty and enjoying the blessing of a bounty. A disbeliever may exert effort and sow the earth, and thus, the earth gives him back. Yet, He reaps the bounty, but never will he enjoy the blessing of this bounty.

What is the blessing of a bounty? It is when the bounty you receive does not assist you in disobeying Allah *Glorified is He*. Rather, it consistently assists you in obeying Allah *the Exalted*. The status of many people is confirmed in His statement: '...You squandered the good things you were given in your earthly life, you took your fill of pleasure there...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 20). Therefore, beware of being misled or of saying, 'They do not say "In the Name of Allah, the Most-Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy"', but despite that they enjoy the delights of this worldly life.' Indeed, when you consider the advancements of their civilisation along with the high aspirations of their research and their discoveries, you find that they are always directed towards evil. No invention do they have except that they use it for evil, till Allah *the Exalted* decrees to distract them by afflicting them with torture and calamities, then, in the Hereafter, they will be chastised for their polytheism and disbelief. 'It is those...who will be secure...' (*al-An'am*: 82) means that, indeed, these people are the ones who did not mix their faith with polytheism. They will be granted security for the smallest details of their deeds, and security for these details combined will qualify them to be given security in paradise. Then, He *Glorified is He* says: '... and it is they who are rightly guided.' (*al-An'am*: 82)

Hidayah (guidance) is the path that takes you to an objective. You would not agree with any sort of activity unless this activity was going to lead to an objective that was drawn up in your mind, and this objective is successful after study and hard work. Nothing that is created or manufactured determines its own objective. Thus, leave it to Allah *the Almighty* to determine your task, for He is the One Who created you. It is common to mankind that no manufacturing ever determines its own task. Rather, it is the manufacturer who determines its objective, and that objective exists before the manufacturing. As long as the objective exists before the manufacturing, then who is he who suffers through the experience?

In a lab, scientific inventions result from the interaction of materials. The scientist is the one who exerts effort and suffers while experimenting, whereas you only know about an experiment when it has a medical outcome. Theoretical matters which weary the scientist cause weariness since they are not connected, from the very beginning, to the set materials, the full knowledge of the objective or to the means of reaching this objective. Who, then, is he who is rightly guided? The one who is rightly guided is he who knows the objective that he is striving for, along with the means that will qualify him for reaching that objective. If any fault befalls his personal faculties, he seeks help to rectify this fault along with seeking refuge in the One Who created these faculties, who is Allah *the Almighty*, just as someone would return a broken machine to the manufacturer. Many poets let their imaginations roam freely and said:

Is there anyone who could show me my destination before I start my journey?

And how could this be done when destinations are only reached after journeying?

We say to him, 'The One Who created you showed you the objective or destination.'

The True Lord says after that:

وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ
 مَن نَّشَاءُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٨٣﴾

**Such was the argument We gave to Abraham against his
 people – We raise in rank whoever We will – your Lord is
 all wise, all knowing [83] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 83)**

Hujja (an argument) is strong evidence used for proving an issue that needs to be proved. It is as if the True Lord wants us, when we argue, to have an objective behind arguing. We know that if the objective behind arguing goes beyond the subject of the argument itself, in negation or affirmation, then it turns into jesting, and it becomes a matter of seeking victory over your opponent, and vice versa. However, whenever you participate in an argument, you must base it on its authentic objective. As it is said, define and clarify the object of controversy since the reason for this is that the truth must be dearer than you and your opponent. This is why the True Lord makes it clear: 'Beware of arguing over a matter the way the masses argue.' Why is this? It is due to the fact that the voice of the masses mixes truth with falsehood, but Allah *Glorified is He* wants every person to be held accountable for his voice or what he says. An example of this is when there is a big rally and the people are shouting for the fall of someone, and no one knows who started the shouting.

What made the Arabs lose is that when they received the call for Islam, they held mass meetings, wherein they criticised the statements of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and thus, they lost the ability to judge objectively. This is why our Lord says: 'Say [Prophet], "I advise you to do one thing only: stand before God, in pairs or singly, and think. There is no sign of madness in your companion [the Prophet]..."' (*Saba'*: 46). It means that you gather and make Allah *the Almighty* your goal. Then, whoever has the power let him debate, using firm arguments as well as the statements of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a subject, and according to history and logic. No two people meet together and look into a matter, with only Allah *Glorified is He* in their thoughts, except that they will end up having a unified opinion. This is why

we have secret negotiations in the modern age, derived from this principle of faith. 'Such was the argument We gave to Ibrahim (Abraham) against his people. We raise by degrees whoever We will. Indeed, your Lord is All Wise, All Knowing.' (*al-An'am*: 83) Ibrahim (Abraham) argued with his people – among which was his father Azar- about the stars, the moon, the sun and idols. He also gained victory, with an argument, over their leader, Nimrod, who was the king or the sultan, when he wanted to debate with him about the power of giving life and causing death.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants us to learn from the wisdom of our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. If you see your opponent going into that which will not bring an end to the debate, then take him to the level that he cannot escape from, and he will not get the better of you. King Nimrod⁽¹⁾ said to him, 'I too give life and death' (*al-Baqara*: 258). Our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* could have said, 'You do not determine death. Rather, you kill, and killing is not since you are only destroying the structure, etc.' However, he did not want to prolong the debate. He wanted to finish it. He, then, brought an argument that ended the debate as quickly as possible. Allah says: '... So Ibrahim (Abraham) said, "Allah brings the sun from the east. So bring it from the west"....' (*al-Baqara*: 258). What was the conclusion of the debate? Allah says: 'The disbeliever was dumbfounded.' (*al-Baqara*: 258)

All of these are arguments that are clarified by Allah's statement: 'Such was the argument We gave to Ibrahim (Abraham) against his people. We raise by degrees whoever We will. Indeed, your Lord is All Wise, All Knowing.' (*al-An'am*: 83)

Allah *the Exalted* gave Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* an argument over his people; in other words, he had degrees, eminence and elevation over them since establishing an argument over someone else is a victory and a victory raises the degree of your subject, and it also raises the degree of your work. He *Glorified is He* does not will anything except out of Wisdom, and He does not will anything except out of Knowledge since if He were to leave the

(1) The story of the debate of Nimrod with our master Abraham

will for a human being, he would do things without wisdom and without knowledge. The True Lord informs us that His will comes out of Wisdom and Knowledge for the benefit of creation since it is not based on any personal desire or on benefitting from any other. Allah *the Almighty* had all the attributes of perfection, majesty, and beauty before He created the creation.

Indeed, creating the creation and their having faith does not increase Allah's sovereignty, and if they disobey, it does not decrease Allah's sovereignty at all. However, some people may lack wisdom, or they fail to gain it. When He imposes a command on His creation and they accept it without knowing its rationale, He shows them the wisdom behind it to make what is unacceptable to the human mind acceptable. This is because He created the creation, and He knows from pre-eternity that the creation has desires and wants. If every created being were given what he wanted, it would be at the expense of someone else, but the True Lord is Just and will not benefit an individual while tiring another.

The True Lord, the All-Wise, knows what improves the life of His creation. So, He does not respond to a slave's silly supplication. He knows that it will be of no benefit to the slave if He accedes to His request. This is why the True Lord says: 'Yet man prays for harm, just as he prays for good. Man is ever hasty.' (*al-Isra'*: 11)

Indeed, the servant of Allah says, 'O, Lord! Do this for me. Make this easy for Me.', for, he believes that it is good for him, when it could actually be bad. Man is prone to be hasty. This is why the True Lord says: 'I will show you My signs soon, so do not ask Me to hasten them.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 37)

Indeed, the True Lord checks the wants of mankind, and His are but for their benefit. 'We raise by degrees whoever We will. Indeed, your Lord is All Wise, All Knowing.' (*al-An'am*: 83)

Whenever the word *rabb* (Lord) is mentioned, it refers to creating as well as teaching mankind. When the word *uluhiyyah* (divinity) is mentioned, it refers to a commandment since Allah is the One Who is worshipped and obeyed when He commands and forbids. However, the Lord is the One Who creates, teaches, maintains, and provides you with the essentials of your life.

Therefore, the giving of *rububiyah* (Lordship) is one thing, and the giving of *uluhiyyah* (Divinity) is something else. The giving of Lordship is granted to the believer and the disbeliever, the obedient and the disobedient since Allah is the One Who summoned them into existence, and He subjugated the universe for them. However, the giving of Divinity is represented in 'Do!' and 'Do not do!', and this enters into the realm of choice. The one who disbelieves in Allah and does well in using the means gets the results of that, while the one who believes in Allah and does not do well in using the means does not take the results; the reason for this is the extracting of things from the universe is from the giving of Lordship.

The True Lord says:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ
قَبْلُ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى
وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

**We gave him Isaac and Jacob, each of whom We guided, as We
had guided Noah before, and among his descendants were
David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron – in this way
We reward those who do good [84] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 84)**

We know that Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him* is the second son of our master Ibrahim (Abraham) after Ismail (Ishmael), and Yaqub (Jacob) is the son of Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon them*. When you see the word *hiba* (bounty), understand that it is not a right. A bounty is a gift given by the Giver to someone who does not deserve it since when you give someone what they deserve, this is not a gift but a right.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear: 'Beware of believing that any of my creation has the right on Me except what I make as a right for him, for everything is a bounty granted by me.' The highest peak of His bounties and bestowals is, first, the highest degree of ascendancy of man over the universe. This is followed by the multiplication of his species, the male and the female, such that there is a progeny of boys and girls. Allah *the Almighty*

says: 'Allah has control of the heavens and the earth; He creates whatever He wills. He grants female offspring to whomever He wills, male to whomever He wills...' (*ash-Shura*: 49).

The bounty of having children does not only come from the fact that He created man and woman and that physical contact between them produces children. Rather, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...or both male and female, and He makes whomever He wills barren. He is All Knowing and All Powerful.' (*ash-Shura*: 50)

If it were nothing but a matter of mechanical procedure, children would just come, but that is not how it is. Whoever understands the *malakut* (greater dominion), he will be comforted by remembering that Allah's Wisdom is behind this bounty, for He is the All-Wise. Even being barren is a bounty. The one who receives it from Allah *the Exalted* as a bounty is pleased with it and does not look at other people's children with envy or resentment. Every child you see will become, by Allah's Will, like your child without the hardship of pregnancy and childbirth and without you having to look after them and take care of them your entire life. Whoever is pleased with Allah's bounty of having female offspring will find that they are a favour from Allah, and He will send males who will marry his daughters and will be more loyal to him than his own sons; this is all due to the fact that he has been content with what Allah *the Almighty* has given him. Therefore, you must contentedly take and accept the bounty in giving as well as the bounty in withholding.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* clarifies that He gave Ibrahim (Abraham) Ishaq (Isaac) and from Ishaq (Isaac) came Yaqub (Jacob) *peace be upon them*. We all know that man eventually dies, without a doubt, and when he grows old, he desires a son so that his name will live on, and it is as if he secures that. If he has a grandson, then the grandfather has secured himself another generation. However, we know the True Lord's statement: 'Wealth and children are the attractions of this worldly life, but lasting good works have a better reward with your Lord and give better grounds for hope...' (*al-Kahf*: 46). The continuation of a man's name (family name) in this worldly life is not a necessity for him if Allah *the Exalted* is going to reduce the value of man in the Hereafter! We notice that Allah *Glorified is He* tells about the supplication of

Zakariyya (Zechariah): ‘...so grant me from Yourself a successor, to be my heir and the heir of the family of Yaquub (Jacob). Lord, make him well pleasing [to You].’ (*Mariam*: 5-6). Allah *the Exalted* favoured Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* with not only Ishaq (Isaac) but Yaquub (Jacob) too *peace be upon them*. Furthermore, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...We gave him Ishaq (Isaac) and Yaquub (Jacob), each of whom We guided...’ which means that both of them were from the people of guidance. Also, He says: ‘...as We had guided Nuh (Noah) before...’; this means that the guidance did not begin with Ishaq (Isaac) and Yaquub (Jacob), rather, it started with Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon them* before that: ‘...and among his descendants were Dawud (David), Sulaiman (Solomon), Ayyub (Job), Yusuf (Joseph), Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)— in this way We reward those who do good.’ (*al-An’am*: 84)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* continues:

وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَإِيلَاسَ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

Zachariah, John, Jesus, and Elijah – every one of them was righteous [85] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 85)

The True Lord did not mention eighteen prophets consecutively; rather, He separated them out of wisdom. He *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيُوشَعَ وَهُودًا وَكَانَ فَضْلُنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah, and Lot. We favoured each one of them over other people [86] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 86)

The matter is not restricted to these prophets. Rather, He *the Exalted* says:

وَمِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَأَجْنِبَتِهِمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٨٧﴾

And also some of their forefathers, their offspring, and their brothers: We chose them and guided them on a straight path [87] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 87)

When you look at these eighteen prophets that are mentioned here, you find that they are from the eighteen messengers that we have been commanded to believe in by name, and they are gathered in the statement of an-Nazhim:

In our record there are from amongst them eight
 After ten; the rest are seven, and they are
 Enoch, Hud, Jethro and Salih, and likewise
 Dhu al-Kifl, Adam and with the Chosen One they are sealed.

The True Lord did not make any of the prophets kings except for two: Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon them* in order to give us the idea that if Allah *the Almighty* wants to coerce a created being to do something that no one can do, He sends a Messenger king, for a slave cannot do anything to a king since the power resides with the king. Furthermore, society at that time was in need of a king to manage and regulate affairs and Allah *Glorified is He* does not want faith to be imposed by force, fear, and fright. Rather, He wants it to be out of choice, and this is why He made the majority of the prophets other than kings.

It was mentioned in one of the Hadiths (prophetic sayings): 'Shall He make you a prophet king or a messenger slave?'⁽¹⁾ He *peace and blessings be upon him* thus chose to be a Messenger slave since a king has authority and wealth which may cause him to transgress.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted Sulaiman (Solomon) and Dawud (David) *peace be upon them* to be from amongst the prophets and to be kings, and He wanted power and the mark of sovereignty and authority to be exemplified in them. As for Ayyub (Job), he was chosen to represent a different aspect which was that of trial and patience along with prophethood. Every prophet had his portion of the shared characteristic of prophethood as well as his distinctive feature. Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* also experienced trials at first, but in the end he gained sovereignty and authority. Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* had fame and many followers, such that we almost know of no other religions besides Judaism and Christianity. As for Zakariyya (Zechariah), Yahya (John), 'Isa (Jesus) and Ilyas (Elijah) *peace be upon them*, they possessed the character trait of abstinence.

As for Ismail (Ishmael), Alyasa' (Elisha), Yunus (Jonah) and Lut (Lot) *peace be upon them* they took what their lives were overflowing with: exalted

(1) Narrated by Ahmad 2/231

actions, noble qualities, upright manner, setting a good example and always being mentioned with excellence.

Thus, there are various aspects which the prophets represented. When the scholars came across 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*, they asked if he was from their progeny, and they found those who looked into the matter, and they came to the conclusion that he is from their progeny from his mother's side.

The mothers of a people are only Vessels

That are novel, but lineage is mainly preserved by fathers

The human element in 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is his mother, and it was with this that Abu Ja'far Mohamed Al-Baqir, the imam of debate, argued in the presence of Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf Ath-Thaqafi, when it was said to him, 'You claim that you are from the family of Allah's Messenger, Muhammad, and from his progeny, even though Allah's Messenger, Muhammad does not have any offspring!' Imam Al-Baqir Allah *be pleased with him* said to him, 'It is as if you have not read the Quran.' He replied, 'Which part of the Quran?' He said, 'Read "... and among his descendants were..." until you get to "... 'Isa (Jesus)..." 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is thus from the offspring of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* and is that from the father's side or the mother's side?' He replied, 'From the mother's side.' He then said, 'Likewise, we are from the offspring of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.'

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

ذَٰلِكَ هُدَىٰ ٱللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ ٱلْمَن يَشَآءُ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِۦ ۚ وَلَوْ أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

Such is God's guidance, with which He guides whichever of His servants He will. If they had associated other gods with Him, all their deeds would have come to nothing [88]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 88)

Dhalik (such) is a demonstrative for that which follows it, and what is intended by it is the guidance by which He (Allah) guided the people. We find that the word *huda* (guidance) refers to an objective for which a short path, that leads to it, has been laid. Our Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who created, and He is the One Who set the objective. He sets, clarifies, and shows the path

that leads to the objective. When guidance is attributed to Allah *the Exalted* then it is proof of the source and the origin, i.e. guidance is from Him. The word *huda* (guidance) is at one time attributed to *Al-Wahib* (the Giver), who is the True Lord, and in other times, it is attributed to the Prophets. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '... Follow, then, their guidance...'.

This is alluding to the way that Allah revealed to His messengers *peace be upon them*. Therefore, the True Lord guides all of mankind by showing them what is good. The one who devotes himself to what Allah shows, out of respect for his faith, will be helped by Him, and He will increase him in guidance. He wants to confirm for man that He has given him the ability to choose, so if you choose something you are not choosing it because our Lord is forcing you. Rather, you chose it because of the One Who created you with the ability to choose. Nothing happens in the universe that is outside of Allah's will. So, if Allah *Glorified is He* had wanted all of mankind to be guided, no one would be able to disobey. Rather, He wanted them to have the ability to choose. Every action that any one of them does is willed by Allah *the Exalted*. Yet, what He wills is not always liked by His slaves. This is why the scholars have said that there is a will in the universe and a will in the Revealed Law. As long as something is in Allah's Sovereignty then it is Allah's Will. The will in the Revealed Law is what is commanded, and what differs from it is the will in the universe. This is due to the fact that He has created you with the ability to choose.

An example of this – and to Allah belongs the highest similitude – is when you give your son a pound, and with a pound one has the ability to buy something. He takes the pound, and then goes to the market, and he is free to do what he wants with it. You say to him, 'Listen. If you buy a copy of the Quran, or a good book, or some sweets for you to share with your brothers, then I will be happy with you, and I will reward you well. If you buy a packet of playing cards, or you spend the pound on something I am not pleased with, then I will be angry with you, and I will never give you money again.'

With this statement, you have given your son freedom of choice, and when he goes to the market and buys a packet of playing cards, he does not do it out of compulsion from you because you are the one who gave him the choice. However, you spoke to him and asked him to make a good choice.

Allah *Glorified is He* has given man the ability to choose. If he chooses guidance, then Allah gives to him generously and if he chooses misguidance, then He will punish him.

With regards to the prophets, guidance came to them from Allah, for they were chosen, and when they devoted themselves to what the True Lord wanted, He granted them another kind of guidance which was to make righteous action beloved and dear to them. After that, Allah *the Almighty* makes it clear: 'Beware of thinking that there is someone who slips away from Me' since if they had associated partners with Him, their deeds would have all been in vain.

Thus, the True Lord did not create the creation and forced them into acts of obedience. Rather, He created them with the ability to choose, with regards to commandments, so they would enjoy the satisfaction of choosing Allah's Way. If they had associated partners with Him, their deeds would have all been in vain. The word *laww* (had they) is a conditional particle for something that is impossible. This is proof that they did not associate partners with Him, and their deeds were not in vain. The word *lahabita* is derived from *al-habt*, which means the nullification of deeds.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنَّبُوءَ فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهَا
هَٰؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوا بِهَا بِكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

**Those are the ones to whom We gave the Scripture,
wisdom, and prophethood. Even if these people now
disbelieve in them, We have entrusted them to others who
do not disbelieve [89] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 89)**

The Book is the way and *hukm* (authority) is the power and authority that Allah gave to some of them. *Alnubuwwah* (prophethood) means that He made them role models and exemplars for humanity. 'But if the disbelievers deny it, We have entrusted it to a people who do not disbelieve.' (*al-An'am*: 89) He *Glorified and Exalted is He* has given us exemplars from the righty-guided messengers, the prophets and those He has chosen from their ancestors, their descendants and their brothers. These people are the ones who have come to

take them by the hand and lead them out of darkness and into light. If some people refuse to be guided, then Allah *Glorified is He* will entrust other people to carry His Ways so that they can be the element of good that remains until the hour is established.

Who are those 'people'? Some say that it is Quraysh that are being alluded to, and what is meant by His statement: '... We have entrusted it to a people who do not disbelieve.' (*al-An'am*: 89) are those from Medina, i.e. the Helpers. Or, what is meant by this noble passage is that every denier and disbeliever and likewise anyone who devotes himself to Allah and obeying Him, which could be a group of people who disbelieve in this truth, then Allah *the Exalted* will entrust a people who establish, defend and protect it. The reason for this is that He does not send down something good to the creation and then wipe it out. Rather, He must preserve it as an argument upon the creation. '... But if the disbelievers deny it, We have entrusted it to a people who do not disbelieve.' (*al-An'am*: 89) This shows that the people who do good to others are always entrusted by Allah. An example of this is the one who extends his hand to assist a weak person from among His creation, and then this weak person has been summoned by Him into existence. Whoever extends his hand to help has made himself a trustee for our Lord since he is doing what Allah *Glorified is He* requires, by making himself a means of it. This is because Allah is the Lord of all. He teaches all, He takes care of all and He provides for all. In this way, the one who does goodness and makes himself a trustee in Allah's behalf becomes certain that he is spreading goodness to His creation, in addition to being certain that He will reward Him many times more than what he gave. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ فَبِهِدَّهُمْ أَقْتَدَ قُلْ لَا
 أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

Those were the people God guided, '[Prophet], follow the guidance they received.' Say, 'I ask no reward for it from you: it is a lesson for all people' [90] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 90)

'Allah has guided...' (*al-An'am*: 90) also refers to the guidance of significance (that they are chosen), and the guidance of assistance. The proof is that He

said: 'Follow, then, their guidance...' (*al-An'am: 90*). Our master the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* is being addressed since the first part of the word *ula'ika, ula'i* (those) is a demonstrative for that which follows it, while the other part *ka* is for addressing the Prophet. 'Those were the people Allah has guided. Follow then their guidance...' (*al-An'am: 90*). When we read this noble statement, we say '*iqtadi*', and we do not say '*iqtadih*'. You do not pronounce the *h* unless you are stopping, and they call it the '*h* of silence'. However, if you are not stopping, then you do not pronounce it. Each one of the messengers who was mentioned previously has a quality that distinguishes him. There are certain things that they all share, such as sincere slavery to Allah, faith in Him and the belief that He is One in His Essence, His Attributes and His Actions. All of them subscribe to these foundations. Each one of them is distinguished by a quality of goodness. Our masters Sulaiman (Solomon) and Dawud (David) *peace be upon them* had power, authority, and sovereignty. Ayyoub (Job) *peace be upon him* had the power to be patient with trials. Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* had the power to be patient, and then he became a powerful ruler. Our master Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* had the power to submit to Allah *the Exalted* whilst in the belly of the whale, while Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* was truthful in what he promised.

What is required, then, of Allah's Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is that he followed all of them, which means that he was like Sulaiman (Solomon), Dawud (David), Ishaq (Isaac), Yaqub (Jacob), Ayyub (Job), Yusuf (Joseph) and Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon them*. He was required to take the distinguishing quality of each of them and to share with them in that which is general, which is Allah's Oneness. With this, all the distinguishing qualities of all the Prophets were gathered in our master Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was commanded by His Lord, we must then believe that he has carried out the command, and as long as the virtues of the Prophets were gathered in him, then it is right for him to be the seal of the Prophets and the Messengers. '... (And) Say, 'I ask no reward for it (this message) from you. It is a lesson for all people.' (*al-An'am: 90*)

Why would a reward be demanded? You do not ask for a reward from someone unless the work you did for him benefitted him somehow such that

you would deserve to be given something. It is as if the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* deserves to be rewarded for what he brought to his nation, but he conveys from His Lord: Say to them that, indeed, you have renounced this reward.

Compare between the one who brings some benefit to any one of you, something that does not take up more than half an hour of his time, and the one who does something for you that benefits you throughout your life in this world and beyond, in the Hereafter, then he says to you, 'I do not want any reward from you.'

Not asking for a reward can be said of all the Messengers except for two, and it is not found in the Quran that they said it. If you look in the chapter of *ash-Shura*, you find that the True Lord talks about Musa (Moses), and Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them*. Then, He talks about the remaining messengers. The word *ajr* (reward) is not mentioned in the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) or the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them*. However, reward is mentioned in regards to prophets other than them. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Their brother Nuh (Noah) said to them, "Will you not be mindful of God? I am a faithful messenger sent to you. Be mindful of God and obey me. I ask no reward of you from it, for my reward is only with the Lord of the Worlds.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 106-109) Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Shu'aib (Jethro) said to them, "Will you not be mindful of Allah? I am a faithful messenger to you. Be mindful of Allah and obey me. I ask no reward of you for it, for my reward is only with the Lord of the Worlds.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 177-180)

When you examine the chapter of *ash-Shura*, you find all the prophets, and you find 'I ask no reward of you for it...' along with all of their statements except for our master Musa (Moses) and our Master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them*. Why is this? We indeed say that the one who renounces the reward is the one who brings benefit to them.

With regards to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* we find that benefit was indeed directed towards him and brought to him by Pharaoh, who raised him. It is as if he took the reward beforehand, and this is why Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did not say to Pharaoh, 'I do not ask you for a reward.' Also, the Quran mentions Pharaoh's statement: 'Pharaoh said, "Did we not

bring you up as a child among us? Did you not stay with us for many years?"' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 18)

Likewise, the issue of reward is not mentioned in the story of our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* because he addressed his father Azar, and it would not make sense for him to say, 'I do not ask you for a reward.' In this way, the issue of reward is blotted from the stories of our master Ibrahim (Abraham) and our master Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them* but remains with the rest. This shows that the Quran has wisdom in the subtlest of its details, and this is due to the fact that the One speaking is our Lord. Our master Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is also distinguished by saying, 'I ask no reward of you for it...' except for one verse that does not contain this renouncing of reward: 'I ask no reward from you for this, only the affection due to kin....' (*ash-Shura*: 23).

Love is an act of goodness that comes from the love of the heart. As for an act of goodness that does not stem from love in the heart, this is a *ma'ruf* (act of courtesy) since man acts with courtesy with those he loves and those he does not love. This is why our Lord says: 'If they strive to make you associate with Me anything about which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. Yet, keep their company in this life according to what is right...' (*Luqman*: 15).

Courtesy, therefore, is an act of superficial goodness, and when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asks that relatives be loved, is he referring to His own relatives, or the love of your relatives? It is relatives in an absolute sense and also the relatives of the one speaking, and he is the messenger who is conveying from Allah.

If we were to take '... only the affection due to kin...' (*ash-Shura*: 23) to mean the relatives of the speaker who is our master the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, then we would have never been able to properly reward him. However, if each one of us takes charge of showing goodness and courtesy to his people, then this is bringing together the spheres of goodness in all mankind.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: '... it is a lesson for all people' (*al-An'am*: 90), and this is what gives us the combining

of spheres, and everyone becomes concerned with his relatives, thus, competing and contending with one another to be good to them. Everyone is keen to expand his sphere of relatives. Here goodness becomes widespread, and love is made to last.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى بَشَرٍ مِّن شَيْءٍ قُلْ مَن أَنزَلَ الْكِتَابَ
الَّذِي جَاء بِهِ مُوسَى نُورًا وَهُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُونَهُ قُرْطُبِسَ تُبَدُونَهَا وَتُخْفُونَ كَثِيرًا
وَعِلْمُهُمَّ مَالٌ تَعْلَمُونَ أَتَسْمَعُونَ وَلَا ءَابَاؤُكُمْ قُلِ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

They have no grasp of God's true measure when they say, 'God has sent nothing down to a mere mortal.' Say, 'Who was it who sent down the Scripture, which Moses brought as a light and a guide to people, which you made into separate sheets, showing some but hiding many? You were taught things that neither you nor your forefathers had known.' Say, 'God [sent it down],' then leave them engrossed in their vain talk [91] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 91)

The discussion is about those who reject and refuse to have faith in Allah *the Exalted*. The command comes to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to make it clear to them that they have not given Allah His true measure. The meaning of *qadr* (measure or rank) is knowledge of rank. His true measure cannot be fully understood by us human beings. Therefore, we understand Him according to our own ability and according to what has been asked of us, for the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Glory be to You! We cannot enumerate Your praise! You are as You have praised Yourself!'⁽¹⁾

When someone praises someone else, it shows that he has evaluated the extent that this person should be praised. When we evaluate Allah's rank, then we must know that He possesses all the attributes of perfection; they do not come to an end, and they cannot be enumerated. It is from the True Lord's

(1) Narrated by Muslim in the Book of Prayer, Abu Dawud in the Book of Prayer and Witr, an-Nasa'i in the Book of Standing in the Night, At-Tirmidhi in the Book of Supplications, Ibn Majah in the Book of Supplications, Malik in the (Muwatta') in the Book of Touching the Quran and narrated by Ahmad in the Musnad 1:96,118

Mercy that He taught us how to praise Him in order for us not to fall into difficulty. Man does not have the ability to fully encompass Allah's beauty and majesty such that he could praise Him as He deserves to be praised. If a slave could encompass this – and he never will – then from where would he get an expression to carry out this praise? There is no rhetorician or man of letters who is able to compose expressions that can sufficiently articulate Allah's praise. The True Lord *Glorified is He* clarified for us via His Messenger: I have taken this matter upon Myself, and relieved you of it, so that you can all be equal. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Glory be to You! We cannot enumerate Your praise! You are as You have praised Yourself!'

In the phrase 'All praise be to Allah' alone, all of mankind is made equal. It is from His Mercy that He made all of mankind equal in knowing how to praise Him. The True Lord mentions here the situation in which it is negated that they have truly understood Allah's measure. Why, O Lord, are they not able to truly understand your measure? The answer is: '..."Allah has sent nothing down to a mere mortal"' (*al-An'am*: 91). This means that they denied that Allah *the Almighty* had chosen some of His created being and made them worthy of receiving His Way in order to convey it to the rest of the creation. The response comes from the True Lord for His Messenger to refute them: 'Say, "Who was it who sent down the Scripture, which Musa (Moses) brought as a light and a guide to people..."' (*al-An'am*: 91).

So, the ones who say this must believe that a book was sent down to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* that the argument proves to be properly stated. The disbelievers of Mecca did not believe in any messenger, yet, they knew about the people of the Book which is proven by their statement: '... If only the Scripture had been sent down to us, we would have been better guided than them.' (*al-An'am*: 157)

We say that if you were to look closely at this verse of this chapter of the Quran, you will find that the matter applies to someone specific from those who were overcome by the argument. In the history of the Prophetic biography, we find that one of the rabbis was persistently saying things about Islam. His name was Malik ibn as-Saif⁽¹⁾, and the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings*

(1) *The story of Malik ibn As-Saif may Allah accurse him with The Messenger of Allah*

be upon him met him. A rabbi is a Jewish scholar, and he is supposed to be abstinent and detached for the sake of knowledge, but this man was fat. The normal habit of those who detached themselves for the sake of worship and knowledge was that they only took the provision that they needed, and this was because of a line in the Torah: 'Indeed, Allah hates the fat rabbi.' When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* learnt that Malik ibn As-Saif, who was one of the Jewish rabbis, was saying many things about Islam, he said to him, 'Does it say in your Torah "Indeed, Allah hates the fat rabbi?"' The man was dumbfounded and he said, 'Never has Allah revealed anything unto man', meaning Allah has never revealed anything the like of what you are saying unto man. This is how we know that a statement like this came from the people of the Book. When Malik made this remark some Jewish men stood up and said to him, 'How could you say, "Never has Allah revealed anything unto man"! He said, 'Muhammad made me angry, and the anger made me respond with falsehood.' Jews who heard him said, 'Therefore, it is not appropriate for you to be a rabbi since you have dishonoured us. They ostracised him, and then put Ka'ab ibn Al-Ashraf in his place.

'... Say, "Who was it who sent down the Scripture, which Musa (Moses) brought as a light and a guide to people, which you made into separate sheets, showing some but hiding many? You were taught things that neither you nor your forefathers had known." Say, "Allah [sent it down]." Then, leave them engrossed in their vain talk.' (*al-An'am*: 91)

So, the divine writ here is the book that was sent down to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* which is the Torah, and they treated it like mere leaves of paper or detached pages. What they wanted from them was made manifest, and what they did not want was hidden, such as what they did regarding the matter of stoning being a punishment for adultery. Therefore, they had previously hidden what Allah *the Exalted* had sent down to them, and the True Lord clarifies this in numerous verses: '... but they too forgot some of what they were told to remember...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 14).

Those who did not forget it hid some of it and disclosed some of it. Those who did not hide it distorted it and corrupted it with their tongues. Thus, there are two kinds of forgetting: hiding and distorting. If only they had restricted

themselves to this and stopped there. Instead, they came up with their own fabrications and said that they were from Allah. 'Woe to those who write something down with their own hands and then claim, "This is from God," in order to make some small gain....' (*al-Baqara*: 79) The True Lord *Glorified is He* continues by saying: '..."You were taught things that neither you nor your forefathers had known." Say, "Allah [sent it down]." Then, leave them engrossed in their vain talk.' (*al-An'am*: 91)

If the discussion here is referring to the disbelievers of Mecca, then the Quran gave them what neither they nor their fathers knew since Islam came after a break in the sequence of messengers. If the discussion is referring to the people of the Book, then it is a true statement since when they hid things, the Quran exposed what they hid and what they distorted. The Quran came and straightened this out for them, for it is as if they had been confronted with the truth, and they had to abrogate it with the falsehood that they had changed and distorted. The True Lord's statement: 'Say: "Allah"...' means that the One Who sent down the book is Allah *the Almighty*.

When the True Lord uses the form of a question, we know that for Him to really ask a question is impossible since He knows everything. He only uses the form of questioning known as 'negating interrogative' or 'affirming interrogative' since He wants a response of affirmation from those who stubbornly deny, and if they do not say anything or they are too confused or embarrassed to speak, then say to them, O, Muhammad: 'Say: "Allah [has revealed that Divine Book]!"—and then leave them wading in vain discourse, amusing themselves' (*al-An'am*: 91).

The Arabic word '*khawd*' (wading) literally means 'stepping in a large amount of water'; the eyes cannot clearly see where the feet are being placed and the person can easily fall in a hollow. The word '*khawd*' here is used to indicate the disbelievers' delving into falsehood. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And then leave them wading in vain discourse, amusing themselves' (*al-An'am*: 91). Their actions are only jests of amusement on their part that cannot stand against the call to the Truth. Indeed, the call to the Truth will continue unscathed and they will remain unable to defeat it. All they are doing is delving into futile and frivolous falsehood.

However, does this mean that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* abandoned them? No, because every time he was able to get their attention, he informed and reminded them of his Message. Thereafter, after Islam had become predominant in the Arabian Peninsula and the Message had been made clear to all people there, they were given the choice of either accepting its presence or fighting its Message. The miracle of Prophet Muhammad came in the form of the Quran that the Arabs realized, was of a miraculous nature. Allah *Glorified is He* who had revealed the Torah and then revealed the Quran, rich in blessings, says after that:

وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ مُصَدِّقُ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنْذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَهُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

This is a blessed Scripture that We have sent down to confirm what came before it and for you to warn the Mother of Cities and all around it. Those who believe in the Hereafter believe in this Scripture, and do not neglect their prayers [92] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 92)

The Arabic word '*anzalna*' ('we have revealed') arises from the Arabic root letters (*nun*, *zay* and *lam*). They are used to indicate the revelation of the Quran in various ways. In one instance, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Behold, We have revealed this [Divine Book] on the Night of Power' (*al-Qadr*: 1). In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...We have revealed it step by step' (*al-Isra*': 106).

In one verse, Allah *Glorified is He* attributed the Revelation (*nuzuul*) to the Quran itself: 'And as a guide towards the Truth have we revealed this [Quran]' (*al-Isra*': 105).

In another verse, He attributed it to the one who carried the Message to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* namely Angel Gabriel *peace be upon him* by saying: 'The Trustworthy Spirit [Angel Gabriel] has come down (*nazala*) with it (as a revelation)' (*ash-Shu'ara*': 193).

There are, therefore, several varied lexical expressions of the Arabic letters (*nun*, *zay* and *lam*). What are the reasons for their different lexical derivations

in the verses mentioned above? We know that the Quran was not sent down as a whole to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but was rather revealed as a whole to the lowest heaven when it was transported from the Preserved Tablet to the world. From that point, the Quranic verses were revealed in instalments according to worldly events. The Arabic word '*anzala*' (have revealed) refers to the transfer of the Quran from the Preserved Tablet to the sky of this world. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Behold, we have revealed this [Divine Book] (*anzalnahu*) on the Night of Power'.

Thus, we can conclude that the Quran was revealed in its entirety during that first transfer from the Preserved Tablet to the sky of this world on the Night of Power. It was then sent down in instalments over the period of twenty-three years that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* lived in this world after he first received the Revelation.

When Allah *Glorified is He* is referring to the Quran being revealed in its entirety from the Preserved Tablet to the lowest heavens, He uses the word '*anzalnahu*', where the initial '*a*' refers to the '*hamza sign*' used to indicate transitive verbs. (In Arabic sentences, a transitive verb is a verb that acts upon one or more objects, as opposed to intransitive verbs that have no object.)

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* refers to the Quran being revealed successively from the sky of this world over 23 years corresponding to successive events. In this case, the word '*nazzala*' is used, because it indicates the succession of the revealed verses throughout the life of Prophet Muhammad's prophethood.

A third verse refers to the one who carried the revelation down to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that is Angel Gabriel. Here, the word '*nazala*' is used.

That is, when talking about the Quran, we can say *nazala*, *anzala* or even *nazzala*. The word '*nazala*' also indicates that the Quran was revealed from a higher power to be received by someone of lower status. When Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to listen to a ruling being sent down, He orders His Prophet: 'Say: "Come (*ta'alu*), let me convey unto you what Allah has [really] forbidden to you' (*al-An'am*: 151).

The meaning of the word '*ta'alu*' (come) is: 'Ascend to a higher level' because we live on the earth, and we are warned of making universal laws that govern our earthly lives by ourselves; these worldly legislations must be constructed under the light of Allah's Way, otherwise we will enter into a state of decay. Allah *Glorified is He* wants the exalted legislation to rule us. Thus, we must receive our laws from the highest heaven in order not to deviate and go astray with false laws that oppose the framework of Allah's Way.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *al-An'am*: 'And this [Quran] is also a Divine Book which We have revealed—blessed...' (*al-An'am*: 92). This is a statement that only holds true for the Quran. It is true that all the previous Divine Books laid down a way of life for its followers, but the miracles of all the previous prophets were not related to their books. As we know, the miracle of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was the staff, and the book that laid down the rules for his followers was the Torah. The miracle of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was curing the blind and the leper and bringing the dead back to life by Allah's Will, while the book of commandments that was revealed to him was the Injil (Gospel). However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was distinguished because his miracle was his Book of commandments itself.

Each of the previous Messages was set for a limited time and place. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came with the universal, invincible Religion, and thus his miracle came in the form of his Message. If Prophet Muhammad's miracle had been physical, i.e. material in form and similar in nature to the previous miracles, his miracle would have come to an end. In addition, we are only sure of the miracles of the previous Prophets because the Quran mentioned them. Each one of the previous miracles was suited to its set time and place, while Islam came for all times and places. This is why the miracle had to accompany the commandment itself. For this reason, people who embrace Islam after the time of Prophet Muhammad, even until the Hour is established, can say, 'Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah and the Quran is his miracle'.

The Quran is blessed. When we speak in our local Arabic dialect, we use the words which have the most eloquent uses in the Arabic language. There are people who say: 'By Allah, this food was surely blessed. It was made for

two people, yet four people ate from it and there is still more leftover'. In Arabic, something is said to be blessed when something gives more than its perceived volume.

The blessings of the Quran are predominant and clear. If we were to compare the size of the Quran to the size of many books, we would often find that the Quran is smaller in size. Despite that disparity, the Quran leads to righteousness and benefaction, and contains blessings, legislations, miracles, and secrets that would overwhelm its number of pages, a number which is smaller than many other books. Some people have tried to interpret the meanings of the Quranic verses in numerous books, yet not one of them was able to arrive at the total and absolute reality that Allah *Glorified is He* intended in His Verses. Had the Quran served all its gifts during the age in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* lived, no other blessings would have been available for the new generations to receive and interpret. Thus, the newer generations have not lost interest in the Quran as they are presented with broader meanings.

Every concept has been clarified and every generation can take from the meanings of the Quran according to the understanding of their times. If Prophet Muhammad had completely interpreted its verses according to only his time, the Quranic meanings will have been limited to the early generations and no one after the Prophet will dare to offer any further interpretation. In fact, Prophet Muhammad knew that the Quran's gifts had no end, and he only clarified what the contemporary minds of his time were capable of understanding so that they will not deviate from it.

If the Quran had clearly said, 'Indeed, the earth is not flat and it revolves around the sun', would any mind (contemporary at that time) believe that fact? There are people nowadays who still falsely argue that the earth is a flat structure! Thus, we find that the Quran alluded to this fact subtly, so that minds can be slowly introduced to the idea. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'He causes the night to wind around the day, and causes the day to wind around the night' (*az-Zumar: 5*).

As long as the night winds around the day, and the day winds around the night in a way that resembles a sphere, then, surely, that structure around which

the day and night are revolving must be sphere-like. Allah *Glorified is He* gives a well-organised account in order for the minds of that time to become enlightened enough to understand this phenomenon.

Furthermore, the Quran says: 'Say (O Muhammad): "To Allah belongs the East and the West"' (*al-Baqara*: 142). This verse is a clear statement to all people because each one of us realizes the presence of these two directions for every specified point on earth. However, Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: '[He is] the Lord of the two farthest points of sunrise, and the Lord of the two farthest points of sunset' (*ar-Rahman*: 17). Now, did the minds living in Prophet Muhammad's time understand this? Yes, because he said at one point, 'Indeed, the sun rises from a certain place and it sets in another place'; when the sun is rising where you are, it is setting where I am, and when the sun is setting where you are, it is rising where I am. That is, for every moment of sunrise, there is a sunset beyond the horizon. Allah's statement is therefore confirmed: '[He is] the Lord of the two farthest points of sunrise, and the Lord of the two farthest points of sunset' (*ar-Rahman*: 17). Moreover, we know that the sun rises at a different angle every day, so there are many points on the horizon where the sun rises and sets throughout the year. Allah *Glorified is He* is Truthful when He says He is the Lord of all the points of sunrise and sunset.

Indeed, the Quran addresses us in a way that the minds of each generation can withstand. We find a reference in the Quran to new phenomena that were discovered in the present times. We also find that the new interpretation of any verse does not abrogate the previous interpretations, but actually builds on them.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not choose to give a complete commentary on the Quran because he had to interpret its verses by only referring to points that his contemporaries were able to contemplate which resulted in the interpretation being limited and not suitable for the later intellectuals. This is why Prophet Muhammad transmitted the Quranic verses regarding the matters concerned with of the universe which were subject to scientific reconsideration, without adding many words of explanation. But for the verses laying down commandments and rulings, his explanation was more profound as these matters were clear at that time. This is why Prophet Muhammad said about the Quran: 'Its wonders do not cease'.

The Quran gives us new wonders in every generation. Hence, the Quran is blessed due to the subtle references to the natural world that are mentioned in its verses, and will be blessed until the Last Hour is established.

‘And this [Quran] is also a Divine Book which We have revealed–blessed, confirming the truth of whatever still remains [of earlier revelations]’ (*al-An‘am: 92*). The earlier revelations are the books that were revealed ‘*bayna yadayhi*’ (literally ‘between the hands of it [the Quran]’ and translated as ‘confirming the truth of whatever still remains [of earlier revelations]’ in this verse). ‘Between the hands of something’, is an Arabic phrase that means ‘before this thing’. The books that were revealed ‘between the hands of the Quran’ are the well-known books, such as the Taurah and the Injil, since these are the two books that we still hear of today.

The Quran confirms the authenticity of the books revealed before it. This does not mean that it confirms the authenticity of what had been distorted, but rather, it confirms the integrity of the original texts. This is what ‘Abdullah ibn Salam⁽¹⁾ and others, who were scholars of the older scriptures, acknowledged when they embraced Islam. ‘Abdullah ibn Salam said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘My heart has been drawn to Islam, but I know that my people (the Jews) are a people who slander and who are arrogant. I want you (Prophet Muhammad) to ask them about me before I embrace Islam openly’. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them (the Jews), ‘What do you say about ‘Abdullah ibn Salam?’ They said, ‘He is our rabbi and the son of our rabbi, our chief and our leader’. They all mentioned his high status. ‘Abdullah ibn Salam then said, ‘I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah’. At this point, they began insulting ‘Abdullah. ‘Abdullah then said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Did I not tell you, O Messenger of Allah, that they are a people who slander?’

Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Quran in the verse under discussion: ‘...confirming the truth of whatever still remains [of earlier revelations]’ (*al-An‘am: 92*). If you want an illustration of that principle, look for the Quranic

(1) *The story of the conversion of ‘Abdullah ibn Salam to Islam*

ruling on any issue present in the Torah that the Jews previously had no reason to deny. You will find that the Quran agrees with the Torah on that issue.

An example of this is when the Quran mentioned the punishment of stoning. The Jews attempted to mitigate the ruling for stoning because a married woman had committed adultery and they wanted to be courteous with her. They raised the issue with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'Indeed, the verdict not to stone is better for us and for her'. It is remarkable that although they did not believe in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they wanted a verdict from him. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them, 'Bring the book (that you believe in)'. They brought the scriptures they had and found the verse regarding stoning. The Quran confirms that which came before it, without hiding, distorting or interpreting any concepts.

The fact that they hardly looked into the issues that they were addressing illustrates their corruption, deceit, and arrogance, but their falsehood does not blot out the traces of the Truth. The discussion of these issues requires a tactful investigator.

Furthermore, we find that Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned a parable in the Torah that describes the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* repeated this parable in the Quran, in the verse: 'Muhammad is Allah's Apostle; and those who are [truly] with him are firm and unyielding (*ashidda'*) towards all deniers of the Truth, [yet] merciful (*ruhama'*) towards one another' (*al-Fath*: 29).

When we look at the Arabic word *ashidda'* (firm and unyielding) and the Arabic word *ruhama'* (merciful), we might think these refer to contradictory temperaments; but in reality there is no contradiction here. An investigative person who examines the verse carefully will understand from this statement that Islam does not want Muslims to have a single, unchangeable temperament; rather, it wants them to have all kinds of normal temperaments. If their character was to be permanently firm and unyielding, they will not be able to be merciful when it is appropriate to show mercy. On the other hand, if their natural disposition and character was to be lenient at all times, they will not be able to be firm when it is appropriate to show firmness.

Moreover, Islam requires Muslims to adhere to both spiritual and material values in order for each value to safeguard its counterpart. If the Muslims were inclined only towards material laws, their civilization will become malicious. On the other hand, if they had only inclined towards intangible values, they will not have been able to establish a lasting and enduring civilization. Allah *Glorified is He* wants civilization to draw its culture from the spiritual and the material realms.

This is why Islam respects both spiritual and material values. In the Jewish understanding of life, the spiritual values were missing, while the Christian culture was immersed in spiritual matters but did not take care of the material world. The Quran confirmed part of what preceded it, and this is why the verse we are discussing informed us of the people of the book.

The verse also directs its warning to the people of Quraysh who reside in Mecca. Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'In order that you may warn the foremost of all cities and all who dwell around it'. We know that the foremost of all cities is Mecca. Some people have tried to use this verse as a proof to say, 'The Quran was only revealed to the Arabs, as they are the people who dwell around Mecca'. We respond by saying to these people, 'You have not properly understood the verse's expression. To start with, what does the word 'around' indicate? Around any specific point there is a circular area. The diameter of this area can be specified as twenty or one hundred kilometres, but it can also be an unspecified distance. Therefore, the word 'around' includes everything that is around Mecca, and what is around any point can include every place in the world'.

Why was it called '*Umm al-qura*' in Arabic, a word that means 'the foremost' or 'the Mother of all cities'? After Hajar *peace be upon her* the mother of Prophet Ismail (Ishmael), settled with her infant son in the valley that had no vegetation and the water of *Zamzam* came forth, the people multiplied in that valley, and it became the foremost of all cities. Additionally, the city of Mecca contains the Ka'ba and its people closely safeguard it. During the Pilgrimage (*Hajj*), people travel from every direction to visit this valley, just as children rush to take refuge with their mother.

'In order that you may warn the foremost of all cities and all who dwell around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter believe in this [warning]'

(*al-An'am*: 92). Therefore, who are those who believe in this book that was sent down affirming that which came before it and also warning the foremost of all cities and those that dwell around it, and who are those who adherently believe in the Hereafter? And what is the connection between warning the Meccans and those who dwell around it, and believing in the Hereafter? The reason is that no one implements the Quranic teachings except after believing in the Hereafter.

For this reason, these people will flee from disobedience and desire obedience when they have knowledge of the rewards awaiting the good deeds and the punishments prepared for the grave sins. Those who do not believe in the Hereafter will not hear you or submit in obedience to any virtuous commands. They will not desist from theft, arrogance or any other grave sin because they have no fear of the consequences. Such a person may say, 'I am not required to do anything. Nothing can restrict my freedom'.

Such a person does not consider the matter properly or deeply. They are under the assumption that the commandments of Allah *Glorified is He* restrict only their freedom, when in fact, these laws justly restrict everyone's freedom. When religion forbids you from committing theft or glancing unlawfully at women, it is also ordering all of mankind not to steal your belongings or harm your female family members. Thus, your rights are only secured if you live under a system of equal obligations and rights.

The people who believe in the Hereafter want salvation from punishment and the security of good rewards. Ponder this example, which is only for clarification as Allah *Glorified is He* is far above any comparison. When you say to your child, 'Seek knowledge', he may respond, 'I do not want any certificate'. His father may then force him to study in his early years. But after a few years we find that young people themselves start working hard without being forced, as they now seek success and fear failure; if there was no exam at the end of the year, this hard work will be futile. Thus, the ones who are closer to the calls of justice and goodness are those who believe in the Hereafter.

'And those who believe in the life to come believe in this [warning]; and it is they who are ever-mindful of their prayer' (*al-An'am*: 92). Why is being mindful of prayers mentioned here? Prayers are the pillars of Islam, and

whoever establishes their prayers fulfils the foundation of the Religion. When we analyse people's nature, we find that they flee from obedience because it takes up time that they like to spend in playing. When you say to someone, for example, 'Take a short break from your work to pray', he may respond by saying, 'No, because leaving my work will make me lose some profit'. If you sincerely obey Allah's orders, the blessings will make up for the time you assume you have lost.

Additionally, if you look at the pillars of Islam, you will find that they do not take up much time. The first pillar of Islam, which is to testify that there is no god but Allah *Glorified is He* and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, only requires you to say it once. Concerning the third pillar, which is obligatory charity (*Az-zakat*), it only takes a small amount of time to give to the poor on the day of harvest. There is also the obligatory charity on monetary savings that is paid at the end of the year and fasting the month of *Ramadan*. And although fasting takes up a part of your day, it only comes once a year. The Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) is obligatory only once in a lifetime if one is able. Therefore, apart from the second pillar of Islam, which is prayers, the remaining pillars of Islam are trouble-free for anyone who is interested in doing them.

Prayers are performed five times every day and it takes up more time than the other pillars. In order to perform our prayers correctly, a person must purify their self from both minor and major impurity. They must also purify their place of Prayer. This is why prayer is a deeply rooted pillar in Islam. You do not know if a person is a Muslim unless he gets up to pray after hearing the call to prayer. This is the distinguishing point between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. The prayer is different from the other pillars which are performed only at set times, but even though this is the case, they are still deeply rooted pillars as well.

Indeed, all of Islam's legislations, the pillars and the branches, were ordained through revelation, except for the prayer. It came as a direct order from Allah *Glorified is He* to Prophet Muhammad. Prayer is the act of worship where the Creator summons His creation into His presence. This is why it had to be legislated in a unique way in His Divine Presence.

Being the foundation of religion, the prayer gathers all of the other pillars of Islam together. The Muslim says while praying, 'I testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'. He also fasts by abstaining from the desires of the stomach and the flesh, and even abstains from every movement that is not included in the prayer. Praying also includes some *zakat* (obligatory charity) because wealth is a derivative of work and time. When you pray, you are learning to give up some of your time for Allah *Glorified is He*. You also face the Ka'ba during prayers, just as someone performing the major pilgrimage (*Hajj*) or the minor pilgrimage (*Umra*) faces the *Ka'ba*. Therefore, all the other pillars of Islam are gathered in the pillar of prayer.

In addition to all the pillars of Islam being incorporated in it, social equality is also realised to reform the earth. Reformation of the earth requires various talents and various abilities. It is not possible for one reformer on earth to gather all these talents; rather, the skills needed for the world's reformation must be dispersed and distributed amongst all mankind. It is not possible for one person to be an engineer, doctor, lawyer, manufacturer, ploughman, farmer, and merchant at the same time. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* distributed the requirements for reforming the earth amongst the people. This would make their skills necessary for each other, and not merely a courtesy. Hence, you are in need of the skills that you do not have, and consequently you go to someone who has these skills, and that person needs your talents in the same manner.

If anyone wants to develop some skills that other people are capable of in order to be independent of them, they have to spend a lot of effort to reach this level. If plumbers charge higher wages than he can afford, and he tries to learn their trade, he has no choice but to learn it from a skilled worker. The same goes for all the other skills and professions. However, mankind only sees wealth as being the main aspect in which people differ.

Some people assume that gaining financial wealth or having wealth tied in fixed assets is the only necessary skill. For example, a student of religious jurisprudence may spend twenty years to earn and learn the necessary knowledge to become a scholar. If someone asks a scholar for his opinion on a particular issue of jurisprudence, and the scholar gives it to him for free, that

answer will be the sum of the material hardships that this scholar went through for a long period of time, researching books, listening to teachers, and deriving rulings. The scholar subjugated himself for twenty years so that people can benefit from these legal opinions with ease.

If we look at someone who works polishing shoes, and we see the owner of the shoe stretching his leg while the shoe polisher works, you may say to yourself, 'Why is there so much arrogance from the shoe owner, stretching his leg in the direction of the shoe polisher? Why does this shoe polisher accept this gloominess and misery?' You have to realize that you are looking at the shoe owner while he is taking a break, and the shoe polisher is in his working attire. If you knew how the owner of the shoes earns his livelihood, you will know that he too had subjugated himself for a period of time to earn the money he needed to pay the shoe polisher. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'So that they might avail themselves of one another's help' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32).

Some people only look at employment and subjugation in terms of being poor or wealthy. The truth is that every person on earth is employed by others due to the gift or talent he has, and that other people employ him due to the gifts and talents that they do not possess. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to connect mankind together by these compulsory means, and not by mere courtesy. When a man needs money to feed his family and the only job available is to empty out the sewers, he will get the necessary tools and do his job to provide for his dependents. However, people who are not bound by necessity may not choose to do this kind of work and provide that necessary skill to society. If all of humanity were living in opulence, will anyone regularly volunteer to empty out the sewers? That would never happen. A job is done out of necessity and not courtesy.

Reformation of the earth requires people to share their available energy, but this ability may not last for a long time. A man may have a particular strength at a particular time and then, later, may become weaker. Another may currently own wealth and riches and later declare bankruptcy. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* has informed us that He made the days alternate among mankind. This ensures that the world is set straight by these ties of necessity. It may appear to us that some of these gifts make some people

distinguished. These gifts may be in the form of their appearance, their elegance, or their modes of transport. A doctor may need to work in more than one place. If he travels by foot or by public transport, he may arrive late and tired to his various shifts, and for this reason he buys a car. Someone may perceive the car as a unique gift forgetting the fact that this car is actually helping the doctor serve and save others.

Another example is your simple cup of tea. Presume that you give a pound to an office worker to buy tea from the grocery. The worker goes to buy a packet of tea, and finds a grocer who supplies him with one. You generally do not realize that this packet of tea took the time and effort of many people to reach you. Allah *Glorified is He* made some people responsible for growing the tea in another country. He also made other people responsible for importing it. Then the packet of tea comes to you in order for you to make a cup of tea to drink in comfort.

All matters of life are maintained by people being employed to each other. That is why there are social differences which our jobs define, but Allah *Glorified is He* dissolves these differences by making the prayer a means of equality for everyone. You notice that when the caller for prayer says, 'Allah is the Greatest' (*Allahu Akbar*), everyone is obligated to go to prayer. The rich people are obligated to attend just as much as the poor and the prince is obligated just as much as his guards. Everyone should leave their ranks outside the mosque so that they can stand in prayer as equals. Whoever has an arrogant boss can now see him prostrating to Allah *Glorified is He* in the same way as his employees. In this moment of equality, everyone is equal in their reformation of this world.

Let us assume that all of us pray the Daily Prayers by ourselves, but when the call to prayer is given for the Friday Prayer, Allah *Glorified is He* is commanding us to stop and leave everything we are doing in order to perform prayer together. The weak person sees the strong humbling himself before Allah just like he does; and the strong person sees the weak next to him in the line. And when we return to work, the mask of power and haughtiness has fallen off because we have all stood together in front of the One Creator and we are all equal. This is indeed the path for social equality.

If you wish to meet a person who has a very important position, you have to write a request. After this, he will either agree or refuse the request. If he agrees, he will ask you, 'What do you want to talk about?' He will set a time for you to come and sit with him. If you sit with him and lose track of time, he may stand up to indicate that the meeting has ended. However, our Lord says to us, 'Come to Me at any time. Talk to Me about anything. I will not end the meeting until you have finished'. This is a huge gift, and Allah *Glorified is He* bountifully gives it to His servants.

There is no Lordship that is better than this. Consequently, if we look at the pillar of prayer, we will find that it gathers all the virtues of Islam and leads to a virtuous society. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* has made it the second pillar for the establishment of Islam.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ قَالَ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوحَ إِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَمَنْ قَالَ
سَأُنْزِلَ مِثْلَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ فِي غَمَرَاتِ الْمَوْتِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ
بَاسِطُوا أَيْدِيهِمْ أَخْرِجُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهِ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

Who could be more wicked than someone who invents a lie against God, or claims, 'A revelation has come to me,' when no revelation has been sent to him, or says, 'I too can reveal something equal to God's revelation'? If you could only see the wicked in their death agonies, as the angels stretch out their hands [to them], saying, 'Give up your souls. Today you will be repaid with a humiliating punishment for saying false things about God and for arrogantly rejecting His revelations' [93] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 93)

When Allah *Glorified is He* speaks in the form of a question, the question is rhetorical and Allah, the Knower of everything, is not asking to receive an answer. The reason for this form of speech is that Allah *Glorified is He* does not want the answer to be clearly revealed by Him. Indeed, he could have said:

‘The one who invents a lie is wicked’. However, He placed it in the form of a question to emphasise the wickedness of a person who invents a lie about Allah. He is asking every believer to reflect on the matter in his mind and come up with the answer himself. Indeed, we punish or admonish a person who invents a lie about one of his colleagues or peers, so what about the gravity of inventing a lie about Allah *Glorified is He*? When you hear these words: ‘And who could be more wicked than he who invents a lie about Allah’, and you consider the matter thoroughly, you will find that no one is more wicked than such a person.

How can someone invent a lie about Allah *Glorified is He*? If someone claims that he is a Messenger from Allah and he is not, this is a lie about Allah *Glorified is He*. That false messenger is lying about Allah *Glorified is He* because He said that Allah had sent him when Allah had not.

The Arabic word ‘*iftira*’ (inventing a lie) refers to an intentional purposeful lie. It applies to claimed false prophecies such as the examples of Musaylamah the Liar, Sujah, Talha Al-Asadi and Al-Aswad Al-‘Ansi. Each one of these people claimed that they were prophets. However, no one asked them for miracles to prove their message! This was because each of them brought religious rulings that were easier for the people. One of them said, ‘I lessen the Prayer and obligatory charity is not compulsory’. Thus, they were followed by anyone who wanted to be relieved of religious commands and prohibitions. These followers wanted to have a religion without adhering to the requirements of religiosity. Hence, they found many supporters from among the hypocrites. One of these followers may even be well educated, but he embraces the belief in an impostor Prophet. You should ask the follower of this impostor, ‘Have you asked this person who claims that he is a prophet about their miracle?’ If a miracle is the first condition for believing in a Prophet, why have so many people not asked for it? It is because although religiosity is a natural disposition in the soul, what makes adhering to a religion difficult are the requirements that the religious commandments impose. Those who follow impostors are people with weak souls because they see someone who makes religious requirements easier for them. Thereafter, the matters of religion for them decay into chaos.

‘And who could be more wicked than he who invents a lie about Allah, or says, “This has been revealed unto me”, while nothing has been revealed to him?’ (*al-An‘am*: 93) A man claimed that he is a prophet and then said, ‘I will give you verses the like of these Quranic verses’. The Arabs were a nation whose ears enjoyed pleasant rhetoric and oration. What did this lying claimant who was called An-Nadr ibn Al-Harith, say to his followers. This liar claimed that one of his verses said, ‘By the grinders that grind (wheat), and the dough makers that produce dough, and the bakers who bake’. This is an example of his ludicrous verses. He could have tried painting a better picture by adding, ‘By the farmers when they farm, and the ploughmen when they plough. By the meals when they are eaten, and the digestive organs when they digest’. Of course, this speech is an example of empty drivel.

Allah *Glorified is He* only sends down His speech in a well-organised way, having a meaning that attracts the listener and conveys information that is of value as well. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the verse: ‘And who could be more wicked than he who invents a lie about Allah, or says, “This has been revealed unto me”, while nothing has been revealed to him?’ (*al-An‘am*: 93)

A man called 'Abdullah ibn Sa‘ad ibn Abu Sarh Al-Qurashi⁽¹⁾ was a foster brother of the Prophet’s Companion, 'Uthman ibn Affan, and a scribe of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He was sitting in the presence of Prophet Muhammad when this verse was revealed: ‘Now, indeed, We created man out of the essence of clay, and then caused him to remain as a drop of sperm in a well-established place (the womb). Then, we created out of the drop of sperm a clinging clot (germ-cell), and next we created out of the clinging clot an embryonic lump, and then we created within the embryonic lump bones, and after that we clothed the bones with flesh—and finally we brought [all] this into being as a new creation...’ (*al-Mu‘minun*: 12-14). He was dazzled by the stages in which Allah *Glorified is He* created man, and said, ‘Blessed, therefore, is Allah, the best of creators!’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, ‘Write it down, for these words (you uttered) have also been revealed’. The man became deluded and said, ‘If Muhammad is truthful, verses have been revealed to me as they have been

(1) *The story of the inspiration of 'Abdullah ibn Sa‘ad ibn Abu Sarh Al-Qurashi*

revealed to him. If he is a liar, I have said words similar to his words'. He then fled and joined the ranks of the disbelievers and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* deemed his blood violable.

In the year of the conquest (of Mecca) 'Uthman Allah *be pleased with him* brought him to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Pardon 'Abdullah'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was quiet. 'Uthman Allah *be pleased with him* said, 'Pardon him'. Prophet Muhammad was again quiet, and when 'Uthman repeated it a third time, 'Pardon him, O Messenger of Allah', Prophet Muhammad said, 'Yes'. This is because 'Uthman had a special status with Prophet Muhammad.

When 'Uthman ibn 'Affan left with the pardoned man, Prophet Muhammad then said to his Companions, 'Did I not tell you that anyone who sees him should kill him?' Our leader, 'Ibad ibn Bishr, said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I looked towards you, waiting for a sign or hint from you to take him'. Prophet Muhammad said to 'Ibad ibn Bishr, 'It is not befitting for a Messenger (of Allah) to have deceitful eyes'. After that, Ibn Abu Sarh became a Muslim and his Islam became sound.

What is the punishment for those people who invent lies about Allah *Glorified is He* and claim that Allah has sent revelation down to them? Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...If you could but see [how it will be] when these evildoers find themselves in the agonies of death, and the angels stretch forth their hands [saying], "Give up your souls! Today you shall be requited with suffering and [extreme] humiliation for having attributed to Allah other than the Truth, and for having persistently scorned His Messages in your arrogance!"' (*al-An'am*: 93).

The Arabic particle '*laaw*' (if) in the phrase: 'If you could but see', is a conditional particle. For example, you can say that if a particular person visits you, you will honour him. When you read the Quran, you may find the particle '*law*' used several times without an apodosis (the clause expressing the consequence). Why is that? Mentioning a particular apodosis restricts the meaning in the reader's mind. But if you want an apodosis that is not restricting, you should not clearly articulate it, leaving it for the listener to imagine it instead. For example, if a criminal living in a neighbourhood is causing problems for the residents and ends up in the hands of the police,

someone may describe the arrest by saying, 'If you could have seen the face of that tough guy when the police grabbed him!' Where is the apodosis here? It is not mentioned because it leaves the picture for it to be painted by the listener's mind without the limitations of language. Allah *Glorified is He* is saying here: '...If you could see when these evildoers will find themselves in the agonies of death...' (*al-An'am*: 93). The word '*ghamarat*' (Agonies) are severities that no one can free themselves from. Allah *Glorified is He* continues: 'And the angels stretch out their hands [saying], "Give up your souls..!"' (*al-An'am*: 93). Are they the angels of death who say that as they take their souls from their bodies, or is this order spoken by the angels of punishment? The answer is that both the angels of death and the angels of punishment can be involved. The angels of death who will take their souls may ask them, 'If you rejected and rebelled against many of Allah's orders, know that Allah *Glorified is He* has commanded us to take your souls. Are you able to rebel against what Allah *Glorified is He* has willed for you?' It could also be that the angels are ordering them to make their souls leave their bodies by their own hands. Finally, it could be a challenge for them to deliver themselves from the punishment which surrounds them.

The punishment of '*Al-Hawn*' (suffering and extreme humiliation) is a painful punishment that involves humiliation of the disbelievers. The forms of punishment mentioned in the Quran are various. Some verses describe a shameful suffering using the Arabic words '*al-muheen*' and '*muheena*'. Other verses show that the suffering is painful and grievous using the Arabic word '*aleem*.'

Thus, at one time the punishment is painful but contains no humiliation, and another time they have a punishment that is painful and humiliating. Why does Allah *Glorified is He* make them taste a shameful suffering? The answer comes from Allah's words: '...for having attributed to Allah other than the Truth and for having persistently scorned His Messages in your arrogance!' (*al-An'am*: 93). The example of the lies that some of them said is claiming false prophecy. In addition to that, they arrogantly scorned the verses that the natural intellect can easily accept. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and in their wickedness and self-exaltation they rejected them, although their minds were convinced of their Truth...' (*an-Naml*: 14).

Allah *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا فُرْدَىٰ كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَتَرَكْتُمْ مَا خَوَّلْنَاكُمْ وَرَاءَ
ظُهُورِكُمْ ۖ وَمَا نَرَىٰ مَعَكُمْ شُفَعَاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّهُمْ فِيكُمْ شُرَكَاءُ ۖ
لَقَدْ تَقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

[God will say], ‘Now you return to Us, alone, as We first created you: you have left behind everything We gave you, nor do We see those intercessors of yours that you claimed were partners of God. All the bonds between you have been severed, and those about whom you made such claims have deserted you’ [94] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 94)

Allah’s statement: ‘And now, indeed, you have come to Us alone...’ (*al-An'am*: 94) means that all of you will come before Allah *Glorified is He*. You will be separated from whatever you had in your worldly life such as wealth, children, and followers. They will all come before Allah *Glorified is He* without the idols they had worshiped with Him which they used to take as intercessors with Allah. The word ‘*furada*’ (alone) is the plural of the word ‘*fardan*’ or ‘*fareed*’, just like ‘*sukara*’ (intoxicated) is the plural of ‘*sakraan*’, and ‘*usara*’ (prisoners) is the plural of ‘*aseer*’. Indeed, they will come before Allah *Glorified is He* in groups and crowds, but each one of them will come detached from what they had in the life of this world; wealth, family, children and followers. The evidence for this is that Allah said: ‘...and you have left behind you all that we bestowed on you...’ (*al-An'am*: 94). The words: ‘...bestowed on you...’ (*al-An'am*: 94) refer to the followers and bounties Allah has bestowed on you to be of service to you such as the followers and devotees. Each one of them returns alone, detached from what they had in the life of this world. There, they will be in the same state in which Allah *Glorified is He* first created them, when they were delivered into the life of this world. ‘And now, indeed, you have come to Us alone, just as we created you in the first instance...’ (*al-An'am*: 94).

Allah's words: ‘...you have come to Us...’ (*al-An'am*: 94) indicate that the person who sinned almost presents himself for punishment while admitting that he deserves it and acknowledging his sins. They will be expressing grief

for what they had done and will reproach themselves for deviating from the Truth. 'And you have left behind you all that we bestowed on you [in your lifetime]. And we do not see with you those intercessors of yours whom you thought to be partners with Allah regarding your affairs! Indeed, all the bonds between (*bayn*) you [and your earthly life] are now severed...' (*al-An'am*: 94).

'*Al-bayn*' (between) is something that either separates or joins two entities; when we find two people sitting and there is a *bayn* between them; this *bayn* separates them and also joins them together. This word indicates that they will be cut off and separated from their worldly bonds and gatherings after they used to connect themselves to the idols.

What was the connection of these people to the idols that they used to worship with Allah? They used to offer sacrifices and similar offerings to their idols. These idols and everything that they used to make partners with Allah *Glorified is He* (in this life) will flee from them on the Day of Resurrection. This is how Allah's statement: 'Indeed, all the bonds between you [and your earthly life] are now severed' (*al-An'am*: 94) will be realised in the Hereafter. Allah *Glorified is He* continues: 'And all your former fancies have forsaken you!' (*al-An'am*: 94). The Arabic word used for 'forsaken' is '*dalla*' (be away from), which means that their idols and worldly supporters will go astray in the Hereafter and will not be able to aid them. You can look for them, but you will not find them, in accordance with Allah's statement: '[On that Day] it will come to pass that those who had been [falsely] adored shall disown their followers' (*al-Baqara*: 166). Allah *Glorified is He* says after this:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوَى ۖ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ
 الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

**It is God who splits open the seed and the fruit stone:
 He brings out the living from the dead and the dead
 from the living – that is God – so how can you turn
 away from the truth? [95] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 95)**

After Allah *Glorified is He* talks about His Oneness and the prophecies, and mentions the stories of those who opposed, resisted and denied these true

prophecies, He *Glorified is He* wanted to turn the attention of His Creation towards what He has prepared for them to maintain their lives. He also wants to show them how He has subjugated the inanimate objects of the entire universe, plants and animals for their service. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is making it clear, 'If you still do not realise that

The Creator deserves your worship, look at the blessings and bounties He gives you. And if the created slave receives all these blessings from Allah, the Most Exalted Creator, why does he not listen to Allah's Commandments? O created being, you were raised on the sustenance of the Most-Merciful; you have to look, reflect and understand. 'Verily, Allah is the One who splits the grain and the fruit-kernel' (*al-An'am*: 95).

When you hear the Name of Allah *Glorified is He* realize that He is the One Who exists by necessity. His Glorified Name comprises all the specified and unspecified attributes of His Majesty and Beauty. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* created the entire universe and He is the One Who sustains it. This creation and sustenance requires the attributes of power, wisdom, vast knowledge, mercy, provision as well as withholding of sustenance, and also other attributes. Allah *Glorified is He* refers to all these attributes by His Name 'Allah' *Glorified is He*.

We say at the beginning of every action, 'In the Name of Allah', and this resembles requesting a license for whatever energy the action needs. With any action, you need power, and consequently you could say, 'In the Name of the fully Capable (*Al-Qadir*)'. Every action also requires knowledge, and therefore you could say, 'In the Name of the All Knowing (*Al-'Alim*)'. If it requires wisdom, you could say, 'In the Name of the All-Wise (*Al-Hakim*)'. If it requires might and ability, you could say, 'In the Name of the Almighty (*Al-'Aziz*)'. It may require domination over your enemy, and for this reason you say, 'In the Name of the Dominant (*Al-Qahir*)'.

Every action requires a concentration of the Attributes of Perfection and Majesty of the Creator, Allah *Glorified is He* and you can refer to all these Attributes by saying, 'In the Name of Allah'.

'Verily, Allah is the One who splits the grain and the fruit-kernel' (*al-An'am*: 95). The One who breaks (*faliq*) means the One Who 'splits' (*shaqiq*)

both the grain and the fruit-kernel into two halves. The grain (*al-habb*) is that which has no fruit kernel, such as barley, wheat and rice. There are other plants that have a fruit kernel, such as dates and peaches. And there is another type of plant that has seeds, such as melons, and every seed has something inside it. Allah *Glorified is He* makes His Might manifest in the creation of the grains and the fruit kernels.

There are grains that are split and ready to use, such as the grain of beans and the grain of lentils. If you look at the growth process, you will find it amazing. When you place the fruit kernel of a date or a barley seed in the earth in a suitable environment with a little bit of humidity, you will find that the plant will emerge from the two halves. The fruit kernel almost splits so that the weak shoot (*zaban*) can emerge between the two sides and the root can be formed.

The secret of life comes from these two halves, and if this root is removed, life comes to an end. Small, crumbled white pieces of seeds are found in ants' nests, and they discovered that these are the shoots (*zabanat*) of the seeds. If the ants had inserted whole seeds in their nests, this seed would grow if there was any humidity, develop into a tree and destroy the nest. Who guided the ants to do such a thing? Indeed it is Allah *Glorified is He*. We also find that ants split the seeds of the coriander plant into four pieces because if it is split into two parts it might grow. Who teaches them this? Indeed it is Allah *Glorified is He*: 'who creates [everything], and thereupon gave it a suitable form, and who determines the nature [of all that exists], and thereupon guides it [to its goal]' (*al-A'la*: 2-3).

It is amazing to see a fragile shoot, the future roots, which is weak and can be easily crumbled emerging into life, piercing the core of the hard earth. If you strike this hard earth with a knife, the knife may break or bend! Who gives the weak plant roots this ability? What power enables it to split the earth? Allah *Glorified is He* has indeed pierced the earth for the seed so that the plant's nourishment can be extracted from it. Indeed, it is the Power of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'The One who splits the grain' (*al-An'am*: 95) and who puts power into the two halves of a seed for it to grow roots when the environment is humid enough. The plants derive their nourishment from the two halves

until they become firm and established in the earth, and then the two halves are transformed into two green leaves.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues: 'Bringing forth the living out of the dead, and He is the One who brings forth the dead out of the living' (*al-An'am*: 95). When the scholars reflected on this verse, they wanted to make clear for us what the living and dead entities were. But everyone has failed to define what life is. The life of any being is what enables it to exist and engage in carrying out its tasks and functions. The life of man has movement, sensation, and progress. There is a second type of life in animals, a third type of life in plants and another type of life that has a different character in inanimate objects. An example of this type of life is what they taught us in schools when the teacher used a magnetic rod to attract iron fillings. Even solid iron fillings have a specific kind of life. In school, we all saw the glass tubes in which we put iron fillings and how they were affected by magnetic rods. They straighten out and become an even line; and this is how we know that life is an existing force in every being so that it can carry out its tasks. Even stones have a different variant of life. There is a stone that takes the form of marble (*rukham*), another that takes the form of alabaster (*marmar*), and every type of stone has some form of life.

We read in the Quran: '[And] that he who would perish might perish in clear evidence of the Truth, and that he who would remain alive might live in clear evidence of the Truth' (*al-Anfal*: 42). Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the opposite of perishing, which is life. That is, perishing is the opposite of life and life is the opposite of perishing. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'Everything is bound to perish, except His (Allah's) [Eternal] Self...' (*al-Qasas*: 88).

Consequently, as long as everything is bound to perish, then everything must contain life. It is a mistake to think that all life must have sensation and motion in the same ways human life has. There is a form of life in everything according to the matter itself, and this will be the case until the Hour is established. Every living thing has a life that is suitable for it, and when we hear: 'And there is not a single thing but it extols His [Allah's] Limitless Glory and Praise: but you [O men] fail to understand how they glorify Him' (*al-Isra'*: 44), we say that everything praises Allah's Limitless Glory. These

songs of praise are not metaphorical, but we do not understand the literal form of these praises. Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'But you [O men] fail to understand how they glorify Him' (*al-Isra'*: 44).

Consequently, none of us understand the language with which all the things in existence glorify Allah. We know that when Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* heard the statement of the ant, he smiled. We also know that he heard the hoopoe, and that the mountains used to glorify Allah along with David when he praised Him: 'Verily, Allah is the One who splits the grain and the fruit-kernel, bringing forth the living out of the dead, and He is the One who brings forth the dead out of the living. This is Allah: how, then, are you deluded away from the Truth?!' (*al-An'am*: 95)

Indeed, every word has a specific indication and meaning. The word 'knowledge' (*'ilm*) indicates that His Knowledge encompasses everything in existence, and the word 'wisdom' (*hikma*) indicates to us that everything is a result of His Wisdom. The word 'The All-Provider' (*Ar-Razzaq*) indicates that He provides us with everything in creation. There is no end to the perfection of His Essential Attributes. As long as His Essence is described with all the attributes of perfection, then every action that is issued by Allah's Command *Glorified is He* is attributed with Absolute Power and Beauty.

Allah tells us this information to turn our attention to the fact that everything in existence has been created by Allah. Moreover, everything has a life which suits its job and function on earth; man has a life which suits its job on earth, animals have a life which suits their job on earth, plants have a life which suits their function on earth, and inanimate objects have a life which suits their function on earth. If we look at anything in this way we will see that all things have a form of life. But the most advanced life which is composed of all the necessary elements is present in the most developed form of created being, which is mankind. Allah created mankind with a physical life that has senses and movements. He also gave him another life by which his physical life becomes important and of value. Both the believer and the disbeliever enjoy the physical life which every man has, and the best thing about such a life is that Allah gives us senses and the ability to move throughout all our time on this world, but the other life, the life of faith which is based on the

directions Allah sends through the Messengers, is a deeper and richer way of life, a life that lasts for eternity. This is the true life. For this reason Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...whereas, behold, the life in the hereafter is indeed the only [true] life: if they but knew!' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64)

This is the real life and the Lord's statement: 'Verily, Allah is the One Who splits the grain and the fruit-kernel' (*al-An'am*: 95) is the first introduction to life. Then He talks about life itself and states that He brings forth the living from the dead. Here He is addressing us according to our knowledge of things; something that does not have any motion or sense is what we would consider to be dead, but if we look at reality properly we find that everything in existence has life. This is affirmed by the Lord's statement: '...Everything is bound to perish, save His [eternal] self'. As long as everything is bound to perish, before it perishes it must contain life.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Say, "O Allah, and Lord of all dominion! You grant dominion to whom you will, and take away dominion from which you will; you exalt whom you will, and abase whom you will. In Your hand is all good. Verily, you have the power to will anything. You make the night grow longer by shortening the day, and you make the day grow longer by shortening the night. You bring forth the living out of the dead, and you bring forth the dead out of the living. And you grant sustenance to whom you will, without measure"' (*Al-'Imran*: 26-27). Why has Allah mentioned in this verse '...You [Allah] bring forth...' (*Al-'Imran*: 27) and in the verse that we are currently discussing we have His statement: 'and He is the One who brings forth the dead out of the living' (*Al-'Imran*: 27) Indeed, those who have looked into the matter have only done so superficially, thinking that the phrase in the verse: 'You [Allah] bring forth the living out of the dead...' (*Al-'Imran*: 27) is just the opposite of the later phrase in the same verse: 'and He is the One who brings forth the dead out of the living' (*Al-'Imran*: 27), not considering that it has a special meaning of its own. They forgot that He *Glorified is He* says that He: '...brings forth the living out of the dead...' (*Al-'Imran*: 27) in order to make it clear that Allah is the One Who splits the grain and the fruit-kernel in order to bring forth the living out of the dead, i.e. Allah cleaves and splits the seed and the fruit kernel in order for the living to emerge from the dead.

Then He said: ‘...and He is the One who brings forth the dead out of the living...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 17) This is the opposite of the cleaver, but do not assume it to be just the opposite of the earlier phrase in the verse and that it does not have any special meaning of its own. Comparing these two verses, we should realise that the noun indicates something that is firmly established, while the verb indicates something that is happening. Allah has attributes which are apparent in His Own Self, and He has attributes which are apparent in how they affect other beings. He is the All-Provider before anyone was present to provide for. He is the All-Provider and after He has created those who He provides for, His Attribute of being the Sustainer is apparent, because He is the Creator. ‘The Creator’ is an attribute which is apparent in His Own Self before anyone was created. And Allah is the One Who grants life before there is anyone to grant life to because granting life is an attribute which is apparent in His Own Self. Moreover, Allah is the One Who causes death before there is anyone to cause to die because causing death is an attribute that is apparent in Allah’s Own Self. And Allah is the One Who has the attribute of splitting the grain and fruit-kernel before there is any grain and fruit-kernel for Him to split. Furthermore, the attribute of being the One Who brings the life out of the dead is a firmly-established characteristic which is apparent in His Own Self before there is any dead object from which life will be brought.

If Allah wants to indicate an attribute before anything is present upon which this attribute is apparent, He uses the noun ‘*Faliq*’ (The One Who splits) and ‘*Makhrāj*’ (The One Who brings forth). And if Allah wants to indicate the attribute after something upon which the attribute is apparent is actually present, He uses the verb ‘*yakhruj*’ (He brings forth). The Lord *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: ‘...This is (*dhalikum*) Allah: how, then, are you deluded away from the Truth!’ (*al-An‘am*: 95)

(*Dha*) in the word ‘*dhalikum*’ (this is) is a demonstrative noun for that which precedes it. That is, the One Who splits the grain and the fruit-kernel, Who brings forth the living from the dead and Who brings forth the dead from the living is Allah *the Exalted*. The letter ‘*kaf*’ in ‘*dhalikum*’ (this is) is for those whom He is addressing, which is us. As for the letter ‘*lam*’ in ‘*dhalikum*’ it indicates distance, while the letter ‘*mim*’ indicates plurality. When the Lord

Glorified is He wants to address His Messenger, He says: 'This (*dhalika*) book—let there be no doubt about it...' (*al-Baqara*: 2). But here He is addressing us by saying '*dhalikum*', a demonstrative indicating the Lord's statement, 'Allah', 'The One Who splits', and 'The One Who brings forth', and the address is for the great mass that the Quran addresses. If Allah has always had these Attributes, how can they turn away from having faith in Him and believing in His Oneness? He mentions to us what we need most to live, which are plants, and it is what we eat, and if the Lord *Glorified is He* is the One who created the grain and created the fruit kernel in order to bring forth the living from the dead, and He is the One Who brings forth the dead out of the living, then He is the One Who deserves to be worshipped. How can you turn away from Him? Who are you going to turn to? Who has attributes that are more exalted than these attributes? No one has attributes that are like these attributes or that are more exalted than these attributes.

When you hear the word '*anna*' (how), you should understand that it is being used to express astonishment. It is a way of demanding a verification of how anyone can turn away from Allah and His Oneness in spite of all the clear proofs and evidences, because, in reality, there is no such verification.

In the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'How can you refuse to acknowledge Allah...?' (*al-Baqara*: 28) He *Glorified is He* is addressing mankind and saying to them, 'How can you refuse to acknowledge Allah?' Allah, in His Essence, does not deserve to be denied because He created out of nothing and He provided out of nothing. No one has participated alongside Him or challenged Him in this matter, and to Him we shall all return. How can you not believe in Him? This is an amazing thing. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says here: '...how, then (*anna*), are you deluded away from the Truth?!' (*al-An'am*: 95), i.e. how can you turn away from the Truth and abandon it in favour of falsehood and worship, with Allah, another deity after knowing that these Attributes of His *Glorified is He* do not belong to anyone but Him? All of this great amazement is expressed in the word '*anna*'. Another example of the use of '*anna*' to express amazement is the saying of the disbelievers expressed in the Lord's statement: '... "How could (*anna*) Allah bring all this back to life after its death?"...' (*al-Baqara*: 259), i.e. how can Allah bring this back to life after its death?!

To sum up, the word (*anna*) expresses amazement. It is as if the Attributes that are mentioned prior to the phrase in the chapter of *al-An'am* are Attributes that necessitate belief in Allah as being the One, the Dominant, the One Who does what He wants, the All Knowing and All-Wise, and the One to Whom we will all return. Thus, Allah tells us: 'How can you disbelieve in this Deity? Who do you go to (for help etc.) if you disbelieve in this Deity? Is there something else that has claimed that it created and provided? If something had claimed that it had created and provided we would excuse you, but nothing in existence has claimed that it created or provided anything. A claim is accepted as true for the one who makes it as long as no one objects to it.

'How, then, are you deluded away from the Truth?!' The phrase: 'How, then, are you deluded away from the Truth (*tofakoon*)' means 'How can you turn away, lying?' because the word '*tofakoon*' refers to telling lies intentionally.

Allah *Glorified is He* says after that:

فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ
حُسْبَانًا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٩٦﴾

**He makes the dawn break; He makes the night for rest;
and He made the sun and the moon to a precise measure.
That is the design of the Almighty, the All Knowing [96]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 96)**

He *Glorified is He* mentions more of His miraculous signs as He did in the first verse when He stated that He is the One Who created for us what we need for our lives.

'[He is] The One Who splits (*faliq*) the dawn; and He has made the night to be [a source of] stillness...' (*al-An'am*: 96). The meaning of '*faliq*' (causes to break) means that He makes something break into two halves. These are two complementary blessings as one cannot do without the other. Hence, there must be a dawn and there must be night-time that is a source of stillness. This is because dawn is a time in which things are seen clearly with the naked eye, and we know that darkness causes man to bump into things. If you are stronger than these objects you will break them and if these objects are

stronger than you they will break you. Moving about in the dark, without light to guide us, could lead to things being destroyed.

In the morning we work and move throughout the earth, and our lives are full of activity. When we are afflicted with toil, fatigue and tiredness because of all this activity, the logic thing for the living being to do is to rest, calm down and be still—not just with regards to this activity but with regards to everything around him; all things near him need to be still as well. This is because if you are still, but light reaches you, it will affect your constitution. This is why they now say that the rays that reveal the details about the inside of man's body, leave effects on the body.

Allah *Glorified is He* protects you at night from the rays that come from the sun for the body to have a rest from everything, from every activity emanating from within it and from every activity coming to it, and this is how the blessing of stillness at night and its darkness is like the blessing of the dawn. Each of them complements the other, and we have already noticed that the Lord *Glorified is He* at the beginning of the chapter, mentions darkness before light: 'All praise is due to Allah, who has created the heavens and the earth, and brought into being deep darkness as well as light...' (*al-An'am*: 1).

This is because you cannot benefit from your activity in the light unless you feel energetic and rested after the night. If you have not rested, you feel exhausted and you will not be able to do your work properly in the day time. For this reason, darkness is meant to be in existence, and this is why advanced civilizations are those that regulate the life of man such that he can work in the daytime and rest at night, in order for him not to resume his work in the morning feeling worn out. Unfortunately, whoever visits the Egyptian countryside these days, will be surprised because the people of the countryside stay up all night playing with their luxury items, and then they go to work in the morning feeling exhausted and worn out.

We say, 'Let us take the good characteristics of any civilization but not the bad ones'; when you go to Europe, you find the people sleeping and resting at night. Whoever walks in the streets does not hear a sound and does not see anyone leaving their house. You do not hear the sound of a microphone in the street, thereby allowing everyone to have their fair share of calm. This is not

the case in our countries. The streets are filled with noise. The sick person is unable to get any rest. Whoever is studying cannot get the necessary peace and quiet. Whoever is trying to engage in worship is distracted by the noise. And still there are those who describe this country as being a model civilization!

We say, 'Let us take each of Allah's blessings in existence in a way that benefits us. When night comes you must turn off the light to be able to sleep peacefully, and for the various parts of your body and constitution not to be disturbed.

He *Glorified is He* says: '[He is] The One Who splits (*faliq*) the dawn...' (*al-An'am*: 96), and '*faliq*', as we said previously, means the 'splitter'. Is the dawn split into two? What splits it? We say that '*faliq*' is an active participle such as when we say 'the killer blow'; i.e the blow from his hand is a killer blow. '[He is] The One Who splits the dawn...' (*al-An'am*: 96). The phrase '*faliq al-isbah*' (the One Who splits the dawn) means that the dawn splits itself from the darkness because the darkness accumulates and when the dawn comes it is as if it breaks the darkness and splits it in order to allow the light to come forth. '*Faaliq al-isbahah*' can also mean that the splitting happens to the dawn, and then later, in the evening, darkness comes. This is one example of the Quran's subtle, rhetorical explanations because the One Who is speaking is Divine. Imr'u Al-Qayss, the poet, said:

Will you not, O long night, will you not vanish

With dawn (*subh*), although dawn (*isbah*) is not much better than you

The words '*Subh*' and '*isbah*' have nearly the same meaning. But is '*subh*' when the sun rises or is it the light that appears before the sun rises? '*Al-aisbah*' comes first; it is the peaceful light before the sun rises. We find ophthalmologists, after carrying out surgery on a person's eyes, start to undo the bandages that were placed to help the wound heal; they take the bandages off gradually for the light not to dazzle the eyes all at once. Similarly, it is due to Allah's Mercy that He made the period of dawn have a peaceful light first before the sun rises to give off all of its light at one time. It is as if the dawn comes to split the darkness of the night in a peaceful way. Then the sun comes and splits the dawn.

‘Therefore, the dawn breaks (*faliq*) one time because it splits the darkness and breaks it, and another time the dawn itself is broken (*mafluq*) when the strong light of the sun begins to spread in the sky, and later the darkness comes after it. The active participle implies two actions. The first is when the dawn is broken; i.e. the peaceful light of the sun started to enter. If we said, ‘Its dawn is breaking’ it means that the first darkness of the night has been broken. Therefore the dawn breaks at one time and at another time it is broken. When He *Glorified is He* says: ‘[He is] The One Who splits the dawn; and He has made the night to be [a source of] stillness...’ (*al-An'am*: 96), He wants to indicate two ideas; He Himself is the One Who causes the dawn to break, and that is why He uses a noun in order to show that it is an Established Attribute. But then He says: ‘...and He has made the night to be [a source of] stillness...’ (*al-An'am*: 96) which indicates an Attribute acting upon something after that upon which it acts (i.e. the daytime) has actually come into existence. When He wants to indicate an Attribute that He Himself has, but that upon which the Attribute acts has not yet come into existence, He uses a noun, and if He wants to indicate an attribute after that upon which the attribute acts has come into existence, He uses a verb. This is why we find the Noble Quran illustrating a firmly established attribute in the Lord’s statement: ‘...and their dog [lay] on the threshold, its forepaws outstretched (*basit*)...’ (*al-Kahf*: 18). The dog here is established in this position and that is why a noun (*‘basit’* meaning ‘outstretched’) is used, but when the Quran wants to mention an attribute that changes, it uses a verb: ‘Are you not aware that it is Allah who sent down water from the skies, whereupon the earth becomes (*fatusbiho*) green...?’ (*al-Hajj*: 63). It is logical to say ‘...whereupon the earth became green...’ because He said: ‘sent down’ in the past, but He is referring to the regeneration that takes place because of the water, and hence He uses the verb in the present tense: ‘...whereupon the earth becomes green...’.

The Lord *Glorified is He* continues: ‘...and the sun and the moon an [exact] reckoning (of time)...’ (*al-An'am*: 96). We know the sun and the moon, and afterwards we have the word *‘husbana’* (an exact reckoning of time) on the pattern *‘fu‘lan’*. This is what usually indicates a hyperbole, such as when you say: ‘So-and-so’ and I seek refuge in Allah from this, ‘has disbelieved fiercely (*kafara kufrana*)’. Or you supplicate, ‘Allah forgive you completely (*ghafara*

ghufrana)'. Whenever you want to exaggerate something, use the pattern *'fu 'lan'*. The Quran mentions the word *'husban'* in two places, both of which are connected to the sun and the moon. It is mentioned here in this verse that we are currently discussing '...and the sun and the moon an [exact] reckoning (of time)...' (*al-An'am*: 96), and also in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*, where the Lord *Glorified is He* says: '[At His behest] the sun and the moon follow their [exactly] computed courses' (*ar-Rahman*: 5).

What is the difference between these two expressions (the sun following its computed course and the moon following its computed course)? The word *'husban'* refers to calculating things. We calculate the year by the revolution of the sun every 365 and a quarter days, and during this period it passes through its different mansions. The moon passes through its mansions every month in just over 28 days, and we calculate the day using the sun and we also use it to calculate the year. However, we calculate the months with the moon. You are not able to calculate the months with the sun; rather, you calculate the months with the moon because at the beginning of the month, the moon appears small and then it grows bigger and bigger. Similarly, our month of *Ramadan* is determined by the moon and not by the sun, and we determine the day using the sun.

This is what we know about the sun and the moon, and they are both used in our calculations of the days and the months; both are means of calculation. The sun's course has an exact calculation and the moon's course has an exact calculation, and whenever we look at the word *'husban'* we understand that both the sun and the moon were created to calculate something because they were created according to an exact calculation, i.e. indeed, what was intended for them was for them to be used for very precise calculations because the sun was created according to an exact calculation and so was the moon.

Look at the clock that we use; is there not a hand for the hours, another for the minutes and a third for the seconds? This is the smallest fraction of time that we can make it count. If it was possible, we would divide the second into fractions as we have done in measuring lengths. There are metres, centimetres, millimetres, and after that we say micro millimetres. Whenever we make advances in scientific knowledge we are able to make more precise

calculations, and the sun and the moon cannot be an exact calculation by which we calculate things unless they were created according to an exact calculation. Indeed, when you look at your watch you can see the movement of the second-hand, but you do not notice the movement of the minute hand. You also do not notice the movement of the hour hand. Each of the three hands is turned by a spring and a specific gear. If the movement in either the spring or the gear becomes defective, it is reflected in the remaining hands; the second-hand depends on the minute hand, and the minute hand depends on the hour hand.

If the clock is not made according to this exact calculation it does not work properly, and thus we only consider the clock to be a standard that is used to calculate our time if it has been created according to an exact calculation. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and the sun and the moon follow their (exactly) computed courses’ (*ar-Rahman*: 5) i.e. we use them to calculate because they have been created according to a calculation, i.e. a precise calculation. Why did the Lord *Glorified is He* say ‘*husban*’ (exact calculation) here and not ‘*hisab*’ (calculation), and similarly in the verse in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*? It is because these calculations require great precision, and this great precision is not understood by the word ‘*hisab*’, but is understood by the word ‘*husban*’.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: ‘... [All] this is laid down by the Will of the Almighty, the All Knowing’ (*al-An'am*: 96). The word Almighty (*Al-'Aziz*) indicates domination and subjection such that no one is able to overcome Him. These masses that you see are stronger than you are, and your hand cannot pass around them. Indeed, they carry out their task for you without you going anywhere near them; you do not approach the sun in order to regulate it as you would do to a clock that a man like you invented. The sun has a power that Allah has provided it with; He created it with this power, and there is nothing in His creation that can rebel against this power in the sun; this is the Will of the Almighty, the All Knowing. He *Glorified is He* reassures us that the sun and moon were created according to an exact calculation, enabling us to use them to calculate time. He *the Exalted* created them according to an Almighty Will that cannot be overcome. He is *the Almighty* that has Absolute Knowledge that is endless and has no limit. The Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ اللَّيْلِ
وَالْبَحْرِ قَدْ فَضَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

**It is He who made the stars, so that they can guide you when
land and sea are dark: We have made the signs clear for those
who have knowledge [97] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 97)**

After clarifying that He *Glorified is He* created the sun and the moon as an exact reckoning to be used for calculations by His Will, and that He is the Almighty, the All Knowing, He *Glorified is He* describes for us the task of the stars, as He says: ‘...so that you might be guided by them in the midst of the deep darkness of land and sea...’ (*al-An'am*: 97). The stars are luminous bodies that we see in the sky in order to be guided by them in the deep darkness of land and sea. It is due to His Mercy towards us and His Knowledge that some of His Creation will be forced by life’s activity to travel on the earth, and to travel by night on land or at sea such as those who guard and spread security in the life of this world and are not able to sleep at night. Rather, they have to stay up in order to protect us. All of this is willed by Allah, according to the Will of the One Who is Almighty, Wise and All Knowing. This is why He has left the stars for us; in order for them to guide these people who stay up at night or travel on the earth or by sea in their ships, and they need a little light to guide them. This is why the Arabs were guided by the stars, and one of them would say to the other: ‘Have such-and-such a star in front of you and go beyond such-and-such a neighbourhood. Have such-and-such a star on your left and keep going and you will find such-and-such, or have such-and-such a star behind you and keep going and you will find such-and-such’.

That is, had the darkness been made complete, movement by night will be impossible, and it is a movement that a living being may be compelled to do. The Lord *Glorified is He* has made the stars a means of guidance for those who are forced by life to move about at night.

However, the stars are not only there to be guided by them in the deep darkness of land and sea because if the intention behind them was merely to guide in the deep darkness of land and sea, they would all be equal in size, but instead we see big stars and small stars; and in reality the small star could be

larger than the big star, but it is farther away. Hence, the wisdom behind the stars is not restricted to man's movement and being guided by them on land and at sea. This is not the entire wisdom. Rather, it is the wisdom that the intellect in its natural disposition realises first. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the stars in another noble statement to make it clear to us that we must not restrict the wisdom of the creation of the stars to being guided by them at night on land and at sea; He says: 'as well as [various other] landmarks: for [it is] by the stars that [men] find their way' (*an-Nahl*: 16). He *Glorified is He* does not say in this verse that they are guided in the deep darkness of land and sea. Clearly, the stars have another task. He also says: 'Nay, I swear by the places of the starts—and indeed, that is a tremendous oath if you only knew' (*al-Waqi'a*: 75-76). Every day as science advances, the Lord *Glorified is He* clarifies many things for us; there is the comet of which much is said and there are new stars that reveal and confirm Allah's statement: 'And it is We Who have built the universe with [Our Creative] Power; and, verily, it is We Who are steadily expanding it' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 47), i.e. indeed He *Glorified is He* has created a massive universe, but you, O man, have taken from it only according to your perceptions and ranges of natural vision that are not assisted by visual aids and the vision that is assisted by the telescope, the microscope and other things such as satellites. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Nay, I swear by the places of the starts—and indeed, that is a tremendous oath if you only knew'. Some scholars say, 'Indeed, every man in existence has a star and his life is attached to this star; when the star sets, its companion on earth also sets'. There are some stars that are luminous and whose pulses we are able to notice, and other stars that are not luminous and are far from us. It is said that they are designated to people who are not known by anyone because of the minimal effect their actions have on life. Science advances every day and it connects certain things to other things for us. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is making it clear to us, 'Indeed, I have created things for you which you are able, with your intellects, to connect to some sort of wisdom therein, but do not say that this is the only wisdom for creating them'. Rather, behind it there are more profound wisdoms because He *Glorified is He* is the Wise, the fully Capable. Indeed, you may have grasped a simple aspect of Allah's Wisdoms, but you must know that Allah's Perfection is unlimited. In Allah's Dominion

there are still things the wisdom of which we cannot and will not be able to grasp until Allah puts an end to the earth and all those who are on it.

The Lord *Glorified is He* says when concluding the verse: ‘...indeed, We have made the signs utterly distinct for people who know!’ (*al-An’am*: 97) This verse or verbal sign is amazing, and this can also be said about the sign in the universe: ‘Now, among His signs are the night and the day, as well as the sun and the moon...’ (*Fussilat*: 37).

The word ‘*ayat*’ (‘signs’ or ‘verses’) applies to the portion of the Quran that is separated from another portion. Therefore, there are Quranic signs or verses, and there are also signs in the universe; and the signs in the universe explain the Quranic signs, i.e. verses. Some of the intricate signs in the universe include what we see of various kinds, colours, wisdoms, and objects. The profound signs or verses in the Quran include what the Lord *Glorified is He* draws our attention to in His Quran which is the fact that the intricate signs in the universe and the amazing, well-organized creation can only belong to a Deity that is fully Capable and Wise Who deserves to be worshipped as the Only One Deity.

Allah *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمُسْتَوْدَعٌ
قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَفْقَهُونَ

It is He who first produced you from a single soul, then gave you a place to stay [in life] and a resting place [after death]. We have made Our revelations clear to those who understand [98]
(The Quran, *al-An’am*: 98)

Allah *Glorified is He* speaks to us at first about the signs that surround us and which we need in order to live such as splitting the grain and the fruit kernel. After that He speaks about the sun and the moon, and then He speaks about the stars; all of these signs are around us. Then He talks about something that is in our own selves for the proof to be stronger. Indeed, He *Glorified is He* brings the proof for you that is in your essence and in your own self, because this proof only needs you to focus your eyes towards what is directly around you. Indeed, the evidence is in your own self and in your soul.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'just as [there are signs thereof] within your own selves: can you not, then, see?' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 21) That is, it is sufficient to consider our bodies as a complete world within themselves, and in this world there is everything that establishes the Lord's Power and His Superior Right to be worshipped, and His Right to be worshipped as the One Deity.

'And He [Allah] it is who has brought you [all] into being out of one living entity...' (*al-An'am*: 98). It is true that this information is from Allah, and that it can also be extrapolated from facts we can see in the past because if you look at the world's population in this century and then look at what it was in the last century, you will find that it is half the number. If you look at the previous century, you will find the number to be a quarter of the current population. As you go further and further into the past, you find that the number decreases and decreases until you will arrive at 'one living entity'. This is what Allah is mentioning to us. Someone might say: How can there be one living entity when He says: 'And of every thing We have created pairs...' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49). We say, 'Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* created the one living entity, and He also clarified that He created from the one living entity its opposite, and then multiplication began'. Therefore, a statistical extrapolation into the past proves the veracity of this issue. Likewise, everything else in existence multiplies such as plants and animals, and you find continuous multiplication. On the other hand, if you look at statistics in the past, you will find the numbers decreasing and decreasing until you end up at one source from which the multiplication began, and this source needs two to start multiplying: 'Glory to Him Who has created pairs...' (*Ya Sin*: 36).

But why does Allah *Glorified is He* say here: '...out of one living entity...' and not 'two spouses'? The scholars have clarified that this is evidence of very intense cohesion because when we are from one living entity, then all of us—all of the creation—has parts of that one living entity within them. We said before, 'If we brought a square centimetre of a red dye, for example, and then put it in a small bottle and shook it, we will find that the square centimetre of red dye has spread throughout the bottle and a portion of it would be found in every drop in the bottle. Then imagine that we take the small bottle and put it in a barrel and then shake the barrel well. Again, we would find every drop in

the barrel contains a portion of this dye. If we take the barrel and throw it into the sea, the dye will spread and every drop in the sea will contain a tiny atom of this dye.

Similarly, as long as Adam *peace be upon him* is the source, and as long as we come from Adam *peace be upon him* and as long as the Lord *Glorified is He* took Eve from Adam *peace be upon them* after he was brought to life and thus she became a living being, then our lives are bound to Adam *peace be upon him* and we each have a portion of Adam in us. Out of Adam *peace be upon him* and Eve, *peace be upon her*, came children that contained a living part of them both, and in this way Allah *Glorified is He* returns us to one source to stimulate and stir within us the feelings of mutual love, mercy and affection.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and [has appointed for each of you] a settled place [on earth for a set time] (*mustaqarr*) and a resting-place [after death] (*mustawda*)...’ (*al-An‘am*: 98). The word ‘*mustaqarr*’ (a settled place) has numerous meanings and Allah *Glorified is He* explains them in His Quran. In the story of the throne of Bilqis, we find Prophet Solomon *peace be upon him* saying: ‘...Which of you can bring me her throne...?’ (*an-Naml*: 38) A bold one from the jinn responded to our master Solomon *peace be upon him* as did the one who had knowledge of the Book. The Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...And when he saw it truly ‘*mustaqarr*’ before him...’ (*an-Naml*: 40). The word ‘*Mustaqarr*’ here means that it is present because the throne was not present in the gathering at first, but rather, it was brought to him.

With regards to the vision that Allah *Glorified is He* wanted for Prophet (Moses) *peace be upon him*: ‘...“O my Lord! Show [Yourself] unto me so that I might behold You!” [Allah] said, “Never can You see Me. However, behold this mountain: if it remains firm (*istiqarra*) in its place, then—only then—will You see Me”...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 143). We know that the mountain was firm before the speech, and thus (*istiqarra*) has the meaning of being present and another time it has the meaning of being firm.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...having on earth your abode (*mustaqarr*) and livelihood for a while’ (*al-A‘raf*: 24). This is an expression of how long we will spend in the life of this world. Likewise, the Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...those who are destined for paradise will be graced with the best of abodes

and the fairest place of repose (*mustaqarr*)' (*al-Furqan*: 24). The Paradise is also a '*mustaqarr*', and the Fire is a '*mustaqarr*' for the disbelievers. Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Fire: 'verily, how evil an abode (*mustaqarr*) and a station!'" (*al-Furqan*: 66)

That is, '*mustaqarr*' is used to mean being present or being settled and firm, or it can be used to express a period of time in the life of this world. The paradise is also a '*mustaqarr*' as is the fire, and this is why scholars have differed over the use of this word, and each one of them has considered only one meaning. Some of them say that '*mustaqarr*' is in the loins and then Allah *Glorified is He* places us in the wombs. Others hold the opinion that '*mustaqarr*' refers to our remaining in the life of this world and then we are placed in our graves.

We say that the origin of the word '*istiqrar*' is '*qarar*' which means 'presence' or 'firmness', and everything has a certain level of '*istiqrar*' (remaining firm). There is '*istiqrar*' followed by '*istiqrar*' followed by the final '*istiqrar*', and this is what the believers desire.

This final '*istiqrar*' is the one that is permanent. As for the first '*istiqrar*' in life, it involves changing from one state to another. We were present in the loins of Adam and after that Allah *Glorified is He* placed us in the wombs. We were present in the life of this world and then Allah *Glorified is He* places us in our graves until we come to be present in the Hereafter. Every scholar takes one of these meanings. The poet says:

Wealth and family are nothing but a trust

It is inevitable that one day the trust must be returned

We notice that there is the word '*mustaqarr*' (settled place) and the word '*mustawda*' (resting-place). The word '*mustawda*' refers to something that has been put in this place by someone else. However, the word '*mustaqarr*' indicates that the matter is not subject to the will of any man, as each and every one of us can become settled (*mustaqarr*) in ourselves, but how we reached this state is not indicated by this word.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...indeed, We have made the signs utterly distinct for people who understand!' (*al-An'am*: 98) The word '*fassalna*'

(made utterly distinct) means that sometimes Allah brings the signs in an utterly distinct way and sometimes He brings them summarized. This is due to the fact that understandings differ, and the circumstances for accepting meanings also differ. What is meant by making the signs utterly distinct is that each detail coincides with a certain fact within the human soul. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* has not left any room for anyone not to understand and He has not left any room for anyone not to learn. We notice that the conclusions of the two consecutive verses are different. First, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...indeed, We have made the signs utterly distinct for people who know!’ (*al-An‘am*: 97) Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...indeed, We have made the signs utterly distinct for people who understand!’ (*al-An‘am*: 98) The word ‘*fiqh*’ (understand) means that you have the ability to understand, i.e. you have the capacity to understand the knowledge that you are told. Thus, having the ability to understand is needed first before receiving knowledge.

What Allah *Glorified is He* means by making the signs utterly distinct in the first verse, in His statement: ‘...for people who know’ (*al-An‘am*: 97) is an invitation to look at the signs that are outside of man’s inner self. But here, i.e. in Allah’s statement: ‘...for people who understand’ (*al-An‘am*: 98), He wants us to look at and consider the signs that are within man’s inner self.

After that Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُخْرِجُ
مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُتَرَاكِبًا وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ مِنَ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَجَنَّاتٍ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ
مُشْتَبِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَبِهٍ انْظُرُوا إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

It is He who sends down water from the sky. With it We produce the shoots of each plant, then bring greenery from it, and from that We bring out grains, one riding on the other in close-packed rows. From the date palm come clusters of low-hanging dates, and there are gardens of vines, olives, and pomegranates, alike yet different. Watch their fruits as they grow and ripen! In all this there are signs for those who would believe [99] (The Quran, *al-An‘am*: 99)

The context requires that Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘... He has caused waters to come down from the sky; and with this means He brings forth...’.

However, here Allah says: '...We bring forth...' (*al-An'am*: 99) because Allah does not have any semblance of a partner when He brings everything into existence. He is the only One Who brings everything into existence. No one can say that he brought forth vegetation because the earth is Allah's that has been created for man, and He also created the seeds. Human beings think with an intellect and with an ability that has been created for them. As you attribute all your needs to the One Who initially made them, as He is the One Who initially made everything, but He respects your efforts, He clearly says to you: '...and with this means We bring forth...' (*al-An'am*: 99), i.e. I and the means that I have granted you have brought forth all living growth; I created the means and you are the one who uses these means. If you consider the One Who creates all the means, He is the One Who truly makes everything happen. If you consider the outward appearance of matters, we notice the means with which man has direct contact. This is why He says: '...We bring forth...' (*al-An'am*: 99). Allah *Glorified is He* at certain times states and affirms that man carries out actions because man uses the means that Allah has granted him. However, Allah negates that man can do any action which he (man) has no say in whatsoever such as in the Lord's statement: 'Have you ever considered the seed which you put in the soil? Is it you who cause it to grow—or are We the cause of its growth?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 63-64)

In this verse Allah *Glorified is He* attributes tillage (putting the seed in the soil) to us because we till but by using the means He *Glorified is He* gave us as He is the One Who sent down the iron from which the plough is made and He has guided us to shape it after making it pliable with fire that He has created for us and He gives us the ability to shape it. But for plants growing, none of us plays a part in this at all. And this is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[For] were it Our Will, We could indeed turn it into chaff, and you will be left to wonder [and to lament]' (*al-Waqi'a*: 65).

Here Allah *Glorified is He* uses the letter '*lam*' in His statement '*laja' alnahu...*' (We could indeed turn it into...). This '*lam*' is used for emphasis because man partakes in this matter, that is he ploughs and takes care of what he has planted in the earth and he works hard to enable it to grow and bear fruit. However, it could be afflicted by some problem that ruins it. Thus, these

means, even though they have been used, cannot guarantee that one will benefit from the fruits of this cultivation. This is because the means do not rebel or defy Allah, and they cannot escape from Him. They only carry out what Allah has willed for them, and He *Glorified is He* may destroy them. As for Allah's statement: 'Have you ever considered the water which you drink? Is it you who cause it to come down from the clouds—or are We the cause of its coming down? [It comes down sweet—but] were it Our Will, We could make it salty and bitter' (*al-Waqi'a*: 68), Allah *Glorified is He* did not emphasise the phrase '*ja' alnahu*' (i.e. 'we could make it') because no one can partake in this matter and no one can effect it at all, and that is why He did not emphasise it with the letter '*lam*'.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Have you ever considered the fire which you kindle? Is it you who have grown the tree that serves as its fuel—or are We the cause of it growing? It is We Who have made it a means to remind [you of Us], and a comfort for all who are lost and hungry in the wilderness' (*al-Waqi'a*: 71-73).

Indeed, everything that the Lord *Glorified is He* mentions is mentioned alongside something that nullifies it. This is for man not to be enthralled by the existence of these things. Rather, he must accept these things along with the possibility of them not existing at some time. Even though man is the one who ploughs, the Lord *Glorified is He* with His Absolute Power, may turn the plants into chaff. Before this, He says about the matter that is involved in the reproduction of life: 'Have you ever considered that [semen seed] which you emit? Is it you who create it—or are We the source of its creation?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 58-59)

Then Allah *Glorified is He* mentions that which nullifies it: 'We have decreed that death shall be [ever-present] among you...' (*al-Waqi'a*: 60). But for fire, Allah *Glorified is He* did not say that He would put an end to it or extinguish it and put it out. Indeed He *the Exalted* has caused it to remain to teach us and remind us of the fire of the Hereafter: 'It is We Who have made it a means to remind [you of Us]...' i.e. we must leave it in front of you so that the punishment of the Hereafter is not hidden from you. '...And a comfort for all who are lost and hungry in the wilderness' (*al-Waqi'a*: 73), i.e. We leave it, without nullifying it, and this is for another matter which is its benefit in the life of this world for those who live in places that are empty and arid or

for those whose stomachs, vessels and provision bags are lacking food because the fire benefits them and helps them to prepare their food to maintain their lives: '...and with this means We bring forth all living things (growth)...' (*al-An'am*: 99).

Any 'thing' is that which one can experience; fine dust is a thing, the atom is a thing, every object is called a thing. The meaning of all living things is absolutely every object that resembles growth. We have seen stones of which the scientists say, 'This is granite, and this is marble, and that is another type of marble (*marmar*)'. If you look at the basic make-up of them all, you will find that they are stones of different life spans. If a stone has a certain life span it is coal. If it has another life span it is granite, and so forth. Every object has a life which affirms for us what we mentioned earlier, which is: '...Everything is bound to perish, save His [eternal] Self...' (*al-Qasas*: 88).

Growth is everything in which you see development and life. The intellect in its natural disposition understands it this way, but the sharp intellect understands many more things from it; such an intellect becomes immersed in the universe and the verse lives with him and he lives with the verse.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues: '...and out of this We bring forth green lush vegetation. Out of this do We bring forth close-growing grain...' (*al-An'am*: 99). If you say the word '*khadir*', (lush green vegetation), you could mean the colour that is known to us, i.e. green, but '*khadir*' means slightly more than '*akhdar*' (green). The word '*akhdar*' only means the green colour, the colour that is seen by the eye, whereas the word '*khadir*' refers to the colour and it also indicates the tenderness that we know through your senses, and when we touch it we find softness.

Clearly, '*khadir*' (lush green vegetation) has many qualities; the colour is for the eye while the tenderness is experienced through the senses, and it has a softness that is known by touching. This green colour is very dark, i.e. its greenness is very strong such that it is almost black. This is why we find people who say '*Sawad al-Iraq*' (the blackness of 'Iraq), i.e. the fertile land that is in 'Iraq, and it is called '*Sawad al-Iraq*' because it is so green that it is nearly black. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And besides those two are two [other]

gardens; which, then, of your Lord's Favours do you deny? Two [gardens] of the deepest green' (*ar-Rahman*: 62-64).

The word '*Mudhama*' (deepest green) means that it is like the darkness of the night; that is, because of the intensity of its greenness it is as if it has become like the darkness of the night. The Lord *Glorified is He* continues: '...green lush vegetation. Out of this do We bring forth close-growing grain...' (*al-An'am*: 99). The grain is that which does not have a kernel such as the grains of barley, wheat, lentils, and beans. The word '*Mutarakiba*' (close growing) means that the grain is pressed together and supports itself. 'And out of the spathe of the palm tree, thick clusters of dates hanging low and near...' (*al-An'am*: 99). The palm tree has an exalted rank amongst the Arabs because it gives them constant nourishment, and this is why Allah reminds them of it: '...and out of the spathe of the palm tree, thick clusters of dates hanging low and near...' (*al-An'am*: 99). The spathe (*tal'*) is the first thing that appears of the palm tree. This is what we call '*al-kuz al-akdar*' (the green cob) in the countryside, and it is found in the male of the date palm which is called '*al-fahl*'. It is also found in the female. The first thing that appears from the fruits of the date palm is called the '*tal'*' (spathe). Then the spathe splits and a bunch of dates emerges, or a root or a stem, which is the part that contains the date palm panicle from which the dates hang. The spathe is the first fruit of the palm tree before it splits and from which clusters of dates emerge, which is what we call '*as-subata*' in the countryside. '...thick clusters of dates hanging low and near...' (*qinwan daniyah*). Allah *Glorified is He* describes them as '*daniyah*' (hanging low and near) because when you see the spathe of the palm tree you see that it first emerges, splits and protects itself with the spikes of a stalk for insects not to eat it. And after that it moves and bends down and it almost touches the ground, such that it becomes close and near. If there is a rare cluster, you will find someone has to insert their hand between the spikes to be able to get to it and pick it. Allah *Glorified is He* leaves unexpected events for us so that we can appreciate Allah's blessing in making it hang down because if they were all close to us we might not appreciate this blessing. This is why Allah leaves just one between the thorns for man to exert effort in order to obtain it, and this is so that you can

appreciate that Allah *Glorified is He* has brought the rest close for you and that this is a Blessing from Allah.

The word '*tal*' (spathe) sometimes refers to calyxes (*akmam*), and a calyx (*kimm*) is that which has fruits in its core, and sometimes it refers to the fruit itself. 'And tall palm-trees with their thickly-clustered dates (*tal*)' (*Qaf*: 10).

You can see the dates hanging down from the panicles and each panicle has a number of dates, and then you can see the panicle connected to the main part of the plant. In this you can see how great the amazing engineering in the arrangement of the fruits is. Everything concerning this is calculated according to some form of amazing engineering. When we look at what we have learned in our lives when we design a grid for irrigation and a grid for sewers, we can see that the water grid that gives us the water that we use, and the grid for sewers that takes away the excess water and excrements. When we look at this or that grid, we find that the engineering used for them is very precise because any negligence in design causes problems. When you want to transfer some water to a small neighbourhood and you use a pipe the diameter of which is an inch or so, and in this small neighbourhood there are bends, for every bend you have to bring a pipe that has a slightly smaller diameter than the first. Then you bring a smaller pipe for the houses and an even smaller pipe for each apartment. In these matters the engineers have made very precise calculations.

If this is the engineering of human beings, then what should we think about the engineering of the Creator? You find the stalk and it holds moisture which it has taken from the palm tree, and each palm tree has clusters and every cluster has panicles. Then there are dates and every date takes a tiny seed to nourish itself. This is how we find everything to be calculated with profound precision. Indeed, it is engineering in the Universe which is amazing; engineering that has been made by Allah's word: 'Be!' Allah *Glorified is He* speaks the Truth when He said: '[The Lord] Who creates [everything], and thereupon forms it in accordance with what it is meant to be, and Who determines the nature [of all that exists], and thereupon guides it [towards its fulfilment]' (*al-A'la*: 2-3).

‘And He it is who has caused waters to come down from the sky...’ (*al-An‘am*: 99). The phrase: ‘And He it is who has caused waters to come down from the sky...’ means that we did not know what is behind it. We only knew that the sky is everything above you and thus it overshadows you, and that the water comes from the clouds. We all see the sky raining and we all know the common expression which states, ‘The sky was cloudy and then it rained’. There are those who say, ‘The earth laughed because the sky cried because it receives the water that irrigates the seeds it contains’. But what is behind this process of rain falling?

Indeed, there is another process that happens in the universe without us being aware of it. We only came to know of it when science advanced and when we started filtering water. We put a pot of water on top of a stove. When it reached boiling point, steam was let off and the steam entered some pipes. The pipes passed through cold areas and the water thus became condensed, resulting in filtered water coming down. This is similar to what happens with rain. Look at how much has to be done to make one cup of filtered water that we buy from the pharmacy. Compare that to the sky that sends down water in torrents. We do not know how it is made, and this is why the Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Is it you who cause it to come down from the clouds—or are We the cause of its coming down?’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 69) This is how water comes down from the sky, and we did not use to know how this happens. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the verse in the chapter of *al-An‘am*: ‘...and out of the spathe of the palm tree, dates in thick clusters; and gardens of vines, and olive trees, and pomegranates: [all] so alike, and yet so different...’ (*al-An‘am*: 99).

When Allah *Glorified is He* says ‘... [all] so alike, and yet so different...’ an example would be the grain of a peach, and there is a grain from one type of peach we call ‘*al-khawkh as-sultani*’; when we take one fruit, we split it for a clean seed to emerge. There is another grain that we split, uncovering a seed that has some flesh of the fruit and also some fibres. This one has a specific colour and the other one has a specific colour. This one has a certain taste and that one has a different taste. ‘... [all] watered with the same water: and yet, some of them We make more excellent than others to eat...’ (*ar-Ra‘d*: 4).

This is for man to know that due to Allah’s Absolute Power, He executes what He wants. After that we find that one plant can have many different

varieties. There are navel oranges, and then there are clementine, blood oranges, and tangerines. Similarly, we will find in paradise what Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about when He says: ‘...Whenever they are granted fruits therefrom as a provision to enjoy, they will say, “This is what we were fed with before (in the life of the world) as our sustenance!”—for they shall be given something that will recall that [past]...’ (*al-Baqara*: 25).

When the inhabitant of paradise eats from the food, he discovers that the fruits of paradise have a different taste. It is due to Allah’s Absolute Power that, after the analyses that were carried out by scientists in the laboratories—may Allah reward them on our behalf—on the grain of the grape, they found that the skin that covers the grape is cold and dry. However, the flesh of the grape is different; it is moist and warm. And the seed is cold and dry. These are three states within one fruit. This is an amazing arrangement. Likewise, the citron is a fruit similar to a bitter orange that has a warm and dry peel while the flesh inside is cold and moist. The question is how can there be four states, i.e. cold and moist flesh and a seed that is warm and dry, in one thing? With what power is this possible?

Indeed, the scientists toiled until they found out its constitution to make the matter clear for us. You look and you find a fruit the external of which you eat and the inside of which is a seed. There is another fruit the inside of which you eat as walnuts and bananas, and you remove the peel and throw it away. With a peach, you eat its flesh and you leave its seed. This is for you to know that the matter is not the mechanics of the created, but the fashioning of a Creator. You find something that has a definite colour but no taste, and something else with a distinct smell. All of that is evidence of Allah’s Absolute Power. When Allah *Glorified is He* talks about the fruits of paradise, this is the reason why he mentions fruits that are similar to those in the life of this world because if He had brought fruits that bore no resemblance to those in the life of this world, man would have said: ‘Had these been found in the previous life they would have had a similar taste’. However, the fruits look similar but their tastes are different. Indeed, it is due to His Absolute Power.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Behold their fruit when it comes to fruition and ripens...!’ (*al-An'am*: 99) The Lord *Glorified is He* does not just give to

man in order for man to fill his stomach. Rather, He nourishes all the faculties within the human soul, even the faculties of luxury, the faculties of beauty, and the faculties of perfection. He makes it clear to you before you eat: Look at the fruit and its shape! Let your eyes be nourished by the beautiful sight when you see the fruit emerging, and keep your eye on it until it ripens. Indeed, these are amazing phases that prove that the Maker is All-Sustaining. And every day the fruits have a different shape and a different size. If you eat it today you will find that its taste is different compared to how it will taste if you ate it after today. This is proof that, as long as they have a specific shape, colour, taste and a different scent at every different moment, their Creator is sustaining them.

‘Look at [each of] its fruit when it begins to bear fruit and [when] it ripens’ (*al-An‘am*: 99). This means that the enjoyment of the blessings of the universe is spread to many others because looking at a fruit does not mean that I actually own it. I might see it in a neighbouring garden and I look at it and enjoy its shape. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to spread the benefit of His blessings even for those who do not actually grow them because no one will ever prevent another from just looking at a blessing.

A well-balanced personality requires nourishment for the different needs of the soul because the needs of the soul are not only hunger and thirst but there are also other needs. Every need has its own type of nourishment. This is why, before Allah says that horses and mules carry loads, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘and for you in them is [the enjoyment of their] beauty when you bring them in [for the evening] and when you send them out [to pasture in the morning]. And they carry your heavy loads to lands you could not have reached except with difficulty to yourselves. Indeed, your Lord is Most Kind and Most Merciful’ (*an-Nahl*: 6-7). These animals benefit me by carrying loads. But the one who does not own them sees the horse and enjoys its beauty, and thereby he becomes happy because of something he does not even own. This is how Allah’s Blessings are spread amongst His Creation.

The Lord *Glorified is He* concludes the noble verse by saying: ‘Indeed, in that are signs for a people who believe’ (*al-An‘am*: 99). These people believe that the Deity they believe in deserves to be characterized by the Attributes of

Majesty and Beauty and deserves to be believed in, and whenever man sees a beautiful creation, he says, 'Allah'. If this is the case, my faith is sound and the signs in the universe affirm the veracity of my faith in the Deity Who created all of this. Every day something amazing appears before me, and it increases my faith, and the intellect that Allah granted me guides me to have faith in this Deity.

It is amazing that there are those who set up partners for Allah; a Deity who has all these Attributes: Who splits the grain and the fruit kernel, causes the dawn to break, makes the night a source of stillness, makes the sun and the moon a means of calculating time, creates the stars by which we are guided in the deep darkness of land and sea, sends down water to us from the sky, brings forth plants for us that are lush and green; all of these points must make man realise that Allah alone is the only Creator and the only One Who deserves to be worshipped, and thereby make man never worship or have faith in anyone else besides Him. Yet, there are those who set up partners with Allah, and He *Glorified is He* mentions them in order to make us angry and be warned about these people, for us to take care and be wary of them.

If we are angry towards them, this means we have to praise Allah as He guided us to have faith which makes us angry at such acts, and as a result we should say, 'Praise be to Allah who guided us to have faith'.

After that Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَفُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَبَنَاتٍ
بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ سُبْحَنَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

Yet they made the jinn partners with God, though He created them, and without any true knowledge they attribute sons and daughters to Him. Glory be to Him! He is far higher than what they ascribe to Him [100] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 100)

The word 'jinn' indicates forms of covering, wrapping and enveloping. We cannot see jinn because they are covered, and the same goes for the angels. 'But they have set up partners with Allah'. Jinn, as you know, are from Allah's Creation because He *Glorified is He* created man and jinn, and He

created the jinn, veiled as they are, in order for us not to believe that Allah's Creation of living beings must necessarily be material in form. Rather, He *Glorified is He* creates what He wants as He wants. He creates things that are veiled and not seen, and they have life and they procreate. He also creates things that are veiled but do not procreate. All of this is due to the Lord's Absolute Power, to make us understand this issue because our intellect may be confused by things that it does not comprehend or see; as we generally do not know the existence of something unless we notice it with one of our senses.

Indeed Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies this point; beware of thinking that you are capable of comprehending everything that Allah has created. What you notice through one of your senses is not your only means of comprehension because how you notice things has rules that govern it. You indeed see but only by following some rules; if what you are looking at is far away from you and beyond your range of vision, you cannot see it. The same is the case for hearing. If the sound or the source of the sound is remote from you, the vibration does not reach you and you do not hear it. The same can be said for the intellect, as you understand some things and you do not understand others. But Allah gives us examples in our material existence to enable us to understand this hidden creation of the jinn and angels.

We have found that the human intellect has been guided by Allah who determines the nature of all that exists, and thereupon He guided it until it discovered something called a microbe, which is a very tiny living being the naked eye cannot see, but it does exist, and it affects people significantly. It enters their bodies without them noticing how it entered. It deteriorates their health and causes destruction and death, such as the plague, cholera and so on. Despite that, the microbe exists and its existence is similar to ours such that it has a physical existence, life, and action, and it affects humans.

This is how we realize how something hidden and unnoticeable may be threatening to man, who is comparatively large and noticeable. Also, discovering microbes does not mean that we brought it into existence. Its existence is one thing and realising that it exists is something else. When we analyse the microbe, we find that it is of the same substance as man, but it is so tiny that the naked eye cannot see it. When it was discovered under the microscope

and we magnified it, we came to know it. This is a living being even though you could not see it. The fact that you could not see it before does not mean that it did not exist. It did exist but you did not notice it. Then man discovered a device that helped him to notice it. When Allah says to you, 'I have angels from amongst my creation and I have jinn from amongst my creation. You do not see them but they see you'; you should say, 'I have believe it my Lord' because at first we did not see something which has the same substance as us, and then we saw it. The things that we discover now prove the veracity of the Quranic Message in relation to matters of the unseen.

Should we be astonished at those who made the jinn partners with Allah, or at the principle of setting up partners itself, whether it be a jinn or other than a jinn? Indeed, our astonishment is because of the principle itself as we not only object to the jinn being set up as partners, but we also object to the principle of setting up any partners with Allah whether they are jinn, angels or anything else. This is why the word 'partners' precedes jinn, although the usual order in a sentence is the other way round. For example, normally, you say that you made the clay into a jug, meaning that the clay existed and then you used it to make something that did not exist, which is the jug. Thus, did the concept of partners exist first and then jinn were taken from them? Or did the jinn exist first and then they were taken as partners? In this second situation, people normally say that they made the jinn partners with Allah. But what is astounding is not the jinn being partners but rather, the principle of idolatry itself (so the word 'jinn' comes second). How do we remove this idea of having partners from their minds whether these partners are jinn or whatever else? This is why Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'But they have set up partners with Allah';...when you hear this you say, 'I seek refuge in Allah. They have set up partners with Allah!' It does not concern you who these partners are because setting up any partner with Allah, no matter what it is, is astounding, regardless of whether it is a jinn or angel. Then, how can they set up the jinn as partners with Allah?! Did the Lord *Glorified is He* not relate in His Book that Ibrahim (Abraham) said: "O my father, do not worship Satan. Indeed Satan has ever been, to the Most Merciful, disobedient' (*Maryam*: 44).

What is worship? Worship means that the worshipper obeys the one who is worshipped in what he commands him; and as long as they obey devils

when they whisper to them, then it is as if they are worshipping them. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And [mention] the Day when He will gather them all and then say to the angels, “Did these [people] use to worship you?”’ (*Saba’*: 40). The reply is: ‘they (the angels) will say: “Glorified be You! You are our Lord and Protector, not them. Rather, they used to worship the jinn; most of them were believers in them”’ (*Saba’*: 41).

How were they worshipping the jinn? They were obeying them in what they commanded them and in what they forbade them because worship is obedience. You, O worshipper, do not invent forms of worship but rather look at what you have been asked to do to draw closer to the One Who is worshipped. Consequently, ‘Do!’ and ‘Do not do’ are the essence of worship.

‘But they have set up partners with Allah’. Why do they set up partners with Allah? Why do they not just worship the partners alone without worshipping Allah at all? It is because the existence of a partner is a proof that Allah is acknowledged as well, but why did they set up partners with Him? Why do they not just disbelieve in Allah and deny that He exists, and that would be the end of the matter? No, they do not do that because they realise that the partners do not have any requirements attached to their worship, and when they worship them, they, for example, do not say to them, ‘Do this!’ and ‘Do not do that!’ There is nothing they have to follow. However, when events take place that are beyond their means, and they are unable to prevent them from happening, to whom do they supplicate? Is it the god that they falsely believe in and does not bring benefit or harm? This is the reason they maintain their acknowledgement of Allah, to seek refuge in Him when they are unable to repel something which neither themselves nor those whom they have set up as partners can repel. This is why the Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘And when affliction touches man, he calls upon Us, whether lying on his side or sitting or standing; but when We remove from him his affliction, he continues [in disobedience] as if he had never called upon Us to [remove] an affliction that had touched him.’ (*Yunus*: 12) It is as if they only worship Allah when it benefits them.

‘But they have set up partners with Allah—the jinn’. It is astonishing that they have set up partners with Allah, even though Allah is the One Who

created the worshipper as well as that which is worshipped. The astonishment is due to two things: that they set up partners with Allah, either from the jinn or from the angels, and that 'He [Allah] has created them (the jinn), and they [falsely] attribute sons and daughters to Him, without [any true source of] knowledge' (*al-An'am*: 100). That is, they falsely attributed that to Him.

As for those who claim that Allah has sons, they are the people of the Book. Allah relates what they have said: 'The Jews say, "Ezra is the son of Allah"; and the Christians say, "The Messiah is the son of Allah."' (*at-Tawba*: 30)

As for those who ascribe daughters to Allah, they are some of the Arabs who believed that the angels were Allah's daughters. 'Then, has your Lord chosen for you sons and taken for Himself daughters from among the angels?' (*al-Isra'*: 40) Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'Has He (then) chosen daughters rather than sons? What is [wrong] with you? How do you judge?' (*as-Saffat*: 153-154) And Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'is the male for you and for Him the female?! That is an unjust division.' (*an-Najm*: 21-22)

Furthermore, there were from amongst the Arabs those who claimed that there was a lineage between Allah and the jinn, affirming the Lord's statement: 'and they have claimed [that there is] a kinship between Him and the jinns' (*as-Saffat*: 158). They fabricated and claimed that there was a relationship between Allah and the jinn, and thereby the angels were created and born. 'But they have set up partners with Allah—the jinn, though He [Allah] has created them (the jinn), and they [falsely] attribute sons and daughters to Him without [any true source of] knowledge. Exalted is He and Most High, far above what they ascribe' (*al-Ma'ida*: 100).

Why does the Lord *Glorified is He* say: 'without knowledge'? It is because knowledge itself indicates the opposite of what they said. Knowledge is a matter that entails complicated investigative and realistic processes that rely on proofs. On the contrary, what they claimed is unrealistic and impossible to be proved which is therefore labelled ignorance; it is due to ignorance that they believe in something to be real when it is not, and such a belief is not based on any proof because it does not exist. Had they submitted to their natural disposition that accepts clear proofs and the proofs that are in the

universe, they will recant what they believed and they will refuse to attribute partners with Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* has presented an issue that is based on confusing ideas as they took partners with Allah, and for this reason He said: 'Exalted is He'; He is Transcendent and Most High, far above having a partner in His Being, His Attributes or His Actions because He Himself is not like any other being, His actions are not like any other being's actions and His attributes are not like any other being's attributes. This is why 'Exalted is He' is mentioned with regard to every matter that contradicts the laws that exist in the universe. The understanding of everything that is connected to the True God must be formed within the framework of 'Exalted is He'. This is why, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went on his night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and then ascended into the heavens on the same night, which was amazing incident, the Lord *Glorified is He* commanded us to believe in this fact within the framework of the Lord's statement: 'Exalted is He who took His Slave by night from Al-Masjid Al-Haram to Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him some of Our signs. Indeed, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing' (*al-Isra': 1*).

Indeed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say, 'I travelled by night from Mecca to Jerusalem', but rather, he said 'I was transported'. As long as he was transported, then the law governing what happened on the night journey was the law concerning the Lord. Hence you should understand it within the framework of 'Exalted is He'. Allah says: 'Exalted is He who created all pairs—from what the earth grows and from themselves' (*Ya Sin: 36*).

Then He continues mentioning that which is beyond your comprehension by saying: 'and from that which they do not know' (*Ya Sin: 36*). It is as if we will come to know afterwards of things that contain pairs. Scientific discovery in the twentieth century has brought some of this about. We learnt the positive and the negative in electricity and electrons etc., and His statement: 'and from that which they do not know' widens the scope for issues of the universe that will be uncovered due to the activities of inquisitive minds. Thus, 'Exalted is He' declares that Allah is too Transcendent and sanctified to be compared to

any living being. His Name is Exalted, He Himself is Exalted, and His Attributes and Actions are Exalted: 'Most High, far above what they ascribe', i.e. any attributes that do not befit Him.

After that Allah *Glorified is He* says:

بَدِيعُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ
 صَاحِبَةٌ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

**the Creator of the heavens and earth! How could
 He have children when He has no spouse, when He
 created all things, and has full knowledge of all
 things? [101] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 101)**

Allah *Glorified is He* said in another verse: 'The creation of the heavens and earth is greater than the creation of mankind' (*Ghafir*: 57).

If you witness several wonders within yourself, and every day physiology reveals a new secret, you should not be astonished because the heaven and the earth were brought into existence from absolutely nothing. Here, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Originator' which means that He *Glorified is He* created them without any previous example. There are those amongst mankind who create things based on previous models and experience, but the Lord is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. We know from science that the earth that we live on is a celestial body that orbits the sun, and we used to say in the past that the celestial bodies orbiting the sun are seven in number. Many scientists and thinkers were fooled into saying that these seven celestial bodies are the seven heavens, but the Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to abolish this matter after they had said seven. The scientists discovered an eighth celestial body orbiting the sun and then a ninth. Then the number became ten and increased further beyond our knowledge. Where is this solar system in relation to the heavens? All of it is merely ornamentation for the sky of this world. When satellites and devices used to bring the distant near were discovered, we saw the Milky Way, and we found a galaxy that contained unlimited solar systems. We found a million systems just like our solar system. This is just one galaxy and there are a million other galaxies, and you will find

an astronomer who says, 'If we had new devices, we would discover new galaxies'. Let us hear Allah's statement: 'With Might did We construct the heaven. Verily, We are extending the vastness of space' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 47).

Consequently, you must understand that the creation of the heavens and the earth is more difficult than the creation of mankind. As long as Allah *Glorified is He* is the Originator of the heavens and the earth, and He, with His Essential Superior Might, created the heavens and the earth—which is greater than the creation of mankind—then if He wants a child, He would make a son be born—because a son cannot be called a child unless he is actually born; but Allah *Glorified is He* is far above that. Furthermore, why would He want a son? Attributes of perfection are not increased by having a son, and the universe was not deficient before some people claimed that Allah *Glorified is He* had a son. The universe has been created by the Lord Himself *Glorified is He*. Mankind needs children in order for the parents to be remembered (after their death), but Allah *Glorified is He* does not die, confirming His statement: 'Everything is bound to perish, except His [Eternal] Self' (*al-Qasas*: 88).

Human beings need to give birth to children in order for their children to help them. Allah *Glorified is He* is the Mighty One Who created, and He is the Ever-Living One Who does not die. For this reason, there is no significance behind this claim about Him; besides, it is not correct rationally to even ponder about this allegation. However, Allah *Glorified is He* out of benevolence towards His Creation clarified and explained matters like this.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'when He [Allah] does not have a companion'. What would Allah *Glorified is He* want from a companion? Indeed, He does not want anything, so why is this insistence in the matter of His Divinity? No child and no mate will increase His Might to create; no wisdom will result and no knowledge will be brought about such relationships. There will be nothing of benefit from this. It is just a futile claim. If having partners is impossible—and the only purpose of such partners would be to assist Him in His sovereignty; one in charge of the sky, another in charge of the earth, a third in charge of darkness, and a fourth in charge of light, similar to what the ancients used to say when they set up a god for evil, a god for good, and so on and so forth— and the Lord *Glorified is He* is One and Unique Who does not

have partners who assist Him, so what is the point of Him having a child and a companion? I seek refuge in Allah from this! Should these people not refrain and stop saying such a thing? 'And He is, of all things, All Knowing'. He *Glorified is He* is the Creator of the universe and He is the All Knowing of everything, and He is not in need of anyone's assistance.

After that, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
فَاعْبُدُوهُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

This is God, your Lord, there is no God but Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him; He is in charge of everything [102] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 102)

Look at how the word 'Lord' comes before the phrase 'none has the right to be worshipped but He'. The word 'Lord' is an introduction to 'none has the right to be worshipped but He' because worship involves someone being obeyed which means that there are commands and prohibitions. Why and for what reason? The reason is that He is the Lord in charge of bringing everything into existence and caring and guiding them, and it is necessary and logical that we listen to His speech. This is because He is the Lord, the Creator and the Provider. An evidence for this is that when we ask disbelievers whilst they are drunk in the heedlessness of their desires, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' Their natural disposition speaks and says, 'Allah is the One Who created the heavens and the earth'. However, if the question is posed in the middle of a heated argument, you will find deception and lies. When you want to extract from them the truth and disparage and negate their false claims, you should approach them when they are heedless and unprepared. At such a time, they will say that the creator is Allah.

We have seen the devices that have been designed to detect lying which illustrate the difficult mental process that a liar has to undergo. The truthful person does not need to exert any effort because he examines reality and articulates it, and he is not afflicted with fatigue. However, the one who lies strains himself, keeps hesitating between matters and is confused. He does not know what to say, and he gives contradictory answers to the same question.

‘That is Allah, your Lord; none has the right to be worshipped but He, the Creator of all things, so worship Him. And He is the Guardian [having charge and disposing (*wakil*)] over all things.’ As long as Allah is the Creator of everything and He is the Ever-Lasting One, then He is the One that most deserves to be worshipped. This is because worship, as we have said, means obeying the commands and refraining from the prohibitions. As long as Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who created, He is the One Who lays down the law for preserving man and the universe. If the laws are contravened, the universe and man will become corrupted. And if the universe or man is corrupted, seek refuge by returning to the path the Creator laid down for you in order for both to return to their proper state. This is why He is the One most deserving of worship.

Such is the testimony Allah testified about Himself before He created everything, and before He created the angels. The angels bore witness to it as did those who are endowed with knowledge: ‘Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge—[and that He is] upholding justice [in the creation]’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18).

Allah bore witness to His Divinity from the outset, and one of His Names is ‘*Al-Mu‘min*’ (The Believer). We are believers in Allah and our Lord believes that He is the One God; Allah gives any order He wants and He knows that nothing can contravene Him. He gives the order by saying, ‘Be, and it is’. And because He is the One [True] God, He knows that no one and nothing can contravene Him. It is why He rules over His kingdom, and He knows that everything is subject to His Command and is incapable of going against His Will. We also say that ‘*Al-Mu‘min*’ (The Believer) means that He has granted safety and security to what He created, for He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger, and made them safe, [saving them] from fear’ (*Quraysh*: 4). Allah *Glorified is He* has made it clear to us, ‘You are My Creation. If you adopt My Way, I will give you food to save you from hunger and make you safe from danger’.

Therefore, logic demands that we worship Him *Glorified is He* and the order to worship Him is in keeping with the beginning of the verse: there is none worthy of worship but Allah. He is the Creator of everything, and this is

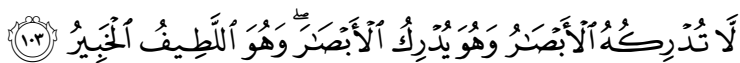
why worshipping Him is a necessity. This means we have to obey His Orders and avoid His Prohibitions. 'And He is a Guardian [having charge and disposing (*wakil*)] over all things'.

This is one of the Quran's subtle and eloquent expressions, for we customarily say, 'so-and-so is a guardian or proxy for so-and-so', meaning s/he does what is good for him according to what the person s/he represents wants. But Allah *Glorified is He* is not a *Wakil* for you but a *Wakil* over you because the *wakil* who is for you carries out your commands. Allah is a '*Wakil*' over you just as a guardian is a *wakil* over a minor. The guardian says 'Do this' and he does it. He *Glorified is He* is a *Wakil* over us, and this is why we ask from Him and He is the One Who responds to our supplications by giving us good. But He does not bring about our frivolous desires. We may find a fool saying, 'I supplicated to Allah and He did not answer me'. You understand answering to mean that Allah carries out whatever you request, while He *Glorified is He* knows best what is suitable for you because He is a *Wakil* over you and He regulates your behaviour. When you ask for something, if there is good in it, He will give it to you. However, if you thought what you asked for is good for you but it will actually bring about evil, He will not give it to you.

A person who supplicates should not expect that his request has to be answered quickly. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'He responds to you as long as you do not hastily say, "I supplicated to Him and He did not answer me"'.⁽¹⁾ 'And He is the Guardian [having charge and disposing (*wakil*)] over all things', whether this thing has been chosen (by a person) or not chosen, because one's choice may be an evil and because Allah is *wakil* over him He says to him, 'No'. That which is not yet legally responsible has no choice and is compelled by Allah's Will, such as fire. It is commanded to burn, but He commanded it not to burn Ibrahim (Abraham) and to make Ibrahim safe.

The following verse comes to confirm the facts that illustrate the Greatness of Allah *Glorified is He*. He says:

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah from Abu Hurayra



No vision can take Him in, but He takes in all vision. He is the All Subtle, the All Aware [103] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 103)

Why is it that no eye can perceive Allah? It is because the eye is a tool of perception which has its own law; rays are reflected from that which is seen to the one who is seeing the object, and it is thus defined. If the eye could perceive Allah, it would define and limit Him, and the one seeing Allah would have power over Him and Allah would become subject to you because He would have come within your perception. If you could perceive Allah, then Allah would be subject to your vision, and the All-Powerful can never become overpowered. That is because He is the Greatest, he cannot be perceived visually. Moreover, you may see the sun, but can you claim that you perceive it? No, because perceiving means that you fully visualize it. If human vision could perceive Allah, then human vision would become all-powerful and Allah would become overpowered. The One Who is All-Powerful in His Self, as we have already said, can never become overpowered by His Creation.

Everything besides Allah needs Him for their existence to continue, and His Existence is not in need of anyone. This is why: 'no eye can perceive Him, whereas He perceives all that the eyes see' because He has power over all sight as He Himself is All-Powerful. Everything else is subject to Him because it is created by Him. As long as it is created by Him, it is subjected and nothing new can happen to created beings that would make them all-powerful beings.

The scholars have deliberated and differed greatly here: Does man see his Lord or not whether in this world or the Hereafter? Some of them said, 'No one sees Allah according to what is written in the verse: "No eye can perceive Him"'. We say, 'But there are verses in the Quran which say: "[Some] faces that Day will be radiant, Looking at their Lord" (*al-Qiyama*: 22-23)'.

The verb 'looking' includes seeing, and it also signifies that meaning. Furthermore, Allah punishes those who disbelieve in Him by veiling Himself from them because He says: 'No. Surely, they will be veiled from seeing their Lord that Day' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 15). The disbelievers are veiled from seeing Allah as a punishment for them. If we are also veiled along with the

disbelievers, then what distinguishes us as believers? Why did the scholars not draw attention to the fact that there is a difference between what the Quran says and what they say? Those scholars try to argue that seeing Allah is impossible because our Lord *Glorified is He* said to Musa (Moses): 'You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me' (*al-A'raf*: 143). But why did those scholars not look at the Lord's statement: 'But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Musa fell unconscious' (*al-A'raf*: 143)?

Clearly, Allah reveals Himself to some of His Creation. As for the creation seeing Him in this world, the answer is no because our current human constitution is not suited to see the Lord. As a proof, the mountain which is harder and stronger than us crumbled to dust when its Lord manifested Himself to it. When the mountain crumbled to dust, Musa fell unconscious. If Musa fell unconscious after seeing that which Allah revealed Himself to (i.e. the mountain), then how would it have been if he had seen Allah Himself? He was not prepared for it.

The scholars have differed over this verse in the chapter of *al-An'am*. Their differing has reached the farthest limit. There are those who say that seeing Allah is possible while others deny it. I think that their differing is not really something to differ over, because they are talking about 'seeing', while the discussion here is about negating 'perception'. Perception means to fully grasp something, while seeing is something general. It is only perception that is not possible, and even if we consider seeing and perception to be the same, we can still say, 'Why is there a difference regarding the Hereafter?' If the differing concerns seeing Allah in this world, then this is a friendly discussion, but they have made the discussion focus on the Hereafter.

Indeed, the verses of the Quran are clear regarding the fact that seeing the Lord *Glorified is He* is one of Allah's Blessings towards the believers, and it is in addition to the other blessings, and that Allah's veiling Himself from the disbelievers is a type of punishment for them. And we also say, 'Why do you not say that perception will exist in the Hereafter in a way that it does not exist in this life because anything we do in this world depends on the means available, while in the Hereafter anything we do will not depend on any means?'

In this world, if you want to drink, you ask for some water or you go and fetch some water and then drink. When you want to eat something, you tell the people of the house to make something for you, or you buy whatever it is that you want. In the Hereafter, all you have to do is think about what you want and you will find it in front of you. This is a new law that is different from any law in this world. Then, why can it not be possible that the constitution of our body in the Hereafter be such that it allows us see Allah but within the framework of 'there is nothing like unto Him'?

Concerning the Hereafter, everyone agrees that there are matters that contravene the laws of this world and the laws of the universe that are contemporary to us regarding food and drink and being free of excretion. We will eat and drink in the Hereafter but there will not be any excrement. Now you prepare food and then ingest it, and in the process of digestion, you take some food and you leave the rest as excrement which must come out. However, preparing food and ingesting it in the Hereafter are according to the command 'Be!' without any excrement. It is food by the Power of the All-Powerful. In paradise, you will obtain everything that you want without it running out. In this world, whatever you take from decreases, but in the Hereafter nothing decreases because it is provided by an everlasting source.

After that, Allah *Glorified is He* continues by saying: 'and He is the Subtle One, the Well-Acquainted'. The Name 'The Subtle One' is appropriate for: 'No eye can perceive Him', while 'Well-Acquainted' is appropriate for: 'whereas He perceives all that the eye sees'. The Name 'The Subtle One' has a special meaning because it is necessary to be 'subtle' when creating something incredibly intricate. Ponder this example—which is only for clarification, for Allah is far Exalted above any comparison. We did not know about the microbe until recently because it is so subtle and tiny that it cannot be perceived by the naked eye. After we had invented the microscope, we could see it—but if the microbe was any smaller than what it is, we would never have seen it. We have discovered the virus and we are trying to know more about its characteristics. In short, whenever something is tiny, subtle and cannot be seen, it requires noble and sublime qualities to make it.

The first manifestation of Allah's Attribute of being the Subtle One is the management of humans' intricate affairs in a way that realises their benefits in their lives. When we just pass around a cup of water for everyone, it requires a lot of management, so what should we think about the management of the Subtle One towards His slaves?

Allah created the earth for, us and three quarters of it is water while the remaining quarter is dry. This is because He *Glorified is He* wants to expand the surface area of water because whenever the surface area of water is expanded, evaporation increases and becomes easier. However, when the water is deep and the surface area is small, the evaporation is only at the surface. If this were the case, the clouds would not bring sufficient water for the creation. Allah *Glorified is He* has expanded the surface area of the water in order for it to evaporate and then form clouds in the sky. They then pass through cold regions in order to send down fresh water for us that we can drink, our animals can drink, and from which our crops can be irrigated. All of this is the result of subtle and exact management.

Another of the manifestations of Allah's Attribute of being the Subtle One is that we find matters that cannot be described at all, and this is why each and every scholar explained one aspect of the Subtlety of Allah with His Creation. One of them says, 'One aspect of the Subtlety of Allah with His Creation is that He bestows abundant blessings on them'. Another says, 'Another aspect is that He manages everything in a subtle and precise way'. A third says, 'An aspect of the manifestations of the Lord being The Subtle One is that He regards His many blessings towards His creation as being negligible'. The blessings that Allah grants His creation are relatively few because His Storehouses are full. His Gifts are unlimited and will never be decreased. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'If you are grateful [to Me], I shall most certainly give you more' (*Ibrahim*: 7). His Countless Blessings towards His Slaves are in reality relatively few in number. In return, He considers the small amount of obedience from His Creation—out of His bounty—to be much because He is the One Who rewards one good deed tenfold.

The manifestations of the Subtle One have no limit. He is the Subtle One as when you call Him, He responds to you; if you seek Him, He accommodates

you; if you love Him, He approaches you; if you obey Him, He suffices you; if you give and lend from the bounty and wealth that He has granted you, He will pardon you. And if you turn away from Him, He is the One Who says, 'O Son of Adam! If you remember Me within yourself, I will remember you within Myself. If you mention Me in a gathering, I will mention you in a gathering that is better than them. If you draw near to Me by one hand span, I will draw near to you by one cubit. If you draw near to Me by one cubit, I will draw near to you a fathoms length. If you come to Me walking, I will come to you rushing.'⁽¹⁾ These are manifestations of Allah being the Subtle One. He is the One Who calls: 'Turn to Allah in sincere repentance'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one who says, 'Allah is more pleased with His Slave's repentance than when one of you finds the camel that you had lost in the middle of nowhere.'⁽²⁾

Another scholar mentioned another manifestation of Allah being the Subtle One by saying, 'The One Who recompenses you if you discharge your obligations and pardons you if you fall short'. Another scholar adds, 'Whoever takes pride in Him [Allah] He exalts, and whoever needs Him He enriches'. Another scholar says, 'His [Allah's] Blessings are good, and even His Withholding is a blessing'. If He denies His slave something, then indeed He stores it for him in the Hereafter. His Subtlety penetrates that which we cannot encompass. When you analyse any matter, you may arrive at an understanding of what the blessing is, and if you do arrive at an understanding, you will not be able to praise Him enough for this blessing.

As for the word 'Well-Acquainted'; in our lives we usually hear the word 'well-acquainted' when we are faced with some problem and we find someone saying, 'We want to hear the opinion of someone who is well-acquainted about this'. In judicial matters, we find the judge summoning an expert to write a report regarding a matter that needs someone who specialises and is well-acquainted in that matter. An expert in any field is the person who knows the details of the field, so what should we think of the Most Exalted, the Well-Acquainted, for

(1) *Narrated by Ahmad from Anas*

(2) *Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim from Anas*

Whom nothing in His kingdom eludes His Knowledge. He is the One Who perceives all that every eye sees.

Allah *Glorified is He* says after that:

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ
وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيفٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾

Now clear proof has come to you from your Lord: if anyone sees it, that will be to his advantage; if anyone is blind to it, that will be to his loss – [Say], ‘I am not your guardian’ [104] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 104)

Insight is related to abstract meanings and illuminations that come to the hearts just as sight is related to the eye. The universe gives you proofs for the physical sight, while the Quran gives you proofs to enable the person to have insight. Just as Allah has guided man and has warned him and forbidden him from being disobedient, He has also granted him light that makes things manifest for him, and thus he moves according to guidance and does not crash or collide. Likewise, He has made abstract meanings a form of light. The first light (i.e. the physical) is taken by the disbeliever and the believer, and we all have a share in it just as we do with provisions. However, the second light concerns insight, which is only grasped by the believer. This is why our Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘to lead you out of the deep darkness into the light’ (*al-Hadid*: 9).

It is the light of guidance to be able to capture abstract meanings. He makes it clear, ‘I created you and I laid down for you laws for your preservation. The laws for preservation regarding the material world are for both the believer and the disbeliever, while the laws for preservation regarding the abstract concepts of life are exclusively for the believer’. He says: ‘for one to whom Allah gives no light has no light whatsoever!’ (*an-Nur*: 40)

We know that insights are abstract while the verb ‘come’ in the verse is for a tangible matter, such as when a person says, ‘Zaid came’ or ‘Amr came’. Can you imagine ‘insight’ coming? Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘Now, there has come to you from Allah a light’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 15). Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* has given us a true and clear light and He brings it to us by His Will. ‘Now,

there has come to you clear proofs and insight from your Lord'. Due to the formation of proofs and insights, they have become like something tangible that actually comes. It is incorrect to say that they have not reached you because they have come to us from the Lord Who created us with His Power and provided us with everything as He continuously sustains us. One of the necessary qualities of Lordship is that He gives that which guides. He has decreed that the means of insight come to us and He has decreed that His Messenger, Muhammad, has conveyed this to us. Thus, He gave to His Prophet Muhammad, and he (Prophet Muhammad), in return, served us. The Lord *Glorified is He* legislated and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed, and it remains for you to carry it out given that you have no excuse before the Most Exalted Legislator Who created everything and Who is the Lord. Likewise, you have no excuse before the infallible conveyor, who is Prophet Muhammad. The Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Whoever sees [them] does so for [the benefit of] his soul, but whoever is blind [to them does harm] against it'.

Ponder this example—which is only for clarification, for Allah is far Exalted above any comparison. A child enters the house and asks his mother, 'What food have you prepared for us?' She says, 'Nothing'. The child says, 'My father has given you meat, rice, and vegetables'. This last statement he made implies, 'Where's your work, mother?' Our Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear, 'I created you, I laid down for you a law of preservation and I sent to you a Messenger, Muhammad, whom you know to be truthful in what he conveys. He carried out the task of conveying the Message, and that is why the rest of the matter is left to you. Everyone must carry out whatever work he has. If he chooses to see, then he does so for his own good, but if he chooses to remain blind, then he does so to his own hurt. Beware of thinking that what I have commanded you benefits Me in any way, or that it increases Me at all in My Authority because these commands are for your benefit'. I do not worry about legislation if the one who legislates does not benefit from it; however, the one who benefits from any legislation is the one who legislates for his own benefit. For the Lord *Glorified is He* His legislation is trustworthy and safe because He does not benefit from it.

The Messenger's job is only to convey the Message, and the Lord *Glorified is He* has protected him and preserved him from disbelief. Allah has created

every individual with the ability to choose whether to follow or disobey. He *Glorified is He* did not send the Messenger as a tyrant, but rather, He sent him as mercy. This is why Allah tells the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to say: 'I am not a guardian over you'. Allah legislates in order to protect the creation and He wants it to be in the best and most excellent form. The Messenger is the one who conveys and the Lord *Glorified is He* says about him: 'You are not domineering over them.' (*Qaf*: 45)

Consequently, everyone is free to obey or disobey. The Messenger, Muhammad, waged war in order to protect this choice and the proof is that the countries that Islam liberated still have people among their populations that have remained in their disbelief without being forced to believe. Allah *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَكَذَلِكَ نَضْرِبُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

This is how We explain Our revelations in various ways – though they will say, ‘You [Muhammad] have been studying’ – to make them clear for those who know [105] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 105)

‘And thus do we explain the signs in various ways’. He brings the signs to us one after another, and He repeats the process. An event takes places and He sends down the legislation regarding it. He makes their hearts incline to Him, and He brings examples from amongst the Messengers and mentions how their nations treated them; every time the sign is repeated we find one heart is ready to accept it. This repetition is needed because if Allah had sent His Signs just once and then was silent, there could have been people whose hearts remained in error.

However, when He diversifies the events and their respective legislations and warnings, their hearts may be prepared for faith and the hearts may comprehend the guidance. ‘So the disbelievers will say, “You have learnt this (from somebody)”’, what does this mean? We know that heaven intervenes when corruption overflows, but if the human himself has a reproachful soul, then the human protects the soul and guards it; if the person sins, his soul reproaches him and he returns. But if the reproachful soul is hidden and the soul begins to command to do evil, and commanding to do good and forbidding evil is

impossible in the society, this means that corruption is overflowing. At this point, heaven intervenes and a new Message comes with a new miracle.

Indeed, corruption only comes about from the existence of classes of people who wear down other classes. Those who are being worn down by the corruption are the ones who eagerly receive the Message. However, those who benefit from the corruption are those who oppose the Message. Every group that waged war against the Messenger were those who used to oppress the people, while the oppressed wanted someone to rescue them.

Therefore, Allah set up an evil enemy for every individual who brought a heavenly call because heaven only intervenes when evil that cannot be stopped is present in the society. This is how Allah sets up an evil enemy for every prophet and Messenger. This enemy is a test for the people, but those who have weak faith incline towards him. The Lord *Glorified is He* reveals the signs in many different ways, one after another; but only the sincere believers remain steadfast with the caller to the Truth.

You find that Islam came and made clear many matters which were previously vague. For example, there was the Night Journey, and those whose faith was shaky denied the Night Journey. This was done in order to remove the froth and leave only those who carry the Message according to the way of Truth. As for those whose faith is weak, or those who worship Allah as if it were on an edge, then Islam does not want them. 'Had they gone forth with you, they would not have increased you except in confusion.' (*at-Tawba*: 47)

The Lord *Glorified is He* has revealed signs in many different ways to make things clear for the oppressed and to make them victorious. But when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* related the signs from Allah, some responded by claiming that he had stayed secluded, studying in a mountain and learning from a non-Arab. This is why we find the Lord *Glorified is He* saying: 'And We certainly know that they say, "It is only a human being who teaches the Prophet (Muhammad)"' (*an-Nahl*: 103). The reply to their claim comes from the Lord: 'The tongue of the one they refer to is foreign, and this Quran is [in] a clear Arabic language' (*an-Nahl*: 103).

When 'Umar Allah *be pleased with him* was circumambulating the *Ka'ba*, he came to the Black Stone and said, 'By Allah, I kiss you and I know that you

are a stone and that you do not bring harm or benefit. If I had not seen the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) *peace and blessings be upon him* kiss you, I would not have kissed you'.⁽¹⁾

Our master 'Umar did this in order to teach us what to say if people come and ask us about the reason behind kissing the Black Stone. The immediate response should be, 'Indeed, the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) *peace and blessings be upon him* did this, and this has been legislated'.

Allah *Glorified is He* says after that:

أَنِيعَ مَا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord, there is no God but Him. Turn away from those who join other gods with Him [106] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 106)

When someone is speaking with someone else regarding a matter that the one he is speaking to is already engaged in and carrying out, we must understand the reality of what is meant. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who believe!' (*an-Nisa'*: 136). What is Allah calling His Believers to here? He called them because they believe and this faith requires them to be addressed about the responsibilities they have because of believing. Man is subject to change in circumstances, and therefore Allah makes it clear that the faith that you have accepted has responsibilities attached to it, and I am telling you to be persistent with this faith. The command here is to be persistent. In other words Allah is saying, 'Just as you have believed and your faith requires that you be addressed about the responsibilities you have, when I say to you: "O you who believe!" this is a command for you to cling to this belief and be persistent in your faith'. Furthermore, the Lord's statement: 'Follow [O Muhammad] what has been revealed to you from your Lord' is a statement for a Messenger who already follows the Revealed Message. Consequently, the command is understood as an order to be persistent in following it, and do not let what they say grieve you O Muhammad because your Lord is assisting you in this. He is in charge of defending you and He will dictate to you the proofs in reply to their

(1) Narrated by Muslim

arguments: 'And they do not come to you with an argument except that We bring you the Truth and the best explanation.' (*al-Furqan*: 33)

The Lord *Glorified is He* then addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: 'Follow [O Muhammad] what has been revealed to you from Your Lord—there is no deity worthy of worship except Him—and turn away from those who associate others with Him [Allah].' (*al-An'am*: 106)

We know that revelation (*wahi*) concerns informing without any third person hearing, and every revelation implies the giving of information in this way. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received revelation in various forms, but everything that is connected and specific to the Quran came via Gabriel *peace be upon him*; and the Lord's statement: 'Follow [O Muhammad] what has been revealed to you from your Lord—there is no deity except Him—and turn away from those who associate others with Allah' means that there is no God but Allah *Glorified is He* and that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not able to change the code of life that has come down to him from His Lord. It is as though Allah is saying to him *peace and blessings be upon him* 'You must turn your back on those who ascribe divinity to anything besides Me. Do not sit with them, do not mix with them, and do not befriend them'. Indeed, such avoidance indicates acumen, results in guidance (of the disbelievers) and is also an order from Allah.

The Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكُوا وَمَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِظًا وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ﴾

**If it had been God's will, they would not have done so,
but We have not made you their guardian, nor are you
their keeper [107] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 107)**

The Lord *Glorified is He* sheds light on a very important point that we must bear in mind as long as we have faith, which is that no disbeliever disbelieves because Allah forces him to do so. Rather, he disbelieves because Allah has loosened the reins and given him the choice, i.e. He created him with the ability to choose. This is why the disbeliever only does what he does because of the choice that Allah has given him and not out of compulsion or coercion from Our Lord. The proof is that the universe we live in is subject to His

Command. It cannot choose other than what Allah has ordained for it, and everything in the universe moves according to what Allah wills.

To sum up, whoever disbelieves does not disbelieve because Allah forces him; but it is the result of the choice granted to him by Allah. When Allah distinguished man with the ability to choose, He showed man the way to follow in order to gain rewards and not be afflicted with punishment. This is why responsibility involves 'Do!' and 'Do not do!' If Allah *Glorified is He* wanted there to be coercion, He will have coerced all the species in the universe, He will have coerced them throughout all their lives, and they will only carry out the function that Allah wanted from them. Indeed, He coerces the sun, the moon, the stars, and the water. Everything in the universe is under His Coercion, and even the angels whom He created: 'who do not disobey Allah [in executing] the Commands they receive from Him' (*at-Tahrim*: 6).

That is, Allah's Attribute of Coercion (*qahr*) can affect anything, but does Allah want His creation to be coerced to do what He wants? No. Rather, He *Glorified is He* wants them to do what He loves and that they choose to do what He loves, although causing coercion in some species affirms His Absolute Power, and indeed it is not possible for any created being to deviate and act differently from what Allah wants from them. But man was left with the ability to choose to show that some people from His Creation choose to move towards Him *the Almighty*, while they are capable of not moving towards Him which affirms their attribute of love.

When the one who can choose, chooses obedience while he is capable of being disobedient, and he chooses faith while he is able to disbelieve, then He has come to Allah out of love, not coercion. This is why our Lord says to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'It may be that you will kill yourself with grief because they do not believe. If it is Our Will, We could have sent down unto them from the skies a sign to which their necks will be forced to bow down in humility' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 3-4).

Allah orders Prophet Muhammad to have compassion on his soul and not to kill it out of grief and sorrow because his people refuse to have faith in what he has brought from Him. It is as if Allah is saying to him *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Do you want Me, O Muhammad, to force them (to believe)? Do you

want their necks or do you want hearts? Indeed, you know, O Muhammad, the way set for you that has come down to you from your Lord wants hearts, and the hearts come out of choice. If We want them to believe, we could have sent down a miracle that will have overcome their hearts, and then they will have been forced to believe’.

This is why if a person loses any of his facilities which are needed to make a free choice, he will become no longer responsible for his actions. The proof of this is that no responsibility is attached to the one who has lost his intellect because the organ we use to choose is the mind. Likewise, no responsibility is attached to whoever is not yet an adult. Rather, the Lord *Glorified is He* leaves him until he becomes an adult and is thus able to give birth to someone like him and the chemical make-up of his body is fully developed. Also, he has to be not forced by anyone stronger than him to do any act he does not want to do. If all the above is the case, he will be responsible for anything he does.

Therefore, the person is responsible for what he does if three points are present: presence of intellect, as no responsibility is attached to the insane; an intellect that is mature and discerning, as there is no responsibility before puberty and no compulsion so one can make sound choices. Why? The answer comes from the Lord *Glorified is He*: ‘That he who perishes might perish with clear knowledge of the Truth, and that he who lives (believers) might live with clear knowledge of the Truth (*al-Anfal*: 42).

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدَوًّا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ
زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

[Believers], do not revile those they call on beside God in case they, in their hostility and ignorance, revile God. To each community We make their own actions seem alluring, but in the end they will return to their Lord and He will inform them of all they did [108] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 108)

This noble verse concerns one of the manners that are needed when calling others to Allah. This call is the same as that delivered by the previous

Messengers. The Lord *Glorified is He* sealed it with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and He *Glorified is He* made it the last connection between heaven and earth. This is why it was imperative for Islam to embrace all matters that are connected to calling others to Allah, and for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to bear them as a trust which he had to deliver to the world. The followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* must also bear this trust; these followers have been honoured by Allah *Glorified is He* as those who bear the trust of delivering Allah's Message to all the creation have been placed amongst them, thereby they continue the work of Allah's Messenger Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Any Muslim who has knowledge of one of Allah's rulings is required to convey it to someone else. This is because the one who the ruling is conveyed to may understand it more than the one who heard it in the first place, even if Allah does not enable the one who conveys the ruling to act according to what he conveyed. He may convey what he has learnt to someone who has a deeper understanding than him. Even if the person who conveys the call does not act according to this information, the one who knows any matter in religion should, at least, not miss the chance of receiving the reward for conveying information from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the creation. But it is better if he acts on this information himself to be a model for others because of his good behaviour and for him not to belong to those about whom Allah says: 'Most loathsome is it in the sight of Allah that you say that which you do not do' (*as-Saff*: 3). Some poets used to insist on this matter by saying:

Take my knowledge and do not rely on my action
have the fruits and use the rod to poke the fire

Thus, conveying from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a necessary matter as it is a continuation of his *peace and blessings be upon him* testimony. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed from the Lord *Glorified is He* what the Lord wants from the creation. It remains for those of mankind who follow the Messenger, Muhammad, to bear witness that they have conveyed to mankind what has come to them from him *peace and blessings be upon him*; 'Thus have We made you (true Muslims) a moderate midmost community

to stand as witnesses to the Truth before all mankind, and for the Messenger [Prophet Muhammad] to be a witness before all of you' (*al-Baqara*: 143).

Likewise, Prophet Muhammad will bear witness that he conveyed the Message to us. And an essential part of the way of life Allah wants for us is that his followers will have to bear witness that they conveyed the Message to mankind. If there is any shortcoming in conveying the Message to mankind, then the guilt lies with those who follow Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* for they did not properly carry out the trust of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* in conveying the Message to all of mankind. The way of calling to Allah is difficult because it requires that the caller takes the hand of those who are deviating from the way of life that was revealed from the heavens and who are following their earthly passions which are always attractive for the creation because they are connected to the soul's immediate enjoyment. By following the religion—as they say—one realises a delayed benefit. This statement is not fair to the religion because before the religion makes people realise a deferred enjoyment, it also makes them realise an immediate enjoyment because the people who adhere to the way of 'Do!' and 'Do not do!' live a good life without malice, exploitation, ill will, envy, suppression and tyranny, and thus all of mankind lives in safety.

That is, do not say that the fruits of the religion are only in the Hereafter. Rather, say that the aim of the religion is not related only to the Hereafter but to the life of this world as well. The Hereafter is a reward for succeeding in fulfilling these goals because in the Hereafter Allah rewards only those who excelled in their actions in the life of this world. Whoever works righteousness, thereby following Allah's Way: 'We will surely cause him to live a good and pure life' (*an-Nahl*: 97); and whoever turns away from His way, then indeed he will have a wretched life, and this happens before the Hereafter. Then the Day of Resurrection comes for them to receive the punishment from Allah: 'And on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him up blind' (*Ta Ha*: 124).

If the aim of the religion is to take people away from their bad desires to the Path of Allah *the Almighty*, then the mission of the caller is going to be very difficult psychologically. This is why some have said, 'Indeed the one who advises others to goodness must be clever because he wants to make

people leave the evil that they love and are accustomed to'. This is why the caller must not try to take them away from what they are used to with ways that they hate. Rather, he must influence their intellects and desires to make them follow the path of Allah, and this is why this verse says: 'And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus we have made the deeds of every community appear pleasing to them. Then to their Lord is their return and He will inform them about what they used to do' (*al-An'am*: 108).

The wise men have said, 'Advice is heavy, so do not make it like a mountain nor turn it into an argument. Reality is bitter, and therefore you should use gentle speech when guiding others. Using gentle speech when advising makes the heart of the one being advised soft. It is enough for you to only make him leave what he loves and is accustomed to (i.e. his desires) and turn towards that which he is not accustomed to (i.e. Allah's Way of life). This is why making him leave what he is used to should not be done with harshness'. For this reason, the Lord *Glorified is He* teaches us to be careful of this matter when we call antagonists who associate others with Allah in worship to have faith in Him; we must do this with leniency.

They wanted immediate pleasure by disregarding Allah's Way. But they kept their belief in Allah with their belief in these partners because they could find themselves in critical situations which earthly means are unable to repel, and it is for their own benefit that they have a Deity Who is able to save them from the situation in which they are. They are honest to themselves concerning this point. But Allah *Glorified is He* says about people like this who are resolute upon idolatry: 'Truly, you and all that you worship besides Allah are [but] fuel of Hell: To it you will surely come' (*al-Anbiya'*: 98).

The fuel (*hasab*) of hell, therefore, is made-up of the idol-worshippers and the idols that they used to worship are with them, so they too will be fuel for the fire that is going to punish them all. Some superficial people think that this will be a punishment only for the stones. No. Rather, it (the punishment) is jealousy, vengeance, and anger on behalf of the stones that is directed at the idol-worshippers for leaving Allah's Way, which is to worship Allah alone. The stone will say, 'You were captivated by me and this is why I will be the

means of burning you'. Indeed, we find for those who are captivated by supposed gods from amongst human beings, or from trees, or celestial bodies, or stones, Allah afflict them with punishment. The stones that they used to worship will say, as some have said in poetry:

They worshipped us while we are stronger worshipers
Of Allah than those who stand during the pre-dawn hours
They took our silence as proof against us
And for them we became fuel for the fire
The transgressor has his reward, and the one who is transgressed against
Will be saved by the Mercy of the All-Forgiving

For this reason, the command comes not to revile what is worshipped by those who associate partners with Allah because the idols have not committed any sin. Actually, we should be kind towards the stones because they incur no sin due to those who are captivated by them. Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us and makes it clear to us that we should not be aggressive against that which has been taken as a god because it is excused. To revile (*sabb*) means to say something vile, or something of abuse, derision, or derogation. If you revile and deride (*tasubbu*) what they worship besides Allah then the one worshipping it, out of his foolishness, will deride Your God. You will have reviled a false god, while they will have reviled the True God, Allah. We would not gain anything from this, and therefore we should desist.

In the Lord's statement in the Quran, Allah warns us against falling into this: 'And do not insult (*tasubbu*) those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge' (*al-An'am*: 108). They will do this out of enmity, hostility and transgression without knowing the value of the Lord *Glorified is He* and His Sanctity. This is why we must guard our tongues against reviling their gods so that we do not encourage their tongues, in turn, to revile Allah.

Indeed Allah *Glorified is He* wants to teach us to be gentle when calling others to Him because you want to soften their hearts to make them incline towards faith, and that can only be achieved with good manners.

It is true that the believers are excused for their enthusiasm when they enter into a discussion with idol-worshippers, but the believer should bear in mind the ultimate aim which is achieving good for the call. He should ask Allah to grant him patience with the idol-worshippers. The Lord *Glorified is He* teaches us how to follow the correct method when calling others to Islam. For example, we find that Prophet Noah *peace be upon him* who remained with his people for nine hundred and fifty years, kept calling and he was tender in doing so, and even in the end they said to him, 'You invented this speech yourself'. Allah *Glorified is He* teaches him that he should say: 'If I have invented it, on me is this sin; but I am innocent of the sin you commit' (*Hud*: 35).

Teaching Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* orders him to say: 'Who is it that provides sustenance for you from the heavens and the earth?' (*Saba'*: 24), i.e. who is it that gives you the sustenance you need for your life? When you ask them a question which proves the error of their ways and they begin to stutter, Allah supports His Messenger, Muhammad, clarifying and commanding him to say to them: 'It is Allah; And most surely, either we or you are on right guidance or in manifest error' (*Saba'*: 24).

The pronoun 'We' refers to Allah's Messenger and those with him. And the phrase 'or you' refers to those who disbelieve in Allah. He did not say 'I alone am on the right path and you have clearly gone astray'. Rather, he said, 'Our way and your way do not agree. There must be one way on the right path and one way that has clearly gone astray. I will not say who is on the right path and who has clearly gone astray'. This is because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was certain that if they pondered over the matter in their minds and used their insight, they could only conclude that Allah's Messenger is on the right path and that they have clearly gone astray. Thus he left it for them to come to this conclusion.

Let us also contemplate this statement of the Lord *Glorified is He*: 'Say, "You shall not be called to account for what we committed, nor shall we be called to account for what you do"' (*Saba'*: 25). Allah *Glorified is He* did not say that they are the ones who are guilty. Rather, he attributed crime—if there was any crime—to the believers. He attributed only doing things—even though

their actions are wrong—to the disbelievers. The least matter that is required is that we shall not be called to account for the crimes you commit, in order for the two to be the same, but He did not say that. This is exalted etiquette and gentleness because the Lord *Glorified is He* does not want Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to leave any room for their natural inclinations to reject him or to find a means to flee from the call. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us this style by saying: ‘And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge’. (*al-Ana'm*: 108)

In this way we learn how to carry out a gentle debate. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Truly, all those who you call upon besides Allah are but created beings like yourselves’ (*al-A'raf*: 194). If you want to unveil the reality of these idols, then they too are created by Allah and they worship Him. If you ask them for anything, they will not answer you. They do not have feet to walk with, they do not have hands to grasp with, they do not have eyes to see with, and they do not have ears with which to hear. And more than this: ‘Those who you call besides Allah cannot create [even] a fly though they all may combine together for that purpose’ (*al-Hajj*: 73). Is there anything smaller than a fly that you know of? Yes. Allah *Glorified is He* tells us: ‘And if the fly should snatch away anything from them, they cannot (even) release it from it [the fly]’ (*al-Hajj*: 73).

If a fly lands on what you are eating and takes from it, would you be able to get that food back from it? If you are a fearsome tyrant, then grab the fly and retrieve the food that it took; but you are not able to do that. This is why the Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘So weak are both the seeker and the sought!’ (*al-Hajj*: 73)

This is the kind of argument that makes the one arguing feel embarrassed. However, if you rage in his face and act like a bigot, then you will give him an excuse to bear a grudge against you, feel anger and hostility towards you, and turn away from Allah’s Way. We ask Allah to grant us vast patience and forbearance, and help us to debate gently. ‘And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus, ‘We have made the deeds of every community appear pleasing to them.

Then to their Lord is their return and He will inform them about what they used to do' (*al-An'am*: 108). When Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us to keep any debate gentle when calling others to Islam, this embellishes the call and makes it pleasing. The call itself is beautiful so it must be presented beautifully.

An example from our daily life is when you go to a merchant. He has some merchandise that could be of outstanding quality, but he does not arrange them properly and does not present them well. For this reason, you may leave him and go to another merchant who may have some merchandise that is not of the same quality but is presented well. This is embellishment, i.e. improving the beauty, making it pleasing. This is why jewellery and what women use to beautify themselves are called (*zinah*) embellishment. A woman may already have beautiful femininity and in addition to her beauty she adorns herself with jewellery, jewels, and fine clothes. When an Arab wanted to praise a woman for being beautiful, he used to say, 'She is (*ghaniyah*) (i.e. has natural beauty)', i.e. because of her beauty, she does not need to embellish herself because what you are concealing with the necklace is more beautiful than the necklace itself.

Embellishment and making something pleasing therefore refers to presenting something in a beautiful way in order to make people feel attracted and inclined towards it. When we adorn anything, we make it dignified and handsomeness, and we increase it in beauty: 'Thus, we have made the deeds of every community appear pleasing to them' (*al-An'am*: 108). A community (*ummah*) is a group whose characteristic of belonging brings its individuals together, such as the Arab community, i.e. those who belong to it are the Arabs. There is also the English community which the English people belong to. As for the community of Islam, it includes the Arabs, the non-Arabs, the black, the white, the yellow, and it covers a large amount of territory. If the previous communities were embellished and made to appear pleasing in order to suit a defined age, a defined time, and a defined place, then We [Allah] shall embellish you in a way that suits all tastes that are present in the life of this world because you will meet all these communities, and your call must make all types of people incline towards it.

In the beginning of the *Da'wah* (call)—and it was weak at that time—we find Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* looking at his community;

Bilal Al-Habashi (the Abyssinian) Allah *be pleased with him* used to give the call to prayer. We find Prophet Muhammad saying about Salman Allah *be pleased with him* who was Persian, 'He is one of us; one of the Prophetic household'.⁽¹⁾ The Companion 'Umar Allah *be pleased with him* says about Suhayb, who was a European (*Rumi*) Allah *be pleased with him* 'What an excellent slave Suhayb is. Even if he did not fear Allah, he will not disobey Him', i.e. his avoidance of disobedience was natural to him, even if he did not fear Allah's Punishment.

'If We [Allah] embellished the deeds of all the previous nations and make them appear pleasing, then embellishing your community must suit its task in terms of the time, place, race, colour, and language of the people. We must also embellish you with regards to how you should present the call. The presentation must suit the beauty of the call itself. Your embellishment is of the utmost importance because your community will deal with all the civilizations of the world and all the affiliations of the world. Thus, your embellishment must suit your task of spreading the Message to all these different types of people. 'Thus, We [Allah] have made the deeds of every community appear pleasing to them. Then to their Lord is their return and He will inform them about what they used to do' (*al-An'am*: 108), i.e. indeed He has clarified for them the way of conveying the call to others, and the reward that the obedient and the doers of good will obtain in the Hereafter. When the believers enjoy the blessings of the Hereafter, these blessings will be unlimited because they will be according to Allah's Absolute Power. And while the believers are enjoying all of these blessings, they also look forward to meeting the One Who is blessing them, and then Allah will manifest Himself to them.

Just as we have embellished the deeds of the previous nations and made them appear pleasing, we have also embellished you because you are the community that has accepted the responsibility of the call. This special embellishment nurtures those who call others to Allah's Way. If others are aware of the beauty that your way of life contains, they will have studied it and each one of them would have examined the signs that exist in front of them, behind them, on their right and on their left, and they will have realised that everything in existence has been created to do a particular task in this

(1) Narrated by At-Tabarani in *Al-Kabir* and *Al-Hakim* in *Al-Mustadrak*

world, and they will also follow the life of worship: 'I only create jinn and men that they may worship Me' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 56).

'That they may worship Me' means that they obey Allah concerning the orders 'Do' and 'Do not do'. When the Lord *Glorified is He* said: 'Thus We have made the deeds of every community appear pleasing to them' (*al-An'am*: 108), it means that He *Glorified is He* has explained the deeds with the benefits they produce.

If you look at the people around you, you will find there are some who have been given special skills you do not have. This is because the Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to benefit you in particular. This is clear in all fields. The work of the skilled and proficient carpenter affects you. The best work of the expert clothes designer will affect you. It is very beneficial for every individual to find that someone else who is superior to him in his expertise, while he himself is superior to others in his work. And he praises the Lord because the benefit from his work will affect others as well. With this we will be able to live in a refined society that is made up of ideal communities and groups. As such, whoever is superior in something must not have rancour towards others in the society because his superiority will affect every individual therein, and it is beneficial for everyone to work to become superior in some skill.

When Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Thus We [Allah] have made the deeds of every community appear pleasing to them' (*al-An'am*: 108), this means that Allah has given each of us a task in life and we will inevitably benefit from it in the life of this world and in the Hereafter as well, and each of us will receive Allah's reward for it. The one who embellishes his work and makes it look pleasing is the one who exerts effort in his work, and the one who does not embellish his work sins. Everyone embellishes their work according to what he himself wishes to attain. We see examples of this in life; we find someone who has a limited income, but he excessively enjoys luxuries that are beyond his necessary needs. He does not set anything aside and he is only concerned about attaining immediate pleasures. You then find someone else who lives fulfilling only his necessities and he sets some of his wealth aside, and afterwards we find that he has improved his lifestyle with an appropriate accommodation and other pleasures of life. The first embellished his life with immediate luxuries, while the second embellished his life with permanent

luxuries. Beware of looking at short-time desires. Instead, look at the long-time benefit that comes from your work: 'Then to their Lord is their return and He will inform them about what they used to do' (*al-An'am*: 108).

As long as the return is to the One Who has set the methodology of 'Do!' and 'Do not do!', and it is to the One Who has also laid down the rule that we have to embellish our work so that you will want to follow this noble way of life from Him, you should follow it. And according to how much you follow Allah's way, you yourself will be noble.

The Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ لَيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا
الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

They swear by God with their most solemn oaths that if a miraculous sign came to them they would believe in it. Say [Prophet], 'Signs are in the power of God alone.' What will make you [believers] realize that even if a sign came to them they still would not believe? [109] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 109)

Allah says, 'And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths'; here there is an oath (*qasam*), something which is sworn by (*muqsam bih*), someone making an oath (*muqsam*), and something that is sworn about (*muqsam 'alaih*). That which is sworn by is Allah. Those making the oath are the group opposing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Why are they making an oath? They made an oath when the True Lord's logic in debate overwhelmed them. They swore by Allah after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had already called them to worship Allah. 'And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths' (*al-An'am*: 109) means that they had to expend great effort '*jahd*' (strongest), which is difficult, meaning that they exaggerated in their oath to such an extent that it was difficult for them, and this was to make it clear to whoever they were swearing to that they were keen to carry out the oath. Thus they exhausted their efforts and their labour in making the oath, and this means that they declared that they were swearing an oath that was beloved to them and what is most beloved to them is to carry out this oath.

This outwardly shows their sincerity in making the oath. 'And they swear by Allah their strongest oaths that if a sign came to them, they would surely believe in it. Say, "The signs are only with Allah." And what will make you perceive that even if a sign came, they will not believe'. (*al-An'am*: 109)

Has Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not come with a clear sign? He came to them with the greatest sign, which is the Quran. Their lack of acknowledgement of this sign is their first calamity. Did Prophet Muhammad not say to you, 'I am a Messenger' after he had declared the sign which is the revelation of the Quran, and you knew that he is truthful in conveying the Message from Allah? This is the peak of their petulance. They continued in this petulance when they asked for signs from Allah. Did they not say to Prophet Muhammad: 'We shall not believe in your Message till you cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth, or you have a garden of date-palms and vines and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst in a sudden rush, or cause the skies to fall down on us in pieces, as you claim [will happen], or you bring Allah and the angels before us face to face' (*al-Isra'*: 90-92)?

Allah *Glorified is He* in this way wanted to make it clear to us that the oath that they swore is a coward's oath. Their saying, 'as you claimed' (*al-Isra'*: 92), (*Za'm*) (you claim will happen)—as we know—refers to lying, and this is the first defect in their oath. The Lord *Glorified is He* tells us: 'If We [Allah] will, we could cause the earth to swallow them, or cause fragments of the sky to fall down on them' (*Saba'*: 9).

To sum up, they are not believers in the original sign which is the Quran, and that is why they challenged him to prove that this Quran is revelation. But the Lord *Glorified is He* warns us not to believe their claim (that they would believe after receiving a sign from heaven) by informing us: 'Even if We [Allah] had sent down to them through the Prophet [Muhammad] a written [Message] on parchment so that they could touch it with their own hands—those who are bent on denying the Truth will indeed have said, "This is clearly nothing but a deception"' (*al-An'am*: 7).

Even if a sign was sent down, they will not believe in it. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Even if We [Allah] open out to them a gateway to Heaven and they

were to continue ascending it [on and on, up to Heaven], they will surely have said, "Our eyes are spellbound! Nay, we have been bewitched!" (*al-Hijr*: 14-15) But if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had bewitched you, how come he did not bewitch them to believe in Allah?

Thus, we see that the Lord *Glorified is He* has mentioned to us in His Book that everything they say about this matter is just a way to stray and flee from responding to the call. This is because there is no sign greater than that which came down to them, that is the Quran. All the signs that they suggested do not surpass this sign. Furthermore, they are a community who excelled in grammar, morphology, rhetoric, eloquence, and literature. He came to them with a miracle, but they disputed over it. They were not masters in the signs that they mentioned and suggested to be sent. We are bringing a miracle to them that is from the same field as that which they have mastery in. This is because miracles always come according to this principle. Allah brings a miraculous sign to every people that are masters in a particular field and this sign is superior to whatever they have accomplished in that field. This is in order to affirm the veracity of the Messenger in what he conveys from Allah.

We have already said that indeed the miracles come to violate the fixed laws of the universe because the laws of the universe have rules that are known to human beings, and they recur many times right in front of them. Whenever a matter comes to violate the law that is prevalent and acknowledged amongst them, it draws their attention and they start to ask one another how the law could be violated. This is for each one of them to realise that the One Who created the law is the One Who violated it, and to affirm the veracity of what is being conveyed from Him. A miracle has come to you that is in the field of your expertise. What proves this is that they did not talk about the miracle itself but rather about the way the miracle reached them and the person who brought it. Thus, Allah says that they ask: 'Why has not an angel been sent down unto him?' (*al-An'am*: 8). The Quran makes it clear that the angel, by the very nature of its constitution, is not seen by you. He sees you and you do not see him. Hence, if We sent you an angel, how can you recognise him? Consequently, sending an angel requires that we make him like a human being. And if the Lord *Glorified is He* sends him down in the form

of a man and if he comes down in the form of a man, you will say, 'He is not a human being so we do not have to adhere to what he has brought'; Allah *Glorified is He* explains: 'If We [Allah] had made him an angel, We will have made him [appear as] a man, but [by this] We will have caused confusion for them in a matter they already now make confusing for themselves' (*al-An'am*: 9).

The Angel Gabriel came down to Prophet Muhammad one time in the form of a man, who had arrived from a journey, and he sat and he spoke with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Gabriel *peace be upon him* therefore, did not come in his true form, but rather he came in the form of a man. There is another similar creation which is called the '*jinn*'. We are not able to see the *jinn*. We cannot, according to our human laws and the laws of the *jinn*, see them. However, if a demon from the *jinn* wants to show himself to us, he comes in the form of something material that can be seen. He takes on the form of an animal, a cat, a camel or a man, and so forth. If this matter was not well organized to maintain a balance between the two species—humans and *jinn*—mankind would suffer much hardship. This is because when a *jinn* reveals himself to a man, stands in front of him and then conceals himself, fear spreads amongst human beings despite the fact that the *jinn* are more scared of man than man is of the *jinn*. This is because the *jinn* know how to take on the form of a man or anything material. And when a *jinn* takes on the form of a man, he is governed by the laws of man. Hence, if he comes across a man with a revolver, for example, the man may shoot him with bullets and kill him. For this reason, *jinn* are scared of manifesting themselves to man for a long period of time. Rather, they appear like a flash of lighting and then vanish because they are scared, as we have said, of man. Hence, a balance exists between the *jinn* and humans. This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'A demon from amongst the (*jinn*) suddenly pounced on me yesterday in order to interrupt my prayer, but Allah gave me power over him. Consequently I seized him and intended to tie him to one of the pillars of the mosque in order that you, all together [or all of you], might look at him, but then I remembered the supplication of my brother Solomon *peace be upon him* "My Lord, forgive me, and give me such a kingdom which will never be possible for anyone after me to have". Hence Allah repelled him (the *jinn*) in disgrace'. In another narration, it is reported

that he said, 'By Allah, if it was not for the supplication of my brother Solomon, he will have been tied up and the children of Medina would have played with him'.⁽¹⁾

This is how we know that whenever a people suggested a miraculous sign and as a result Allah brought a sign but they then denied it, they were seized in a way that only *the Almighty*, the One Who determines and overpowers all things, can seize, and it was not deferred until the Hereafter.

The Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'But Allah will not punish them while you [Prophet Muhammad] are still among them' (*al-Anfal*: 33). Thus, even those who disbelieve in him obtain mercy because of him: 'and they swear by Allah their strongest oaths that if a sign came to them, they would surely believe in it. Say, "The signs are only with Allah." And what will make you perceive that, even if a sign came, they will not believe' (*al-An'am*: 109).

Here Allah *Glorified is He* conveys to His Messenger Muhammad to say to them, 'I do not bring signs from myself and I do not bring them relying on my own ability; because what governs my ability is the same that governs yours. I am not superior to you in any way other than the fact that I receive revelation and I convey to you with what I have been sent. Indeed, Allah is the One Who gives me the signs of the Quran and no creation should suggest a miraculous sign for Allah to bring. This is due to the fact that what happened with previous Messages shows that when a people do not respond and do not believe in the sign that they asked for, the Lord *Glorified is He* destroys and annihilates them, drowns them, sends a violent wind against them or causes the earth to swallow them up. Allah *Glorified is He* tells us: 'Nothing has prevented Us [Allah] from sending [this Message] with miraculous signs [in its wake, like the earlier Messages] save [Our knowledge] that the people of former generations [only too often] belied them' (*al-Isra*: 59).

(1) Narrated by Muslim with this wording in the section on Prayer in the Book of Mosques..., narrated by Al-Bukhari in the section on Prayer and narrated by Ahmad... The meaning of 'yaftaku' is 'to pounce on someone deceptively in a state of heedlessness', and in one narration the word 'tafallata' (to bother) is used. The meaning of 'fadhatuhu' (I seized him) with a dotted 'dhal' and an undotted 'ain' means to choke him. In another narration it is 'fada'tuhu' with an undotted 'dal', meaning 'I pushed him away with force'. The meaning of 'sariya' is 'pillar'.

As such, some people of the earlier Messages suggested signs for Allah to bring, and Allah brought these signs for them. But they denied them. Clearly, denial is the usual response from this type of people.

The sign comes in the way Allah wants it to come and not according to anyone's suggestion. This is why the Lord *Glorified is He* commands His Messenger Muhammad to convey to them, 'The miraculous signs are only with Allah.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 50)

After this a new address comes for those of humanity who differ with the idol-worshippers, and they are the believers. The Lord *Glorified is He* says to them: 'And what will make you perceive that even if a sign came, they will not believe' (*al-An'am*: 109). When idolaters asked for a sign, it is as if the believers wanted to reduce the adversity the idol-worshippers caused Allah's Messenger, and that is why they said to him, 'O Prophet Muhammad! Ask Allah to send a miraculous sign to them in order for us to be relieved of their stubbornness'. Allah directs His response to those who suggested this question by clearly saying, 'You are believers and your thinking is good and your idea is fine in that you want to put an end to this adversity, but what will make you realise, i.e. what will make you understand clearly, that if I bring to them the sign that they are proposing, they will still not believe'. It is as if the believers supported the statement of these idol-worshippers in demanding a sign in order to prevent such idol-worshippers' stubbornness.

Regarding the following words of Allah *the Exalted* as mentioned in the Noble Quran, '...they still would not believe.' (*al-An'am*: 109) Muslim scholars, may Allah *the Exalted* reward them all abundantly, have differed on what is meant here because understanding differs when it comes to matters of religion (with scholars trying their best to properly comprehend the issue). We ask, 'What is the wisdom behind this Quranic style'? The answer, as we see it, is a form of expression that is used to get us immersed in the Quran. Allah *the Exalted* wants us to fully comprehend its meanings, not just merely pass over it in haste. The style in Allah's statement *the Exalted* '...What will make you [believers] realise that even if a sign came to them they still would not believe?' (*al-An'am*: 109), is proof that we human beings do not have any knowledge in terms of what Allah *the Exalted* allows us to know. We said that

shu`ur (realisation) requires awareness along with passion and wishes, so it is as if the question being asked is, 'On what foundation do you base your claim of knowledge and perception?' It is easy for anyone to be deceived by the tone of their statement (if taken on its face value), but Allah *Glorified is He* would never be deceived by that and He knows and encompasses all what is hidden and concealed. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is making it clear that asking for a sign (here in this context) is nothing but wrangling. You do not know that if Allah *the Exalted* brought a sign to them they would not believe.

Some of the scholars of Quranic exegesis have said that the Arabic letter *la* used in the above verse, and meaning 'not', is additional, while other scholars maintained some kind of tactical approach, said that the letter *la* (*not*) is a conjunction because they do not want to consider it as 'additional'. Some of them have made similar statements and then retracted them, and to do so is better in terms of etiquette. This is because the one speaking is Allah *the Exalted* and it is unconceivable to assume an 'extra' letter in Allah's speech; that if it was omitted, we would still be having a complete sentence. No. The logic is that if a word is omitted in a sentence, then that statement becomes incomplete and thus lacks the capacity to convey the intended meaning. And because we know that Allah *the Exalted* always has purpose behind all His statements, and His purpose and Will have to come to pass. We can draw an example from our daily lives and how we use words when someone says to you, 'I do not have money'. Or 'I do not have any money'. The phrase 'any money' means that the person does not even have the least basic of what could be called money. As for saying 'I do not have money', this means that one does not have what would be considered a significant or considerable amount of money. Rather, that person may have with him a few coins, which are of course, insignificant when referring to money as compared to someone who has quite much more than that.

The Arabic letter *la* is used in this verse because Allah *the Exalted* wants to say to the believers, 'What makes you so sure that if I brought a sign (miracle) to them (the disbelievers), they would then believe'? It is as if Allah *the Exalted* is rebuking the believers for endorsing the request of the disbelievers. But we need to take note that the True Lord *Glorified is He* (in His statement)

was very calm in the way He addressed the believers (as mentioned in the above verse), for He appreciated their good intention behind the kind of an 'implicit endorsement' they showed to the request made by the disbelievers because they did not do that out of love for the disbelievers, but rather out of love for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and His message. It is as if Allah *the Exalted* is saying to them, 'I excuse you because your reaction was based on the mere tone used by the disbelievers as they swore by Allah, that if Allah *the Exalted* would send some miracles as a sign they would believe in the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*', '...Now they swear by Allah *the Exalted* with their most solemn oaths.' (*al-An'am*: 109), especially with the kind of emphasis used in this sentence. Furthermore, it is also as if Allah *the Exalted* was telling the disbelievers, 'I am not rebuking you for taking that solemn oath at face value because this is due to your limited knowledge; and how could you be so sure that if I did bring a sign to them they would believe'? Had Allah done that, they still would not have believed in the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, the Arabic letter *la* used in the Quranic verse, 'they would not believe' is very essential and not extra. To assuage the believers, the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear to them (i.e. the Prophet's Companions) that with His vast knowledge He knows the reality of their affairs. He says:

وَنَقْلِبَ أَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَرَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ
مَرَّةٍ وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

We would make their hearts and their eyes turn away, just as they did not believe the first time, and leave them to flounder in their obstinacy [110] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 110)

When you say *uqallib* ('I turn over the merchandise'), it means that you examine it. So in the same context, we can understand what Allah *the Exalted* wants to inform us that He was making it clear that with His Infinite Knowledge, He knows what is in all hearts, so nothing is hidden from Him. So, by this, the believers (and this applies to all believers of all time) should rest assured that Allah's judgement on everything is nothing but true because His judgement results from his precise and all-informed Knowledge.

There could be another meaning here, i.e. that the Arabic word *taqalub* could be referring to a kind of changing. It is possible that when the disbelievers swore by Allah *the Exalted* with their most solemn oaths that if Allah sent to them a miracle as a sign they would submit in faith, that, at that moment, their hearts were drawing closer to faith but in a shaky way (i.e. not fully inclined towards faith just like any hearts that are not established upon any creed; such hearts would remain weak). So, since the disbelievers were in that situation, then how could the believers take their swearing by Allah *the Exalted* as an indication of faith, or a sign of readiness to believe if a sign could be revealed to them? Was there someone amongst the disbelievers who could possibly control himself and get rid of his arrogance and stubbornness after seeing a miracle from Allah *Exalted is He*? Would he possibly remain steadfast in that state or would he quickly revert to disbelief? We need understand this fact; Allah *the Exalted* is the One who controls man's heart, turning it around the way He wants; that is why man's dispositions and behaviours are subject to constant switch and altercation. Allah *the Exalted* has made this clear in this verse, 'And We will turn away their hearts and their eyes...' (*al-An'am*: 110). So by this, it should be clear that Allah's judgement in that case was the result of His being All-Informed and having fully encompassing knowledge.

Indeed, faith requires a kind of visual perception of universal signs. And what comes after such perception of the signs that prove the mightiness of Allah *the Exalted* is belief with conviction and that makes faith settled in the heart. So Allah *the Exalted* makes it clear that He is the One Who turns people's hearts and eyes. And this should help us verify how people get conviction, or how they arrive at a state of certainty regarding the universal signs. It is by knowing whether people look at these signs with consideration and conviction or is it just a superficial glance in which they have no understanding and ability to draw conclusions. Also, it is by verifying whether their hearts (after perceiving these signs) succeed in absorbing faith or not, whether their eyes manage to feel the light or not. All this is very important in terms of verification and ascertaining truth. 'And We will turn away their hearts and their eyes just as they refused to believe in it the first time. And We will leave them in their transgression, wandering blindly.' (*al-An'am*: 110)

That is how Allah *the Exalted* made it clear to the believers that the pagans would not believe even if a sign were to be brought to them. They would just ignore it and move on as if they saw nothing. In this verse, we also draw from it that the believers were spared from blame for having such hope and desire that the disbelievers would surrender in faith and embrace Islam if a miracle could be revealed to them, (without knowing that those disbelievers were already stone-hearted and very stubborn). Why? Because the True Lord *Glorified is He* said, '...just as they refused to believe in it the first time' (*al-An'am*: 110), i.e. they did not change and for that reason the judgement is issued against them. 'And We will leave them in their transgression, wandering blindly.' (*al-An'am*: 110) The Arabic word *tughyan* (overweening arrogance) is to overstep the bounds, and the disbelievers did overstep the bounds in the way they reacted to the signs sent to them. The signs of the Quran came to them, but they refused to believe. Just as Allah *the Exalted* made it clear they could not even come up with ten verses, and not only that, they were incapable of bringing up just one verse. So, with all this 'incapacity', the least that was expected of them was not to transgress and overstep their bounds in asking to be convinced of the truth of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

'And We will leave them in their transgression, wandering blindly.' (*al-An'am*: 110) The Arabic word *'amah* (blind) is confusion and indecision. It means that the disbelievers in their transgression waver because within them, there is a natural disposition that awakens in them a sense a belief, but at the same time, that spirit collides with another spirit that calls them to disbelief, and the latter keeps persisting, making them wonder whether to believe or not. The natural disposition that wakes up within them flashes like lightning, and so (with such a powerful ray of light) it should have been enough to sway them to the Right Path. Or 'And We will turn away their hearts and their eyes just as they refused to believe in it the first time. And We will leave them in their transgression, wandering blindly' (*al-An'am*: 110), refers to when they are thrown in the hell-fire because of their failure to use their senses as a means of pondering over the signs of Allah *Exalted is He*. The same is also with their hearts, rendering them stagnant, without using them to comprehend the words and wonders of Allah *the Exalted*.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that,

وَلَوْ أَنَّا زَلَّلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتَى وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ
قُبُلًا مَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

Even if We sent the angels down to them, and the dead spoke to them, and We gathered all things right in front of them, they still would not believe, unless God so willed, but most of them are ignorant [of this] [111] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 111)

Allah *the Exalted* expands more on this matter; making it clear that the disbelievers were not ready to believe. Allah *the Exalted* did not say, 'Indeed they will believe'. Rather, He said, 'And even if We sent the angels down to them...' (*al-An'am*: 111), as they had claimed or even if the dead were to speak to them as they had stated previously, 'so then, bring forth our forefathers [as witnesses], if what you claim is true!' (*ad-Dukhan*: 36)

Let us look carefully at this verse, '...and we gathered all things right in front of them...' (*al-An'am*: 111). The Arabic word *hashr* (gathering with difficulty) such as when you put some books on a shelf and there's one more book that cannot fit in, and you have to squeeze it in. Therefore, that Arabic word refers to grouping things together with difficulty. Here Allah *the Exalted* makes it clear: 'If I had brought the signs to them, you would find their hearts, despite all this clear signs, still resisting faith '...and We gathered all things right in front of them...' (*al-An'am*: 111). Take note of this Arabic word *qubula*, (in front of them) is the plural form of the Arabic word *qabil*, just like the Arabic word that refers to bed, both in its singular and plural forms.

"...and we gathered all things right in front of them..." (*al-An'am*: 111). This means that if the True Lord *Glorified is He* brought them all the signs they were asking for, and it was as if each and every sign was like a thread linked with the other (as if they formed a group) the disbelievers still would not have believed. Or, another explanation for *qubulan* is that the disbelievers see the signs with their own eyes, and this can be inferred from the Arabic word because for everything there are two sides, either the front or the back. And we refer to this in Arabic with the words *dubur* (the back) and *qubul* (at the front). Per this explanation, we can take the above verse as meaning that if we

gather everything in front of them, in front of their own eyes, the disbelievers still will not believe. So in any of the two explanations, the outcome is the same. If we understand the verse per the first meaning, it indicates that (even) if Allah *Glorified is He* were to gather all the signs in this world for the disbelievers, more than what any ordinary person would need, they still would not believe (this is one explanation). If you understand it to mean that even if the disbelievers were to see the signs in front of them, with their own eyes, they still would not believe, is the other explanation. 'And even if We sent the angels down to them, and the dead spoke to them, and We gathered all things right in front of them, they still would not believe, unless Allah *the Exalted* so willed, but most of them are ignorant [of this].' (*al-An'am*: 111)

There is something else we must notice here. The True Lord *Glorified is He* used here a kind of 'soft' phrase that indicates a power of 'choice' given to mankind, i.e. instead of demonstrating His Absolute Power in making anything happens whenever He wills such that if He wanted to force anyone to believe in Him, no one would be able to repel that. Instead, Allah *the Exalted* used the expression that indicates a right or freedom to choose because forcing someone to have faith rules out the possibility of having a choice regarding matters of religious responsibility in the context of Islam. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[O] Muhammad], are you going to worry yourself to death because they will not believe? If We had wished, We could have sent them down a sign from heaven, at which their necks would stay bowed in utter humility.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3-4)

But as the previous verse shows, Allah *the Exalted* does not want subjugated necks but rather, He wants submissive hearts. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* concludes that verse by saying, '...but most of them are ignorant [of this].' (*al-An'am*: 111) But let us be clear, *jahl* (ignorance) is different from lack of knowledge. Rather, ignorance is a lack of proper knowledge or information, i.e. on a given subject, an ignorant person knows what contradicts it. If one does not know the subject at all, then such a person is uneducated, and it suffices for that person to be properly lectured on that given topic so that he understands it promptly. However, to reform an ignorant person, there are two issues; first, we need to remove from his understanding the false information

filling his mind; secondly, we need to replace it with the correct knowledge. So, the Quranic phrase in the above verse indicating, 'But most of them are ignorant' means that the disbelievers have followed misguidance.

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

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ
 زُخْرَفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ مَا فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

In the same way We assigned to each prophet an enemy, evil humans and evil jinn. They suggest alluring words to one another in order to deceive – if it had been your Lord's will, [Prophet], they would not have done this: leave them to their inventions [112]

(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 112)

With the phrase 'And thus it is...', the True Lord *Glorified is He* referred to the previous messengers and prophets in order to give Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the example of his brothers who preceded him in the procession of prophethood and divine messages, in order to stress the fact that he is not unprecedented, i.e. he is on the same Straight Path brought forward by the previous messengers of Allah *the Exalted* and so also in the aspect of being subject to severe criticism and enmity; that is the norm for all the prophets of Allah.

But the question is, did these enemies of those previous messengers prevail and weaken the spirit and power of those people sent by Allah *the Exalted* for guidance? Did the enemies succeed in wearing out the messengers of Allah *the Exalted* sapping their strength and their determination and turning them away from their mission, or were the messengers able to withstand and resist all that with bravery and courage? Indeed, they were brave and defiant and Allah *the Exalted* helped them and gave them victory over their enemies. So Allah *the Exalted* wanted to make this clear to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the same good outcome would be his in the end, especially given the fact that he is the seal of all the prophets. He is the one given the honour of bringing the final Message of Allah *the Exalted* no other divine message will come after him. By this, Allah *the Exalted* wanted to make

it clear to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that based on this, the enmity he would face would proportionally be on par with the magnitude of his great prophetic mission, and he should not be thinking that the intention behind this enmity was to let him down, or it was just for the sake of enmity. No. Rather, the opposition and enmity faced by the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was for the benefit of strengthening his Message because whoever is on a right path and committed to righteousness should never be weakened or disturbed by any evil scheme; rather, he should be more active and emboldened to move on with his good deeds. Therefore, we normally see much of religious awakenings whenever believers are challenged by enemies (the real man always gathers strength from distress and grows brave). So, if it had not been for pressure from enemies, there would be no awakening and the faith would have remained stagnant. This is what we see when there are enemies of Islam of any kind, who challenge some matter of the religion; in this situation, we find that even those who do not adhere to the way of Islam are fiercely protective over their religion.

Therefore, enmity has benefit, so one must not indulge in thinking that there is something that can prevent Allah's will *the Exalted* and plan from taking effect as He wills. Thus, it must be clear that there is a divine wisdom behind evil, otherwise, there would not be any passion for goodness if evil and harm did not exist; and (part of) what makes people enthusiastic for doing good is to pose resistance against evil (per Allah's design *the Exalted* and plan for the universe). We have explained before that falsehood is one of the factors that bring about truth because when falsehood strikes and causes turmoil amongst people they ask one another, 'When will this falsehood disappear and be replaced with truth? We really need a saviour'! Whenever you see someone suffering from pain, do not ever think that the pain is without reason. Rather, the pain is an important factor that will trigger a rigorous search for a cure. In a metaphorical sense, it is if the pain says to its victim, 'O man, take note of a disease in this part of your body, and find a cure for it'. Therefore, we find that (in some cases), the most severe, vicious and malignant diseases are those that are not preceded by any pain, and the mystery behind that does not get unravelled until several medical efforts and examinations have been exhausted by experts who leave no stone unturned

until they get treatment for such diseases. This is what I mean by saying that pain is an effective means of recovery.

When you have an enemy in the neighbourhood or in the town, and his sight is focused on you, you fear yourself slipping into some fault or mistake that would allow him to expose you. For this reason, you try to adopt a proper strategy to avoid falling prey to him. An ancient poet said, as he tries to enlighten you with his poetry on this subject,

My enemies do me a favour, and I admire their kindness

For their benefit to me, I am really grateful to them

They are like medicine and the cure that is bitter

And thanks to Allah (the Most-Merciful) not sparing me my enemies

They were looking for me to slip but I avoided it

And I became free of having my dignity defiled

They made me expend great effort with their hatred

They turned to foes against me, but victory was mine over them, as well as continuing success

For this reason, you must look at everything in terms of the wisdom behind it; everything has a certain purpose that Allah *the Supreme Wise* has for bringing it into existence, just like the True Lord *Glorified is He* willed that the Islamic Message will face severe challenges and resistance so that it fortified with strength that will pave way for its eternal victory. Hence the statement of Allah *the Exalted* in this verse, ‘And thus it is that, against every prophet We have set up [as enemies] the evil forces from among humans as well as from among invisible beings that whisper unto one another glittering half-truths meant to delude the mind. But they could not do this unless thy Sustainer had so willed: stand, therefore, aloof from them and from all their false imagery!’ (*al-An‘am*: 112)

So the True Lord *Glorified is He* set up enemies for the prophets in a way that this created some disturbances for the prophets and their followers, and the wisdom behind this was to fill the mind of the believers with a strong power of resistance which would naturally strengthen their resolve to defend

themselves, warding off any feeling or sense of letting up or defeat. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: 'And thus it is that against every prophet, We have set up against every prophet [as enemies]...' (*al-An'am*: 112), i.e. they did not volunteer to be enemies but rather, they were utilized to be enemies.

But how does Allah *the Exalted* set up an enemy for every prophet? Indeed, He does so by way of the choice that He places within mankind. So long as man has a right and ability to choose, whoever chooses to follow the divine guidance and Right Path would automatically feel inclined to supporting a prophet sent to them, and those who choose misguidance are, by that very fact, the enemies of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, the aspect of enmity here is not just something that happens by chance; rather, it is through the power of will and right to choose which Allah *the Exalted* has placed in every human being.

Since Allah *the Exalted* is the One Who gives man the ability to choose, then we should understand that the reason He does that is made clear in the following verse, '...[and] that he who would perish might perish in clear evidence of the truth, and that he who would remain alive might live in clear evidence of the truth...' (*al-Anfal*: 42).

If Allah *the Exalted* had wanted the prophets not to have enemies, He would have done so, that is quite easy and simple for Him because He has absolute power over everything, but this would have been tantamount to compulsion, i.e. subduing everything and everybody, thus erasing power of choosing. But Allah *the Exalted* does not want to force human beings. Rather, He wants them to go to Him purely out of their own will, i.e. while they are just as capable of not going to Him. The Arabic word *`aduw* (enemy) seems to be singular, but it is used for both singular and plural. Thus you can say, 'This person (a male) is a *`aduw* of mine', and for a female you can equally say, 'This sister is a *`aduw* of mine', the Arabic word does not have a feminine word (singular) on its own. It is also used for two people, 'These two men are a *`aduw* of mine', or 'These two women are a *`aduw* of mine' because the word *`aduw* can be used for both male and female and be used for the singular, the dual and the plural. Take for instance the words of the True Lord *Glorified is He* 'They are enemies to me, except for the Lord of the worlds.'

(*ash-Shu'ara'*: 77) Another example is the saying of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: 'Go down, both of you, from here, as enemies to one another.' (*Ta Ha*: 123) Also in another verse, Allah *the Exalted* says, "...Did I not forbid that tree unto you and tell you, "Verily, Satan is your open foe (*`aduw*)?" (al-A'raf: 22)

Allah *the Exalted* did not say *`adaa`* which is the plural form of the word *`aduw*. So the word *`aduw* can be used for male/female singular, or for two persons, male and female, and for male and female plural.

However, some of those who love to think they can correct Allah' Speech say to one another, 'How can Allah *the Exalted* use the Arabic *`aduw* in its singular form in all the above-mentioned verses'? Satan is an enemy *`aduw* and they are an enemy *`aduw*, i.e. by using a singular form of *`aduw* in all these cases whereas after that, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, '...And remember the blessings which Allah has bestowed upon you; how, when you were enemies (*`adaa`*), He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brethren...' (*Al-Imran*: 103).

We say to those people, 'You have forgotten that the one speaking is Allah *the Sublime*. Enmity is of two kinds. If there is a plurality of enemies and with a common interest in taking someone as enemy such that they are united in their enmity, then they are one enemy (*`aduw*) because they share a common purpose. However, if the reasons for enmity are varied, then the matter is different. Your good handsomeness may cause enmity between you and someone, while being intelligent can create enmity between you and someone else, and your wealth may be the reason why others take you as enemy and so on. If the reasons are varied then each one of them becomes an enemy in his own right, and thus gathered together they are considered enemies, thus the Arabic word *`adaa`* is properly applied here. 'And thus it is that, against every prophet We have set up [as enemies] the jinn from among humans as well as from among invisible beings that whisper unto one another...' (*al-An'am*: 112).

Devils, human beings and jinn, as Arabic grammarians say, are a substitute for an enemy. And the Arabic word *shayatin*, (devils) is the plural of the Arabic word *shaytan* the accursed, rejected, and the loathsome, whether he is from the human beings or the jinn '...that whispers unto one another

glittering half-truths meant to delude the mind...' (*al-An'am*: 112). The Arabic word *wahi* means to pass on information secretly, so why do they, the devils whisper unto one another? It is because the predominance of truth had not made them capable of speaking openly to one another. Therefore, they conspire with each other, but people who say truth have nothing to hide, so they move about it openly.

'...They whisper unto one another...' (*al-An'am*: 112). Who is the one whispering? Who are they whispering to? We do not have any say on this subject; the word *wahi* means to pass on information secretly, whether it is inspiration of the soul, by way of indication, by way of scheming, by way of whispering or through a messenger that we do not see. All these are means and mechanisms of what the word *wahi* stands for, for both good and evil purposes.

If the whispering is from the devils amongst the jinn, do not expect anything from their whispering except evil; that is a fact. Likewise, there are devils amongst human beings who are also evil whisperers, and this is confirmed by the True Lord in His statement, '...that whisper unto one another glittering half-truths meant to delude the mind...' (*al-An'am*: 112). What is meant here is that the devils enter matters and try to change their form through adornment, and so they do to man by filling him with deceptive desires. That is why Allah *the Exalted* called what devils do 'whispering' (*waswasa* in Arabic). As we know, tangible words are used to have our expressions meaningful and clear, so part of the meaning of *waswasa* refers to the rustling sound of jewellery. And so Allah *the Exalted* chose that word to refer to what the devils from amongst man and jinn engage in; He deliberately chose that specific expression because with its rustling (*waswasa*) sound, jewellery also dazzles and entices people with its preciousness and its great value. *Waswasa* is also done secretly.

'...whisper unto one another...' (*al-An'am*: 112). This refers to the devils amongst man and jinn, as man whispers to man by embellishing sin and disobedience for him, as well as getting obsessed with deceptive desires, jinn whisper to jinn because they are also legally responsible. Likewise, jinn whisper to man: '...that whispers unto one another glittering half-truths...' (*al-An'am*: 112).

Zukhruf (glittering half-truth) is something that is outwardly embellished but is inwardly corrupt. *The Almighty*, said, “And gold ornament. But all that is not but the enjoyment of worldly life. And the Hereafter with your Lord is for the righteous.” (*az-Zukhruf*: 35), i.e. things that are outwardly embellished, but they do not have any profundity, or longevity or value.

‘...that whispers unto one another glittering half-truths meant to delude the mind...’ (*al-An’am*: 112). This is to delude and deceive them into doing and saying things of disobedience, and if the devils did not present disobedience with adorning and embellishing words, their tricks would not work; they would never be able to get people to engage in it. They show and present charms of disobedience in a very deceptive fashion. For example, you will not find someone saying to another, ‘Drink wine so that you can get liver cirrhosis’. Rather, he will try to deceive him by saying, ‘Drink wine so that you can forget your worries, be happy, and enjoy yourself’.

‘...glittering half-truths meant to delude the mind...’ (*al-Ana’m*: 112), i.e. the devils employ deception to delude their victims, making them believe that everything is fine, and there is no harm in committing disobedience and sinful acts.

Allah *the Exalted* then continues, ‘...But they could not do this unless thy Sustainer had so willed...’ (*al-An’am*: 112). Indeed, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who has given His creatures the choice to be either believers or disbelievers, guided or misguided, to follow His light or be led astray by the devil (by wallowing in darkness); and there is day, i.e. the Day of Judgment when everybody will be called to account, and the outcome will either be a blissful reward from Allah *the Exalted* for whoever is righteous and faithful, or severe punishment for the disbelievers. That is why Allah *the Exalted* does not force people when it comes to the issue of faith because it would amount to injustice to force people to disbelieve and then punish them for that; no, that is not what Allah *the Exalted* does, He is the Supreme, the Just. But we find those who say, ‘Why is there punishment when nothing in the universe takes place without Allah’s will? We say, ‘Yes, everything is from Allah’s doing because the cause of choice is from Allah *the Exalted* the One Who created choice. Thus, it would be impossible for a person to turn a disbeliever without

predestination (divine decree and afore-time knowledge of Allah), yet it is required of him to believe because his nature, as created by Allah *the Exalted* can choose either disbelief or faith.

Therefore, with the power of choice that Allah *the Exalted* created in man, he can choose between doing and not doing in certain matters. Thus, those who maintain an argument that every action is from Allah *the Exalted*, i.e. there is nothing man can do without the power of Allah *the Exalted* we say to them, 'Your point of argument is correct'. And as for those who say that, 'all of man's actions (including belief and disbelief) are a product of his own doing not from Allah *the Exalted*', we would also say to them, 'Your position is correct'; but the truth is: it is the Almighty Allah, Our Lord Who created man with the ability to do certain things as if he was the one directing all the will and power to have them done. To prove this further, take note of the fact that every action comes from Allah *Exalted is He*. It is neither you, for example, that created the power that allows your hands to lift things, nor did you create the power that allows your hands to grasp. When you want to grasp with your hand, which muscles do you move to do so? You do not know. You grasp with your hand simply because of your will to do so. But take note that Allah *the Exalted* the One who filled you with this power commands you not to use them to subjugate others (or to be unjust to them). Rather, He wants you to use those powers for the benefit of mankind. The hand can strike and it is also able to do good work, and you neither have any control on the power that controls your hand (or muscles that move it), nor did you create the means for that power to be affected by your will.

'...But they could not do this unless thy Sustainer had so willed...' (*al-An'am*: 112), i.e. if Allah *the Exalted* had wanted it (the devil's whisper) not to be done, He would have done so because He has absolute power and no one is ever able to escape from His Will. We see that the sky, the earth and everything created, apart from human beings, is subjugated to the Will of Allah *Exalted is He*. So, why do we take examples from the sky, the earth, plants, inanimate objects, and animals? Take the example of yourself. You have things within your body over which you have no control and you have no choice regarding them. Can you choose, for instance, to be sick or remain

healthy? No. If you are struck by a stone while walking, is that by your choice? Or if you get hit by a drunk driver, is that what you willed for yourself? Do you have any control in that?

And with regards to death, is that a matter of choice for you to die or not to die? So, what we need to understand clearly is that Allah *the Exalted* in His Absolute Power disposes His affairs on you in two ways: He subjects you, on some issues, to His absolute control so that you do such things instinctively, while at the same time He allows you have some kind of control over other things, and being able to choose here is a strong proof that man is responsible from the Islamic legal perspectives.

Allah *the Exalted* continues by concluding the above verse, ‘...therefore, aloof from them and from all their false imagery!’ (*al-An‘am*: 112). This shows that their false imagery, lies, and deceptions will never change the reality of the matter at all. Contrary to their belief, nothing of their evil scheme will hinder the Message. Rather, what will their false scheme, plotting and enmity to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* turn to? All this will turn to fuel that will ignite strong light of belief and passion for the message of Islam; and this will also purify the message from all defects and defilements, so that this will bring forth true and strong believers completely purified and filled with the attributes of goodness: ‘...for, as far as the scum is concerned, it passes away as [does all] dross; but that which is of benefit to man abides on earth...’ (*ar-Ra‘d*: 17).

If it were not for such awakening, emanated from the above-mentioned process of indirect purification, the message of Islam would have been filled with useless and worthless people (for being ignorant about the religion), and Islam would have been high jacked by people with no sound knowledge about the value of faith and religion. So, it happens that (sometimes) Allah *the Exalted* uses Islam’s enemies and antagonists as an indirect means of purification for the adherents of the religion in a way that the Message of Islam would be purged of people with weak belief and unsound faith, who would have been otherwise a burden to the religion, rather than being its supporters. So at the end of the day, what will remain are the true adherents of Islam. I mean the residual of this purification process will be those who are sincere in their

truthfulness with Allah *the Exalted* and steadfastness in their belief. Allah *the Exalted* said, 'Had these [hypocrites] set out with you, [O believers,] they would have added nothing to you, save the evil of corruption...' (*at-Tawba*: 47).

It is from Divine Wisdom of Allah *the Exalted* that He frustrated the plan of the hypocrites and weakened their desire, so that they could not go out and fight with the believers. 'For, had they been [truly] desirous of setting out [with thee], they would surely have made some preparation therefore, but Allah was averse to their taking the field, and so He caused them to hold back when it was said, "You may stay at home with all [the others] who stay at home."' (*at-Tawba*: 46)

In the previous verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, '...whisper unto one another glittering half-truths...' (*al-An'am*: 112). The phrase 'glittering half-truths' (*zukhruf al-qawl*) is a form of deceptively sugar-coated talk that sways some listeners. One may get away with it at first instance without having any effect on the hearts or souls, but once it is repeated and it keeps recurring, it may have negative effects on people with weak belief and thus leading them astray. How do these people proceed?

وَلِنَصْغِي إِلَيْهِ أَفْعَدَةُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ
وَلِنَرْصُوهُ وَلِنَقْتَرِفُوا مَا هُمْ مُقْتَرِفُونَ

**So that the hearts of those who do not believe in the
Hereafter may incline towards their deceit, be pleased
with it, and so perpetrate whatever they perpetrate [113]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 113)**

This indicates that the people who believe in the Hereafter will never have anything to do with such deceptive talk and they will not get inclined towards it. Whenever they are exposed to such sinful atmosphere, no matter how exciting and alluring it is, they will never get deluded by it, as if they ask themselves, 'How long will the pleasure of this disobedience last, two minutes, an hour, a month? What will I do on the Day of Resurrection when I am subject to questioning in front of the Mighty Lord; and upon that my fate will either be Paradise or be thrown into the Hell-Fire'? Therefore, the ears and heart of the one who believes in the Hereafter do not accept such

glittering half-truths. No one accepts them except one who does not believe in the Hereafter, and is only obsessed with the enjoyment of the worldly life; and tricks himself by getting indulged into the 'temporary enjoyment' of life'. So by this, if every Muslim could picture the kind horrifying punishment behind committing disobedience, they would not do it. It is just only then one is heedless of the punishment that Satan succeeds in leading one to sinful acts. But surprisingly, how come, that in this worldly life, we fear punishment from one another though our ability to punish is quite limited, and we take the incessant warning of punishment from the Mighty Allah *the Exalted* the One Who has All-Dominant Power to punish lightly? That is why we find those who remember the Hereafter remembering the punishment and thus stay away from it whenever disobedience is presented to them 'so that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline towards their deceit, be pleased with it, and so perpetrate whatever they perpetrate' (*al-An'am*: 113).

The Arabic word *al-isgha'*, (inclining towards) refers to the act of paying attention, that is, the inclination of the ears towards someone speaking because you could hear someone speaking without paying attention to him. For instance, walking in the street, one hears lots of things, but he does not stop at everything he hears, and that is normal. Rather, one tends to pay attention only when the ears hear something very important. This is why it is called, in this case, *tasammu'* (listening) and not *sam'* (hearing), so, that is what is meant by *al-isgha'*, and this is why the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, in one of his Ahadith, 'Whoever listens to a woman who sings with moral depravity (*ghaniyah*)...' – he did not say, 'Whoever hears...' Another example is what happens whenever someone moves around and hears a song on the radio, He hears with his ears, a normal human tool for encompassing sound within a certain range, so it is not an open-ended tool. Thus, in such case, we do not refer to that person by saying, 'he lends his ear'. The same thing applies to the eyes, another tool for man encompassing sight. And as we know, the eye does not see when it is shut, it only sees when it is open. But the ears do not have lids, so they cannot be told to hear something and not hear something else.

Therefore, man has no choice with regards to hearing, but he does have a choice with regards to what he listens to so '...that the hearts of those who do

not believe in the Hereafter may incline towards their deceit, be pleased with it, and so perpetrate whatever they perpetrate.' (*al-An'am*: 113) This verse also refers to something in the heart that makes one seek to hear, i.e. it resonates with one's core. But at the same time, it happens that one passes by something else and does not look at it, one just passes by it with sheer disregard. The Arabic word *al-fida* refers to the hearts, and though it is true that with the ears, one pays attention, but it is the hearts that listen to what is said and perceive it. So, this verse strengthens the fact it is with the whole body (heart and soul) the disbeliever uses to pay attention to such words of deceit, thus disbelieving that there is a Hereafter and by being completely indulged in the pleasure of the worldly life; his heart and soul will never consider the Hereafter. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses this expression that refers to the flow of attentiveness from the ears to the heart, and this is perception. '...so that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline towards their deceit...' (*al-An'am*: 113). Then the second and third phases are mentioned: '(so that the hearts)...be pleased with it, and so perpetrate whatever they perpetrate.' (*al-An'am*: 113)

It is possible that someone might listen to something and, being alerted by his reproachful self, then becomes unable to respond. However, there are those who listen to something and feel happy and pleased with what they hear. Then they move towards action and committing sin. These are three phases. The first is, '...so that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline towards their deceit...' Then the second phase is, 'be pleased with it,' and then the third phase is, '...and so perpetrate whatever they perpetrate.' (*al-An'am*: 113), i.e. that they commit sin.

This matter has defined for us, the conscious phenomena studied by psychologists, i.e. the symptoms or levels of feeling. One of them is 'aptitude', i.e. having fondness for something, as expressed in the above verse, '...may incline towards', the other one is, 'strong feeling of joy', also expressed in the verse, 'be pleased with it', and the last one is, 'being emotionally drawn to it' as the verse also clarifies, '...and so perpetrate whatever they perpetrate.' (*al-An'am*: 113)

Look at how the Quran remarkably preceded psychology in describing the different phases of human nature namely, aptitude, strong feeling of joy and then acting upon those feelings. It is to be clarified that Islamic Law does not

intervene when feelings manifest themselves, except when someone moves towards action, but this is only when it is possible to separate between acting upon the feeling, having feelings and realisation. This is one of the very critical areas, and the law intervenes right from the beginning, and this is what happens in the process of man staring at women because what normally follows a lustful gaze is an emotional attraction in the sense that the person feels attracted to the woman, feeling passionate about her and then captivated by her beauty, charm etc. But in Islamic Law, it is not permissible for the person to act upon those feelings in a sinful way. If you take a step towards her, the law says to you, 'No!' This is because the law realises the fact that all those steps are linked together normally, so this might automatically lead to a sinful act. So, given the fact that these emotional parts of human nature are normally interlinked; feelings follow perception, which also ultimately lead to actions. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* commanded Muslims to keep away, taking precautionary steps right from the beginning: 'Tell the believing men to lower their gaze... And tell the believing women to lower their gaze...' (*an-Nur*: 30-31).

So we see from this verse, that lustful looks towards the opposite sex is categorically prohibited from the outset, and in Islamic Law, there is no waiting for the feelings to be acted upon, if the aim and objective behind that is unlawful. Why? It is because the outcome of perceiving beauty in everything is different from that of getting attracted to a woman's beauty, which, whenever it occurs, produces a kind of chemical process in the body of the person, and drives him under the impulse of emotion to act upon that feeling. As we have said, the process is completely inter-related and can never be broken down.

Allah says: 'So that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline towards their deceit, be pleased with it, and so perpetrate whatever they perpetrate.' (*al-An'am*: 113)

Whenever we use the Arabic word *ma*, and followed by a sense that indicates vagueness, this shows that the sentence is about something great in number or magnitude. This is why Allah *the Exalted* says, '...and they were overwhelmed by the sea which was destined to overwhelm them' (*Ta Ha*: 78),

i.e. it is a matter that cannot be defined in words, just like the words of Allah *the Exalted* in the above verse, ‘...and so perpetrate whatever they perpetrate’, and the meaning of this is, everyone commits, earns, acts and perpetrates whatever their soul is inclined to; such as those who slander, or harbour grudges, envy, steal etc. and the verse strengthens the fact that passions of the soul are unlimited. Therefore, a term is used to indicate generality.

So, as long as the matter regards prophecy and challenges facing the act of adhering to the Divine Message preached by Allah’s prophets and also considering the fact that satanic enemies, from man and the jinn, form evil schemes against this message, whispering unto one another glittering half-truths meant to delude people’s mind, then this is a serious matter, i.e. a very challenging situation which is expected to continue until there is a divine intervention from the Mighty Allah Who gives a verdict. It is as if Allah *the Exalted* is making it clear to his Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘O Muhammad! I have sent you and you will have enemies that will plot against you, they will exert every conceivable effort to harm you and those who follow you. Thus, beware of seeking a verdict from other than Me, because I am the Legislator and I am the Most Just. I am the One who dispenses reward’.

Why? This is because the subject matter here is about what Allah *the Exalted* has legislated, and it is not right or correct for someone to come along and try to insinuate what is not intended by Allah *the Exalted*. It is inconceivable for man, with his limited faculty, to act as if he is able to outmanoeuvre Allah *the Exalted* in the matter of legislation, disregarding the fact that this is outside the scope of man-made law. No. This is a matter that falls exclusively in the jurisdiction of Allah *the Exalted* the Most-Wise and the One Who laid down the law, and He knows best what He intends by them. He knows what the clear truth is and He is the One Who is the best to judge. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘I am only a human being, and you people come to me with your cases; and it may be that one of you is able to present his case eloquently in a more convincing way than the other, and I give my verdict per what I hear. So, if ever I judge (by error) and give the right of a brother to his other (brother) then he (the latter) should not take it,

for I am giving him only a piece of the Fire.'⁽¹⁾ So no one should take this as a basis for claiming that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave a judgment (so how come are we saying this is not within human's mental capacity?) No. What Prophet Muhammad did is to judge this case per what was presented to him, i.e. based on the evidence and proofs presented by the litigants, and as we know, one party may have a stronger case, while the other is not very good in expressing themselves. Therefore, even in this case, the real judge is Allah *the Exalted* (not the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*) because He is the One Who legislated. As long as He is the One Who legislated, then He is the One Who judges between us, so whoever has any case against someone should not have any panic about the verdict because he should have faith that the One Who will render the judgement is Allah *the Exalted* whose Judgment is of absolute Justice.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا وَالَّذِينَ
ءَاتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾

[Say], 'Shall I seek any judge other than God, when it is He who has sent down for you [people] the Scripture, clearly explained?' Those to whom We gave the Scripture know that this [Quran] is revealed by your Lord [Prophet] with the truth, so do not be one of those who doubt [114] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 114)

This verse shows that Allah *the Exalted* is the One Who judges and He is the One Who legislated. He knows the law and He knows who follows the law and who contravenes the law. So the above verse, 'Say, "Am I, then, to look unto anyone but Allah for judgement..."' shows that having strong belief in the meaning and connotation of that verse makes one confident in the divine support of Allah *the Exalted* because He never fails anyone who relies on Him, just as He orders us, 'Do not seek judgement from other than Allah *Exalted is He*', He will never fail you if you heed His instruction. This is why

(1) Narrated by Malik, Ahmad, Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, An-Nisa'i, At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah

the matter is presented in the form of a question. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says conveying from his Lord, '...when it is He who has bestowed upon you from on high this divine writ, clearly spelling out the truth...' (*al-An'am*: 114). Notice that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say, 'He is the One Who has bestowed the Book upon me'. Rather, in conveying from the Mighty Lord, he said, '...when it is He who has bestowed upon you from on high this divine writ, clearly spelling out the truth...'. The message here is that it is as if the enmity is not only directed towards Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, but rather, the enmity is toward the entire Muslim community, and Allah's judgement. Even though the Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, his mission was to convey the Divine Message to all mankind, and therein a great objective for the believers, all of them, to carry forth the message. This is how enmity directed at Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is enmity to all his followers. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* revealed the above verse in the form of a question, and telling His Prophet to say to them, '...Am I, then, to look unto anyone but Allah *the Exalted* for judgement...' (*al-An'am*: 114), in line with His other remarkable message in the previous verse, 'And thus it is that against every prophet, We have set up [as enemies] the evil forces from among humans as well as from among invisible beings...' (*al-An'am*: 112).

Therefore, an enemy of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is also an enemy of those who believe and follow him, but the peak of enmity is the one directed against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is sent by Allah *the Exalted* '...And those unto whom We have given revelation a foretime know that this one, too, has been bestowed from on high, step by step, by thy Sustainer, setting forth the truth. Be not, then, among the doubters.' (*al-An'am*: 114)

The phrase '...by thy Sustainer, setting forth the truth...' is an impetus for the believers to realise that every matter behind this divine message comes back to them with benefit because the main objective of sending down the Book (the Glorious Quran) is for them to be guided; they are the first target (but from them and through them the light of message will beam throughout the universe). So, the believers should know that they have many benefits to

gain behind the revelation of the Glorious Quran; it will not add anything to Allah *the Exalted* in His majesty and Glory. It will neither add anything to Allah *the Exalted* in His divinely beautiful attributes nor increase Him in His Sovereignty. Rather, you, the believer, should know that you are part of the main objective.

‘Say, “Am I, then, to look unto anyone but Allah *the Exalted* for judgment [as to what is right and wrong], when it is He who has bestowed upon you from on high this divine writ...”’ (*al-An‘am*: 114). This indicates that Allah, *Glorified is He* did not send down the Quran without spelling out the truth, so there is no any cause for confusion whatsoever. ‘...And those unto whom We have given revelation a foretime know that this one, too, has been bestowed from on high, step by step, by thy Sustainer, setting forth the truth. Be not, then, among the doubters’ (*al-An‘am*: 114).

The phrase ‘those who were given revelation a foretime’ is referring to the Jews and Christians because they are supposedly equipped with knowledge about Prophet Muhammad’s *peace and blessings be upon him* attributes. They know your description and they know a lot about your Book (the Quran). Therefore, everything that is connected to you is not strange to them, but the bane is that they have adopted two different aspects of faith; they openly practice one of these two versions, forthcoming in any questions related to it, but the other one is hidden. In this form of faith (for them), they make secret everything hidden, and they forbid any questioning about it. They do not even accept any discussion about it. If you get a fact, a very undeniable fact, and try to convince them with it, they will not accept it. What is it that has made them so? It is because they have gone through two situations: first, when they were the bearers of the divine message brought to them by the previous messengers, they were opposed by those who disbelieved in heavenly revealed religions such as idol-worshippers and polytheists. Allah *the Exalted* has this to say about them, ‘...and [bear in mind that] a foretime they used to pray for victory over those who were bent on denying the truth...”’ (*al-Baqara*: 89). So, you can see per this verse, they took the disbelievers (the pagans and idol worshippers) as enemies and their main concern at that time was to achieve victory over these disbelievers. And they used to say, ‘Very soon a

prophet will come and we will follow him, and with him we will destroy the disbelievers the way the People of 'Ad and people of the city of Aram were destroyed.

But surprisingly, when what they knew (and were waiting for) came to them they disbelieved in it because 'They have exchanged the signs of Allah for a small price and averted [people] from His way. Indeed, it was evil that they were doing. (*at-Tawba*: 9)

The bargain they conducted was for having the prophethood remain in their own ancestry, but the advent of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* drew the curtain down on their prophetic lineage, removing from them any kind of religious authority, especially given the fact that in Islam there is no authority for the priesthood or the clergy. They wanted to remain in their positions of leadership, but they bartered Allah's signs for a trifling gain. '...And those unto whom We have given revelation a foretime know that this one, too, has been bestowed from on high, step by step, by thy Sustainer, setting forth the truth. Be not, then, among the doubters.' (*al-An'am*: 114)

They (the Jews and the Christians) know that the Quran was sent down from Allah *the Exalted* setting forth the truth. They know that what they are divulging is false – therefore, as I have said above, there are clear facts they know about the religion brought by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and this is a well-established fact among them, but rather than coming forth with this truth, they go out proclaiming falsehood, contrary to what they know is the truth. Hence, Allah *the Exalted* in the following statement, was alerting Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* "...Be not, then, among the doubters' (*al-An'am*: 114), i.e. do not have doubt that the people of the Book know that the Quran is sent down from your Lord, setting out the truth. This is an address to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and we know, in grammatical terms, that in a communication between two people, when a second person tense is used to request something that is already being done, then what is meant is that such action needs persistence with no relenting efforts. The objective behind this is to ward off anything that might shake confidence and belief. So Allah *the Exalted* used that tense to strengthen Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, belief

and steadfastness. Another meaning for the above verse might be that it is used to spur him up into taking further action, or it might also be a means of warning the believers from being distracted, as Allah *the Exalted* told them not to have any doubt or scepticism.

Then Allah *the Exalted* says after that:

وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١١٥﴾

**The word of your Lord is complete in its truth and justice.
No one can change His words: He is the All Hearing, the
All Knowing [115] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 115)**

The phrase *tammat* (been fulfilled) indicates that the subject matter here has a beginning and an end. But let us pause and ask this question, 'What is meant by the word *kalima* (word) has been fulfilled'? Is it Allah's Exalted Promise to eventually give victory to Islam, and put an end to all this kind of antagonism posed against it, or is it referring to the complete fulfilment of the Message of Islam (i.e. being provided with all what it needs to be strong and solid), as this can be inferred from the words of Allah *the Exalted* when He said, "This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion" (*al-Ma'ida*: 3)? Or is it referring to the Quran? What we can say here is that the meaning of 'been fulfilled' encompasses all the issues of life, and this will remain a fact forever, i.e. nothing is beyond Allah's control. And this also means that nobody will be able to amend any ruling stated and clarified in His Book (the Noble Quran) because the rulings cover all matters. Let us take note also that the Arabic word *kalima* here is singular, but it can have a plural meaning. When you hear someone saying, 'So-and-so gave an excellent speech', described in Arabic as *kalima tayyiba*, 'and was received with approval and applause', what is intended is that the person spoke words (*kalimat* in Arabic) but the normal and correct expression used for that is *kalima* in the singular to indicate that 'he gave a speech'. Therefore, what is meant by 'And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled...' (*al-An'am*: 115) is the way that comprises all of life. Read the words of Allah, '...Dreadful is the word that comes out of their mouths...' (*al-Kahf*: 5).

Is it a word or words? It is indeed a statement that contains words; therefore the Arabic word *kalima* can be used and intended for a singular term and it can also be used and intended for speech (as we say in Arabic *kalaam*). Originally, *kalima* is a singular word, i.e. there is no other word with it, but it needs to give a meaningful sentence. If the meaning is not independently understood and it needs a supplement for us to understand it then is a particle. Take for instance, the Arabic letter *fi* which means 'in' in English. It indicates an adverbial of time or place, but it is not independently understood. This is because it is a preposition, and a preposition requires a deposition (*mazhruf*) and an adverbial complement (in Arabic, *mazhruf fi*). You say in a sentence, for instance, 'The water is in the cup', showing that the meaning can be independently understood. Likewise, when you hear a sentence where the preposition 'from' (*min*, in Arabic) you understand that this gives a sense of beginning, just as the preposition 'to' (*'ila* in Arabic) gives a sense of an end. If the word indicates a meaning that is independently understood, but it is not connected to time, then this is a noun, if time is part of its indication then it is a verb. As for the Arabic word *kalam* (speech), it refers to words that carry complete meaning.

When you hear the word 'sky' you understand the meaning, and the same goes for when you hear the word 'earth'; in such words, the intended meanings are independently understood. When you hear the phrase *kataba* (he wrote), it indicates a meaning that is independently understood, and time is a part of the verb. 'He wrote' indicates the past tense, 'he writes' indicates the present tense, while 'he will write' indicates an action of writing in the future. Therefore, *kalima* is a term that indicates a meaning. If it is not independently understood, it is a particle, and could also mean 'speech' (*kalam*).

So, the statement of the True Lord *Glorified is He* 'And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled...' (*al-An'am*: 115) means many things. If it refers to the Quran, then what is meant is His word. We call Allah's speech (*kalam*) because what it indicates is one word, and this divine word is a complete expression of its own, with no discrepancy therein. So, if we understand the above verse as referring to the Quran, then we should understand that the noble Quran contains every matter and every issue in existence, and it is a complete expression of Allah's rulings and orders, with no letter to be omitted

or altered in it. Rather, it has remained perfectly comprehensive, and will remain as such ever since it was revealed, unlike what happened to the previous heavenly revealed Books, they got distorted by the people sent to, as they tampered with them, concealing, and altering some of what was revealed in them. The people upon whom those books were revealed were entrusted with the task of preserving them; i.e. they were made religiously responsible to take care of these scriptures. And as is natural with any religious obligations, they are sometimes obeyed and sometimes disobeyed. So, what happened is that these people (followers of the previous prophets) were not consistent in observing the obligation of preserving these scriptures, and the proof is what Allah *the Exalted* said in the following: 'Lo! We did reveal the Torah, wherein is guidance and a light, by which the prophets who surrendered (unto Allah), judged the Jews, and the rabbis and the priests (judged) by such of Allah's Scripture as they were bidden to observe...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44).

Notice the phrase '...bidden to observe...', it means that they were asked to preserve it (the scripture). So, there is a sense of being religiously responsible, and this obligation can be obeyed or disobeyed. However, the matter is different with regards to the Quran. The True Lord *Glorified is He* said: 'Behold, it is We Ourselves who have bestowed from on high, step by step, this reminder: and, behold, it is We who shall truly guard it [from all corruption].' (*al-Hijr*: 9)

Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who preserves the Quran. So, this is not a duty for human beings because the Quran is a miracle and those who are religiously responsible never have anything to do with something of a divine magnitude and a miracle like the Quran.

Therefore, what is meant by the words of Allah *the Exalted* 'And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled...' (*al-An'am*: 115) is that you should rest assured that the Quran is already divinely preserved, and that it is going to remain as a fact until the Day of Judgment; nothing is going to change that; it is not going to be tampered with, not even a word. The proof for that is the fact that one always gets amazed by the Quran. One of these amazing aspects is that when one finds a verse from the Quran, which is similar to another, one will quickly notice that the context is different. Allah *the Exalted*

says, 'No! Indeed, the Quran is a reminder. Then whoever wills will remember it.' (*al-Muddaththir*: 54-55).

In another verse, He says: 'Nay, verily, these [messages] are but a reminder and so, whoever is willing may remember Him.' (*Abasa*: 11-12). And also in another verse, He says: 'Indeed, this is a reminder, so he who wills may take to his Lord a way.' (*al-Insan*: 29). This is a type and kind of similarity between some of the verses, but what are we requested to do to properly comprehend the Quran? Allah *the Exalted* says: 'So when We have recited it [through Gabriel], then follow its recitation.' (*al-Qiyama*: 18)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Truly, a happy state shall attain the believers. Those who humble themselves in their prayer and who turn away from all that is frivolous and who are intent on inner purity and who are mindful of their chastity, not giving way to their desires with any but their spouses – that is, those whom they rightfully possess [through wedlock]: for then, behold, they are free of all blame, whereas such as seek to go beyond that [limit] are truly transgressors; and who are faithful to their trusts and to their pledges, and who guard their prayers from all worldly intent...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 1-9). In another verse, He repeats same wording saying, 'and who guard their prayers [from all worldly intent].' (*al-Ma'arij*: 34) All of this shows you that every word has come to you as it was sent down, and this is how the promise of your Lord has been fulfilled.

Or, another meaning for the statement of Allah *the Exalted* 'And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled...' (*al-An'am*: 115) is that it is directed at strengthening the fact that Allah's word is supreme, but it is worth mentioning that the issue about the supremacy of Allah's, words, as an ordinary statement (in the context of condemning the words of disbelievers as falsehood), but rather, it was mentioned as an established fact that should not be taken with a grain of salt. About the words of the disbelievers, Allah *the Exalted* says: '...and brought utterly low the word of those who were bent on denying the truth...' (*at-Tawba*: 40).

In the grammatical context, there is a brief deliberate departure from the norm here. If this statement would have been out the context of the Quran, it would have been put this way, 'And He made the word of Allah

supreme' (as if Allah *the Exalted* was trying to prove His words are supreme, no!) rather than that, He says, '...and brought utterly low the cause of those who were bent on denying the truth, whereas Allah's cause remained supreme.' (*at-Tawba*: 40)

By this Allah *the Exalted* wants us to understand that His word is always supreme and dominant, and it is not something He has just done, nay; Allah's words have been perfectly supreme since the beginning of time, and so this will remain eternally, and this is a strong proof that His promise and decree will always come to pass, sooner or later.

We notice that the statement of the True Lord *Glorified is He* 'And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled...' (*al-An'am*: 115), comes after, 'Say, "Am I, then, to look unto anyone but Allah for judgment [as to what is right and wrong]..." (*al-An'am*: 14). So, try to examine the procession of Allah's divine messages right from the time of Adam *peace be upon him* up to the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and look how Allah *the Exalted* judged between those who attempted to suppress the Message of Truth, and those who remained steadfast upholding the Truth, and how He judged between those who are guided and those who are misguided. Indeed, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'For every one of them did We take to task for his sin: and so, upon some of them We let loose a deadly storm wind...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40).

The Arabic word *al-hasib* refers to a blowing and strong wind that carries stones, and it was a punishment for the people of 'Ad. Also Allah *the Exalted* says, '...and some of them were overtaken by a [sudden] blast...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40). This is referring to the people of Thamud. One time Allah *the Exalted* calls it a *sayha* (blast) and another time He calls it *taghiya* (a violent upheaval): 'Now as for Thamud – they were destroyed by a violent upheaval [of the earth].' (*al-Haqqa*: 5)

And in another occasion, what happened is that the earth swallowed up the disbelievers such as what happened to Qarun (Korah), 'And thereupon We caused the earth to swallow him and his dwelling...' (*al-Qasas*: 81). And likewise, '...and some of them We caused to drown...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40). And, in another instance, Allah *the Exalted* caused the people of Pharaoh to drown, and likewise He caused to drown – before them – the people of Noah

peace be upon him. Therefore, considering the above, it is clear every people (who dared to stage antagonism and enmity against the Message of Truth) received their due judgment from the Mighty Allah *Exalted is He*. And in a context of directing this message to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, as if Allah *the Exalted* is telling him, 'But you O Muhammad, are different from them (from those people of the previous prophets', and so likewise the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who have become entrusted with the great task of carrying forth the light of the Divine Message. This is why Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Moreover, We would never chastise any community for the wrong they may do until We have sent an apostle [to them].' (*al-Isra'*: 15)

After the True Lord sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He said, 'But Allah would not send them punishment while you [Prophet] are in their midst, nor would He punish them if they sought forgiveness.' (*al-Anfal*: 33) Therefore, 'And the word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice. None can alter His words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.' (*al-An'am*: 115)

'And Our word has already preceded for Our servants, the messengers; that indeed, they would be those given victory and [that] indeed, Our soldiers will be those who overcome. (*as-Saffat*: 171-173) You are the ones who will gain victory because you belong to the dominant religion, and to attain victory as a dominant religion you are required to be faithful. If you support this religion by following it, then the One who sent it down will grant you victory, for Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, '...Allah has written, "I shall most certainly win, I and My Messengers..."' (*al-Mujadala*: 21). What Allah *Glorified is He* says becomes a reality and what we see as a reality conforms to His words.

'The Word of your Lord is complete in its truth and justice. No one can change His Words: He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing.' (*al-An'am*: 115) This means that the real universe matches what Allah *Glorified is He* says. How can reality be true and just at the same time? Let us suppose that you have brought a tutor for your child, and this tutor is, by chance, your child's teacher at school. You told the teacher that you wanted your child to pass the exams.

The teacher promised you to fulfil this. When the exams came, the child passed. Thus, the teacher's promise came true, but is it just? The teacher could have prepared the questions of the exams and informed the child on them beforehand. In this case, it is unjust to have the child pass the exams. In contrast, Allah's Promise corresponds to what He says and the fulfilment of this promise on the ground conforms to what He says. This promise is also just because Allah *Glorified is He* makes recompense and punishment clear: 'The Word of your Lord is complete in its truth and justice....' (*al-An'am*: 115) This is because there is no power that could alter Allah's Words and there is no other deity to oppose Him; thus, He has absolute power.

With regards to human beings, Allah *Glorified is He* teaches His servants to adhere to truth in their speech, advising them, 'Do not say of anything, "I will do that tomorrow," without adding, "Allah willing..."' (*al-Kahf*: 23-24). Doing things tomorrow is a matter related to the future over which we have no control. Thus, protect yourself and say, 'Allah willing', if something does not happen, you should say that Our Lord has not willed what you have promised to do. You thus prove yourself truthful and safeguard yourself from being a liar. You should only speak per your potential and means because when you say that you will do something tomorrow, you do not guarantee that you are going to live until then in the light of changing events and circumstances. Meanwhile, if Allah *Glorified is He* says that He will do something, He has absolute power to do so.

'The Word of your Lord is complete in its truth and justice. No one can change His Words: He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing.' (*al-An'am*: 115) Since words are fulfilled and judgements are issued, then this is evidence that Allah *Glorified is He* is All-hearing of what they have said in their enmity, and He is All Knowing of the plots that they have hatched. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* is the One Who says in the same chapter, '...The evil ones incite their followers to argue with you...' (*al-An'am*: 121). This means that those devils teach their followers in secret. If their speech is clear, then it can be heard; and if it is in secret then it can be known.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says after that:

وَأِنْ تُطِيعُوا أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنْ
يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

**If you obeyed most of those on earth, they would lead
you away from the path of God. They follow nothing
but speculation; they are merely guessing [116]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 116)**

“If you obeyed those on earth...” are those who are legally competent because they can choose and they have commands and prohibitions. Commands apply only to man. The opposite of *akthar* (most) does not necessarily mean ‘little’ or ‘lesser’. Mentioning of ‘most’ could mean, per Arabic, that the rest may be many (*katheer*). This latter adjective (*katheer*) indicates that a given thing has a quantity of its own and does not depend on another thing. In this regard, we have heard several people say that the following phrase was once written at the country’s main train station, airport or harbour, ‘O you visitor of Egypt, there are many like you’. This means that if you are a good man, you will find many like you; and if you are wicked, you will also find many like you.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘Do you not realise [Muhammad] that everything in the heavens and earth submitted to Allah; the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees and the animals? So do many human beings, though for many others punishment is well deserved....’ (*al-Hajj*: 18) All beings are subjected and subjugated. Concerning mankind, there is a difference as they are granted free will to choose. Some people obey and some people disobey. The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not say, ‘all human beings’, but He says, ‘*many* human beings’. Similarly, Allah *Glorified is He* does not say, ‘though for a few others punishment is well deserved’ but He, says, ‘though for *many* others punishment is well deserved’. Thus, these are many and those are many too. If you look at each group of people, you will basically find them many. Why does the True Lord then say, ‘If you obeyed most of those on earth, they would lead you away from the Path of Allah...’? (*al-An'am*: 116) ‘Obedience’ means responding to the command of ‘do’ and the prohibition of ‘do not do’. When the True Lord

Glorified is He orders man to do such and such, he has the choice to do or not to do. And when the True Lord *Glorified is He* orders man not to do such and such, he has the same choice. If there is something beyond your power, Allah *Glorified is He* will never order you to do it. Man is always commanded to do or not to do for his own benefit. Man can also benefit from those things that do not contradict the Divine Way of Life because Allah *Glorified is He* has given him the freedom to do or not do. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to tell us to this effect: It is from My Mercy that I have laid down legislation for you because if I had left people to their desires, powerful people would have commanded others to do whatever they desire. Therefore, we resolve this matter through the divine way of life so that human desires do not come into conflict and one's whims do not collide with another's. It is a real benefit to mankind to have only one God Who must be obeyed and Who has no desires. It is also a real benefit to have one way of life suitable to all humans which tells them to 'do and not do'. This is discussed in detail so that we can all best understand matters. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: "If you obeyed most of those on earth, they would lead you away from the path of Allah..." (*al-An'am*: 116).

There are people who believe in Allah *Glorified is He*; these are the ones who have good nature. Man is disposed to do good deeds by nature. Legislation has come to develop and enhance this good nature and rectify evil inclinations and put right deviating dispositions. What do people going astray from the path of Allah *Glorified is He* follow? The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, 'They follow nothing but speculation....' (*al-An'am*: 116)

Each one of them thinks that this misguidance benefits them at that moment, while they are unaware of the bad consequences that will come upon them afterwards.

Zhann (speculation), as we might know, is realisation of the most possible thing; and the opposite is disregard, which means realisation of the least possible thing. However, speculation is here motivated by desires.

'...they are merely guessing and falsifying (facts).' (*al-An'am*: 116)
Those people either follow speculation or falsify facts by means of guessing. A

khariis in Arabic is someone who falsifies facts; he always guesses and makes conjectures. It is as if someone asks another one at a market about the weight of a pile of wheat. The latter responds that it is about ten or twelve bushels. He just guesses without definite proof or strict standards; he utters inaccurate words.

If you follow the advice of most people, they will lead you astray because they do not have any tangible proof or hard facts. They rather follow speculation when things are most possible, while they guess and falsify facts when things are less possible.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* then says:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

Your Lord knows best who strays from His path and who is rightly guided [117] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 117)

Whenever you see 'He', be sure that it has a unique significance. You can judge someone through his behaviour and actions; but you learn nothing about his emotions and thoughts regardless of the information you have about him because your knowledge is limited as a human being. On the contrary, the True Lord *Glorified is He* knows best since He is the All Knowing of everything in this universe. He knows both what is open and what is hidden. In this verse, He says, 'knows *best*' which is different from 'know'. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* dealt with people per how they acted, while leaving what they concealed to Allah *Glorified is He*. When a Muslim killed a man who had declared Islam, he *peace and blessings be upon him* asked him why. The Muslim replied that the man insincerely declared Islam. He, *peace and blessing be upon him* said, 'Have you cut his heart open?' Allah *Glorified is He* knows best because He knows what is open and what is hidden, and is aware of the most secretive of glances and of all that hearts conceal.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted* says:

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا
 ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ مَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا مَا اضْطُرَّرْتُمْ إِلَيْهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا
 لَيُضِلُّونَ بِأَهْوَاءِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ إِنْ رَبُّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾

So [believers] eat any [animal] over which God's name has been pronounced, if you believe in His revelations [118] Why should you not eat such animals when God has already fully explained what He has forbidden you, except when forced by hunger? But many lead others astray by their desires, without any true knowledge: your Lord knows best who oversteps the limit [119] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 118 - 119)

Why is this issue mentioned in this context? The True Lord *Glorified is He* shows that there are enemies for every prophet who always try to find faults with his religion so that they can attack him. This is their mission for which Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen them. When they raise suspicions, we find that this religion refutes them; thus, the call of this religion gets stronger until the Coming of the Hour.

An example of this is the group of people who opposed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* regarding the Night Journey and Ascension, when he said to them, 'Indeed I was taken to Al-Aqsa Mosque (in Jerusalem) and I was made to ascend into the heavens in one night.' They tried to find faults with him to lead people astray. They said to him, 'Are you claiming that you have done this journey in one night, while we beat the livers of camels (meaning that they hasten and travel upon them) for one month?!!' Meanwhile, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'If he said so, then he spoke the truth'; this is the kind of faith that is perfect about accepting matters that contravene physical laws. When this group argued with Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* he said, 'I believe that he receives revelations from the heavens, so how can I deny this? Since he has told of this, it is true.' This is a logical statement.

Again, the opponents of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Are you claiming that you have done this journey in one night while we strike the livers of our camels for one month?' He *peace and blessings be upon him* then gave them signs of the mosque and description of the trade caravans that

he passed, as well as other evidences that decisively proved the event until the Day of Resurrection. If the issue of the Night Journey and Ascension had not been subject to such opposition from enemies, we would not have found such eagerness to affirm it.

Nowadays, we find people saying, 'Is it reasonable that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to Jerusalem and came back in one night? It must have been a dream'. If they had not said such words, we would not have known how to refute them in a way that can deter opponents from going ahead with their accusations until the Hour is established. We repeat that this is the mission that Allah *Glorified is He* has set for the enemies. If Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said to them, 'Indeed I dreamt that I went to Jerusalem', would have there been anyone to object to his dreams, even if he said that he had gone to the remotest part of the world? No one would dare deny it. But since they considered him a liar and denied the Night Journey, then this is proof that they understood it to be a real journey, not a dream. They realised that he had been taken in person from Mecca to Jerusalem; and that is why they disbelieved the whole story. Their denial benefits us now as we use it to refute opponents today. Thus, the existence of enemies has always been a motivation for combatting doubts and suspicions.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says here, 'So [believers] eat any [animal] over which Allah's Name has been pronounced, if you believe in His revelations.' (*al-An'am*: 118) This verse has a story that clarifies how enemies try to find faults to attack the religion. Some of them once said, 'The Prophet says to you, 'Indeed dead animals are not permitted for you to eat, while what you slaughter with your hands you can eat from'. They threw doubt on this Hadith, claiming that slaughtering is a form of death. First, this is a misleading linguistic argument because dead animals are not slaughtered or killed. Meanwhile, animals are slaughtered to be purified of blood. When we discuss this issue from scientific and academic perspectives, those enemies are easily defeated because there is a difference between death and killing. Death is removal of life without destroying the physical constitution. Killing is the destruction of the physical constitution first, and then death follows with blood remaining in the body. After all, does the Legislator,

Who is the Most High Lord, take wisdom from us or does wisdom belong to Him alone?

It has become clear in our time that non-believers have begun to realise that a dead animal or flesh contains many harmful wastes that must be removed before its meat can be eaten. This is because the body of an animal is like that of a man; animals eat, digest, and absorb the nourishing elements that constitute their blood and energy. It is well known that there are organs and systems inside the body which clean and purify it from harmful toxins. For example, the kidneys cleanse blood of urea and other harmful waste so that blood can flow easily to the lungs to get oxygen. Moreover, blood vessels in both man and animals contain healthy and spoilt blood. The spoilt blood is that which has not been purified yet. When an animal is slaughtered, the spoilt blood comes out along with other bad compounds. This means that we sacrifice healthy blood to protect ourselves from unhealthy blood. On the other hand, if an animal is not slaughtered, the traces of both kinds of blood as well as waste remain. We avoid all this when slaughtering animals. Thus, we must trust in our True Lord *Glorified is He* when we learn that a ruling is surely ordained by Him.

Again, those enemies argued to this effect, 'You eat what you have killed while you do not eat what Allah has killed. Thus, you think that you are better than Allah'. This is a false statement. When an animal dies, the Name of Allah *Glorified is He* is not pronounced over it, while we pronounce the Name of Allah over a slaughtered animal. It is as if the True Lord puts it this way: Eat what the Name of Allah has been pronounced over, i.e. neither dead animals nor what has been slaughtered for idols.

'So [believers] eat any [animal] over which Allah's Name has been pronounced, if you believe in His revelations.' (*al-An'am*: 118) Whenever we receive a ruling from the True Lord *Glorified is He* we must never look for the wisdom behind it first and then believe in it. Rather, we must trust that it is from Allah *Glorified is He* Whom we believe in. Therefore, we must follow every ruling coming from Allah *Glorified is He*. 'Why should you not eat such animals when Allah has already fully explained what He has forbidden upon you, except when forced by hunger? But many lead others astray by their

desires, without any true knowledge: your Lord knows best who oversteps the limits.' (*al-An'am*: 119)

These two verses – as we have known – were sent down to expose the opponents of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who stood in denial of the call and strived to put an end to it. Those opponents spread rumours amongst the believers, which targeted their belief and faith. To raise doubts, they presented this issue that proved groundless. Let us look at it once again. Who is the one who has killed (such an animal)? They said, 'Indeed Allah has killed it'. So, is Allah *Glorified is He* the One Who has slit its throat? Has Allah *Glorified is He* struck its head and caused the brain to die? Has He directed something into its heart? Allah is Exalted above such human actions. So, how can they call death 'killing'? Referring to death as killing is wrong. They stick to faulty reasoning when they say, 'How can you legalize for yourselves what you have killed, i.e. what you have slaughtered, while not legalizing what Allah *Glorified is He* has killed, i.e. what He has caused to die'? Allah *Glorified is He* intends to grant the believers immunity from these suspicions raised by opponents. He said, 'So [believers] eat any [animal] over which Allah's Name has been pronounced, if you believe in His revelations.' (*al-An'am*: 118)

What is the meaning of 'pronouncement' or 'remembrance' (*dhikr* in Arabic)? There is a great deal of difference among scholars since they have not defined what is meant by (*dhikr*). Imam Malik *Allah rest his soul* is of the opinion that if you slaughter an animal and do not pronounce Allah's Name unmindfully or intentionally, it is not permissible for you to eat a slaughtered animal. Imam Abu Hanifah *Allah rest his soul* views that if you forget to pronounce Allah's Name, you can still eat a slaughtered animal, but if you intentionally do not pronounce it, then you cannot eat it. Imam Ash-Shafi'i *Allah rest his soul* says that as long as you are a believer and you are engaged in slaughtering in such a state of faith, then eat what Allah's Name has not been pronounced over, whether unmindfully or deliberately, because your faith includes pronouncement of the Name of Allah (*dhikr*).

We ask: What is *dhikr*? Is *dhikr* something which is said by the tongue, or is it something that occurs to one's mind? If you say that *dhikr* is something

voiced through the tongue, then let us consider this Divine Hadith in which Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'I am near to the thought of My servant as he thinks about Me, and I am with him as he remembers Me. And if he remembers Me within himself, I also remember him within Myself, and if he remembers Me in an assembly, I remember him in an assembly that is better than his.'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, our Lord, has called the thoughts within oneself *dhikr*, so, Imam Ash-Shafi'i Allah *rest his soul* was right in his statement.

Therefore, I believe that we must define the meaning of *dhikr* first so that we can put an end to the difference of opinion in this issue. It does not make sense to have an argument over the meaning of *dhikr* because *dhikr* is something that occurs to the mind and may be pronounced by the tongue at the same time; or it may occur to the mind only as mentioned in the aforesaid Hadith.

A believer may find among the things around them, that some of them are beautiful, while others are not related to beauty at all. For example, a buffalo may be less beautiful than some animals that Allah *Glorified is He* has declared impermissible to eat. However, we find believers keep slaughtering buffaloes to eat their meat, while we have never heard of a Muslim coming to an animal, which Allah *Glorified is He* has declared unlawful to eat, to slaughter it; why? The reason is that the believers only engage in what Allah *Glorified is He* has permitted; this is proof that they remember within themselves that the One Who declares things permissible or impermissible is Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, a Muslim's choice of an animal to slaughter is evidence that he remembers Allah *Glorified is He* within himself or by his tongue. Hence, we agree now that a believer's *dhikr* is in their heart, whether they say it or not; accordingly, the dispute of this issue is settled. As we have shown, Imam Ash-Shafi'i adopted this viewpoint because when Prophet Mohammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked about a Muslim eating a slaughtered animal, while neither knowing who has slaughtered it nor whether Allah's Name was pronounced over it, he *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified, 'Say Allah's Name and eat.'

One cannot always be present at the time of slaughtering; so, it is enough for us to call to mind the One Who declares things permissible or impermissible

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and At-Tirmidhi

when we eat the meat of a slaughtered animal. The True Lord *Glorified is He* commands us to 'mention Allah's Name over it'. Allah *Glorified is He* knows that you intend to do things; these things are divided into two categories: things that you think about before you do them and others that you do not think about, but you rather do them automatically without thinking, such as all reflexive actions. If someone tried to put their finger in another's eyes, this other person would automatically close their eyes. This is not the case in actions that one thinks about before doing. An action that is thought of before being done is an action which is important; that is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to save us trouble by saying, 'Every matter of importance that is not begun with "In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy" is devoid (of blessings).'

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An important matter is a one that you think about before doing or not doing it. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* does not hold us accountable about any action so long as it does not occur to our minds because when you embark on an action, it responds to you the way you want to do it. This is from Allah's Bounty to you. When you slaughter a calf or a lamb, contemplate how Allah *Glorified is He* has granted you power over this living being and that you would not be able to do this unless Allah *Glorified is He* subjugated everything in existence for you. You slaughter such an animal in the Name of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Thus, there are many important matters and actions that occur to your mind, which you must embark upon in Allah's Name as recommended by good manners and faith. Some people are mistaken when they think that when they slaughter animals, they do harm them. No, an animal concludes its mission in life by being slaughtered since it is created and subjugated for such a purpose.

We previously stated that there is a wonder found concerning practices in this regard: when you try to kill an animal that Allah *Glorified is He* has not made permissible for man, such as a donkey, for example, by tying a rope around its neck, it chokes to death without stretching its neck forward. On the other hand, the animals that Allah *Glorified is He* has declared permissible to

(1) Narrated by 'Abd Al-Qadir Ar-Rahawi in *Al-Arba'in* from Abu Hurayra

eat, such as buffaloes, lambs, or calves, stretch their necks forward when they are strangled to death. People in the Egyptian countryside say, 'It is seeking the lawful (*halal*) action', i.e. to be slaughtered. So, having an animal slaughtered is not considered transgression against it because it is created for this mission. Thus, the meaning of 'In the Name of Allah' is that I dare not do such an act unless it is within the framework of the Name of Allah *Glorified is He* Who has allowed me to do so.

Afterwards, The True Lord *Glorified is He* says to the believers to this effect, 'Do not listen to what the disbelievers say' through this question for denial, 'Why should you not eat such animals...' (*al-An'am*: 119) which means: what prevents you from eating the animals which Allah's Name has been pronounced over when He has already fully explained what He has forbidden upon you. Thus, what Allah's Name has been pronounced over is not included in what is prohibited by Allah *Glorified is He*. Our Lord is the One Who declares things permissible or impermissible. Some might say, 'Why has Allah *Glorified is He* created things that He has declared impermissible for us?' We answer as follows: Whoever thinks this way is oblivious of the fact that not every animal is created to be eaten. Every animal has a mission; when you slaughter an impermissible animal, you thus transgress its mission. The pig, for example, has been declared unlawful by our Lord *Glorified is He* because when you slaughter it, you violate its mission. This animal is created to collect dirt not easily seen by the naked eye; when you slaughter it, you take it away from its original job. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who has created man and He knows best what kind of nourishment suitable for him as far as energy and good health is concerned. So, Allah *Glorified is He* has declared some things permissible and others impermissible for us. Beware of saying: Allah *Glorified is He* only forbids the things that are harmful because He wants us to decently comply with the Commands of 'do and not do'. This is why the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'For the wrongdoings done by the Jews, We forbade them certain good things that had been permitted to them before....' (*an-Nisa*': 160)

In everyday life, do you say that those who harshly train our sons in the army are cruel to them? No, they actually prepare them to undertake difficult

tasks and teach them good manners, obedience, and discipline. Likewise, The True Lord *Glorified is He* has permitted what He wants and has forbidden what He wills so that the universe can be kept in order with the Power of the Most Wise, the All-Capable. Allah *Glorified is He* has forbidden things such as drugs which we sometimes use to treat some illnesses. Thus, if a healthy person unjustifiably uses them, they will destroy their body and eliminate their health. If this person uses them afterwards for the sake of treatment, they will not have the desired effect. That is why we find doctors, before carrying out delicate surgeries, ask patients whether they have taken drugs, to determine anaesthetics appropriate for them.

Astonishingly enough, Allah *Glorified is He* has forbidden us from using such things that affect our minds, while we may need them at the time of suffering and illness.

Then, The True Lord *Glorified is He* has linked all rulings of *halal* and *haram* (lawful and unlawful things) to ‘...if you believe in His revelations...’ which can be explained as follows: ‘O you who have believed in Allah, the Most Wise Lord Who only commands you for your benefit, refrain from such actions’. If you embark upon anything that Allah *Glorified is He* has permitted for you, then embark upon it in the Name of Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah *Glorified is He* has basically taught us some of His Names That He has sent down in His Book (the Quran) and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, while He has taught some of His servants other Names and kept other Names for Himself as unseen knowledge. These Names are Allah’s Attributes of Perfection that only concerns Him. If we want to call to mind the Name that gathers all these Attributes of Perfection, we say: ‘In the Name of Allah’. When scholars discussed the issue of forbidden and permitted things, some of them said, ‘The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says at the beginning of the chapter of *al-Ma'ida*: ‘You are forbidden to eat dead animals [flesh]...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). And Here in the chapter of *al-An'am* Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘...when Allah has already fully explained what He has forbidden you...’ (*al-An'am*: 119).

Scholars who showed more interest said that the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* is Medinan which means that it was sent down in Medina after the Meccan

chapters; the chapter of *al-An'am* is Meccan. Does the True Lord *Glorified is He* say in this Meccan chapter '...Allah has already fully explained what He has forbidden you...' in Medinan chapters? Some scholars of inspired vision said that '...Allah has already fully explained...' in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* as well as in this Meccan chapter of *al-An'am* when He says, '[Prophet Muhammad], say, "In all that has been revealed to me, I find nothing forbidden for people to eat, except for carrion [dead animals], flowing blood, pig's meat—it is loathsome—or a sinful offering over which any name other than Allah has been invoked."' But if someone is forced by hunger, rather than desire or excess, then Allah is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful.' (*al-An'am*: 145)

One of those who are hell-bent on making objections or one of the opponents of Islam might ask why this verse has not mentioned all the impermissible things. We answer that the Quran includes the guidelines of the religion, while the Sunnah has the details: '...so accept whatever the Messenger [Muhammad] gives you, and abstain from whatever he forbids you....' (*al-Hashr*: 7)

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says here: '...when Allah has already fully explained what He has forbidden upon you, except when forced by hunger....' (*al-An'am*: 119)

Compulsion is a state in which you are forced to resort to unlawful means. In such a condition, man is compelled to depend on impermissible things, just as when a person searches for anything to eat to stay alive; if he cannot find anything lawful, he is under compulsion. We advise such a person, saying, 'take from that which Allah has not permitted for you according to your dire need; so, eat from carrion if necessary and do not satisfy your appetite.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...but if any of you is forced by hunger to eat forbidden food....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3) When people are forced to eat forbidden food, this means that they are facing a famine. You resort to impermissible means and alternatives when you are forced or compelled. Allah *Glorified is He* gives man permission to consume what is forbidden if they are under compulsion as in '...except when forced by hunger? But many lead others astray by their desires, without any true knowledge....' (*al-An'am*: 119) Those who lead others astray by their desires without any true knowledge are those

who want to cast doubt in the hearts of Muslims. The meaning of leading others astray by desires means that one is fully aware of a given issue, but his passions drive him away from what the True Lord wants people to do concerning this issue. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'He does not speak from his own desire.' (*an-Najm*: 3)

When the True Lord says: '...But many lead others astray by their desires, without any true knowledge...' (*al-An'am*: 119), it means that there is a form of leading astray without desires; this is when man cannot get to reality because he does not know how to reach it. Meanwhile, leading astray with desires means that you learn reality quite well but you turn away from it.

'...But many lead others astray by their desires, without any true knowledge....' (*al-An'am*: 119) When you see the phrase '...by their desires...' coming after '... lead others astray...', you may say that there can be a form of leading astray without knowledge which is not blameworthy because the person in question does not know the ruling related to a given issue. This is different from the person who goes astray while he knows the ruling; this means that he goes astray by his desires. When we understand this matter this way, misunderstanding has no room. The phrase: '...without any true knowledge...' means that the people in question here, do not have knowledge of this given issue and its rulings. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* concludes this verse by saying: '...your Lord knows best who oversteps the limits.' (*al-An'am*: 119)

Allah *Glorified is He* shows us in many verses of the Glorious Quran that some of His Creation can discern the ones who are rightly guided and those who are not rightly guided. However, many people cannot distinguish the rightly guided people from the wrongly guided people. After all, Allah *Glorified is He* knows best.

After that, The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

وَذَرُوا ظَهْرَ الْإِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ
 الْإِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

**Avoid committing sin, whether openly or in secret,
 for those who commit sin will be repaid for what
 they do [120] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 120)**

This is the Heavenly Legislation which provides the society with self-protection, so that one may not see violations committed by others. If you see violations committed by some people, be sure that these are some evident examples and do not constitute all instances of corruption in the society. The corruption of the society is caused by many motives of that we might not be aware. There are motives instilled in the deepest part of the human soul that controls desires. Before an outward sin is committed, there is surely an inward sin. This means that an inward sin precedes an outward one. All human laws protect us from outward sins, whereas the religion of Heaven protects us from the corruption of both open and secret sins.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* shows us the difference between human legislation and Allah's legislation. He observes your feelings, emotions, and secrets; so beware of committing inward sins. It is not enough to protect yourself from laws reaching you because the biggest thing a law can do is to prevent people from committing crimes in public. The difference between the Legislation of Heaven and the legislation of Earth is that the latter protects people from open sins, while the former protects people from both open sins and secret sins, which are the most dangerous.

Some of the people who are accustomed to doing evil find it so easy to do evil deeds; a daily routine.

The verb 'commit' in this verse is the translation of the Arabic verb *kasab* which is originally related to good deeds and easier when uttered in comparison with another Arabic verb of the same root *iktisab* which is used for evil deeds. Doing things that are permissible is a natural practice by all human faculties. When someone wants, for example, to buy something at a shop, all they need to do is to go to that shop in broad daylight and buy that thing. Meanwhile, when someone wants to steal a shop, they must make other abnormal arrangements.

However, such abnormal practices could become natural after getting accustomed to them and gaining experience, thus turning to easy jobs compatible with the verb *kasab* which indicates, per Arabic, that you get profits in addition to your capital. When man does good deeds, he grants himself the essentials of life and he gets the rewards of the Hereafter as extra. This is the highest yield.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants us during our endeavours in life, to realise the benefits we need for ourselves. But we may be harmed when doing so. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* protects the believers by the religion's way of life so that they can distinguish between that what fulfils them their present goal as well as permanent benefits with no harm on one hand, and what brings them instant benefits, disastrous consequences and real suffering on the other. We find around us that those who do evil and follow their desires, get temporary benefits for themselves, just like a student who does not care for his lessons and sleeps most of the time or goes out wandering in the streets. Outwardly, such a student finds some comfort for himself; in fact, he heads towards failure and regret. In contrast, a hardworking, diligent student fulfils himself great everlasting benefits.

‘...for those who commit sin will be repaid for what they do.’ (*al-An'am*: 120). In this worldly life, we find humans reward and punish each other per their power, but what about the moment we stand before Allah *Glorified is He* the All Knowing of open and secret sins? Thus, what safeguards the society is the Legislation of Heaven. The religion's way of life not only protects man from dangers but also sets laws for man's movement on earth.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* then comes back to the issue of food, saying:

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يَذْكُرْ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ وَإِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ
لَيُوحُونَ إِلَيْكَ أَوْلِيَاءَهُمْ لِيُجَدِّدُوا لَكُمْ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٣١﴾

And do not eat anything over which God's name has not been pronounced, for that is breaking the law. The evil ones incite their followers to argue with you: if you listen to them, you too will become idolaters [121] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 121)

Here, The True Lord *Glorified is He* calls what Allah's Name has not been mentioned over *fisq* (sinful offering) which is explained in the following verse

of the same chapter: '[Prophet Muhammad], say, "In all that has been revealed to me, I find nothing forbidden for people to eat, except for carrion [dead animals], flowing blood, pig's meat—it is loathsome—or a sinful offering over which any name other than Allah has been invoked." But if someone is forced by hunger, rather than desire or excess, then Allah is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful.' (*al-An'am*: 145)

Thus, the word '*fisq*' (sinful offering) is conjoined to carrion, flowing blood and pig's meat, but Allah *Glorified is He* separates between the second conjunct (*ma'tuf* in Arabic), which is *fisq* and the first conjunct (*ma'tuf alaih* in Arabic) with a description that is specific to the first conjunct. This description is 'being loathsome' (*rijs*); thus these three impermissible things take the description of (*rijs*) and conjoined to them is that which is slaughtered and other than Allah's Name is pronounced over it, such as idols. Here, *rijs* and *fisq* have been brought together.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: '...The evil ones incite their followers to argue with you...' (*al-An'am*: 121). Allah *Glorified is He* intends to show us that a good nature that does not follow whims will recognize the reality of goodness. That is why we find that those who incite each other to do evil and teach one another in secret play the role of Satan in regards to whispering and instigation for the sake of people's disobedience and disbelief. Good nature rejects such deviant dispositions. When a man commits a grave offence, he deceives others and takes an indirect course to commit such an offence; he may whisper to someone else and direct them towards corruption. Thus, such a person assumes the position of devils who whisper secretly to their followers, while people of good nature, who control their whims and desires, reject and combat evil things. Thus, when a devil from amongst the mankind or jinn, wants to make people's deeds fair seeming, he does not declare it directly; rather, he uses deceitful, crooked discourse.

'...The evil ones incite their followers to argue with you: if you listen to them, you too will become idolaters.' (*al-An'am*: 121) Here, there is an indication to the statement voiced by idolaters: 'You eat what you have killed and not eat what Allah has killed, while it would be better for you to eat what Allah has killed'.

If ‘...you listen to them, you too will become idolaters.’ (*al-An'am*: 121) It is as if merely obeying these polytheists is a type of idolatry because worship means that a worshipper obeys and carries out the commands and prohibitions of that which he worships. Thus, if you receive a command from one other than Allah *Glorified is He* you are driven away from His True Religion because of having associated partners with Him.

After that, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted* says:

أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

Is a dead person brought back to life by Us, and given light with which to walk among people, comparable to someone trapped in deep darkness who cannot escape? In this way the evil deeds of the disbelievers are made to seem alluring to them [122] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 122)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* as we have earlier learned, presents some issues in the form of questions, not statements because Allah is fully aware that when He presents you a question, you will find only one answer after long thought; this answer is that what the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants. Thus, the Quran sometimes uses statements, and in other times it uses affirmative or negative questions. The most effective of these styles is that of a negative question. When Allah *Glorified is He* presents a given issue, He states that the only way you should look at this issue is what the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants since He is the All-Knower of what you do.

In this glorious verse, we find death and life and darkness and light. What is life? Life is the existence of beings in a state that allows them to carry out their missions; and so long as a being is in a state enabling it to achieve its task, then it sustains life. The most elevated level of life is that which combines motion, senses, and intellect. All these components are found in man. Concerning animals, they have motion and senses, but not intellect; however, they have natural instincts that may be sometimes stronger than man's instincts. Man is governed by instincts in some aspects and by choice in others. You have

nothing to do regarding instincts, while you have the say in the sphere of choice. You can either do or not do.

Thus, life means that a being is in a state that qualifies it to fulfil its mission. Hence, there is life in man, plants, and inanimate objects; there is even life in life itself. As science advances, it proves that there are forms of life in so many things that we have thought had no life, even if the nature of some things is sometimes changed due to chemical interactions. For example, an animal has life; but after we slaughter and eat it, and throw away the bones, it has another kind of life. These inanimate bones still maintain life until they break into pieces and go smashed.

In the country, we used to milk animals and keep milk in clay vessels put in storehouses. Milk stayed in those storehouses for a week, and each day it got sweeter. The sweetness of milk increased every day. Then, a farmer's wife brought the remaining cream to make cheese and butter of wonderful taste; but after boiling milk, we found that it had gone off few hours later. This means that when you put milk in clay vessels in storehouses, you put it with the life it contains, whereas when you boil it, you kill its very life. Hence, if you do not put it in a fridge, it will inevitably rot. Rotting here denotes that milk no longer has its original mission. Rather, it changes to another life due to bacteria and other factors. Destruction eventually eliminates all forms of life, as stated by The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He*: '...Everything will perish except His Face....' (*al-Qasas*: 88)

Thus, do not look at dead things as having no life; they rather move to another life. 'Is a dead person brought back to life by Us, and given light with which to walk among people....' (*al-An'am*: 122) It is as if man has life of his own, then The True Lord *Glorified is He* grants him light to walk with, as though life moves from one a state to another. Man needs a life and a light so that he can see things. In earlier times, people used to believe that man sees when rays are emitted from his eyes towards objects, until the Arab Muslim scientist Al-Hassan ibn Al-Haytham came along and said that this theory had not been quite correct as far as the laws of light are concerned. He said man sees because of rays emitting from objects towards the eyes, providing compelling evidence since man can see objects in the light, not in the dark.

If rays emitted from man's eyes, then he would be able to see things in both light and darkness. Hence, all theories of light were modified at the hand of this Muslim scientist to make the way open for photography and cinema. Again, we repeat that light is a means of making things visible.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* presents us evidence related to concrete issues in the universe to prove abstract issues. For instance, tangible light represented in the sun, the moon, a lamp or anything else, makes man see objects. Man's seeing of things means that he interacts with them in a very useful way. We use an electric lamp when the natural light of the sun is away. When we turn lamps on, we see things and interact with them without hitting them or being hit by them. Each one of us takes the light he needs. Thus, each one uses a means to illuminate dark places in the absence of the natural light as much as he can. When the sun appears again, we all switch our lamps off. This can be a proof from the tangible, sensory universe that Allah gives light to the values He likes. So, we must not produce values for ourselves since His values are existence.

Allah *Glorified is He* enlightens us that a valueless man is a moving dead one. The religion's way of life is sent to him to grant him a superior life. Allah *Glorified is He* addresses every man as if saying, 'Strive for the other eternal life that will never end; this only comes about by adhering to the religion's way of life'. Beware of thinking that life is only what you see in this existence because if this life was our ultimate objective, man would feel unhappy. If the worldly life was our final goal, this would necessitate that all our fortune, lifetimes and circumstances would be one and the same. Difference in all these aspects is evidence that this life is not the end because the end of equals must be equal.

Thus, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says the truly decisive statement in this verse: '...the true life is in the Hereafter, if only they knew....' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64) This is the life that neither misses you nor you miss it; and its goodness neither escapes you and nor do you escape it. Again, the one who lives the first sensuous life, through Allah's breathing into the spirit to produce motion, is a moving dead person. 'Is a dead person brought back to life by Us, and given light with which to walk among people....' (*al-An'am*: 122) This

means that Allah *Glorified is He* has given such a slave an eternal life and light with which he walks; he neither harms other beings nor is harmed by them.

In regards to those who say that life with its worldly meaning does not differ from life in the light of Faith, we answer that they are totally different and not equal at all, since The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...Believers, respond to Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] when he calls you to that which gives you life....' (*al-Anfal*: 24)

Allah *Glorified is He* is addressing the believers; and since He is addressing them, then they are alive per the laws of this life. But Allah *Glorified is He* revealed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the true religion that gives the believers a superior life. Note that the True Lord *Glorified is He* grants the first spirit which He breathes into the motionless body to move and feel this worldly life, to both the believers and the disbelievers. Meanwhile, there is another spirit that gives eternal life. Thus, Allah's way of life for His Creation is called a spirit: 'So We have revealed a spirit to you [Prophet Muhammad] by Our Command....' (*ash-Shura*: 52)

Religion's way of life leads to an eternal life. So, the True Lord's Statement: 'Is a dead person brought back to life by Us...' (*al-An'am*: 122) means, 'Is a lost person guided by Us...' or 'Is a disbeliever brought to Faith by Us...'

'Per Arabic, there is the word (*mayt*) and the word (*mayyit*) with doubling the 'y' letter; both generally mean 'dead'. *Mayyit* refers to someone who is ordained to die, even though they are still alive. So, each one of us is *mayyit* even though we are alive. Meanwhile, *mayt*, is someone who has died and their spirit no longer exists. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying, 'Yet, verily, you are bound to die...' (*az-Zumar*: 30).

This means that you will eventually die (*mayyit*), even though you are alive now since each one of us continues to live until we take on the state of non-existence. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, '...brought back to life by Us...' i.e. through the religion's way of life that gives such a man another life. This is why the Quran is called a spirit, the same word attributed to the angel who brought down the Quran (Gabriel).

‘...and given light with which to walk among people...’ (*al-An'am*: 122). Why does he walk among people only, and not among everything? You can be careful concerning other things, while the word ‘people’ expresses uneasy interaction since they are subject to changing circumstances. The True Lord *Glorified is He* continues to say, ‘...comparable to someone trapped in deep darkness who cannot escape...’ (*al-An'am*: 122). The answer for the question raised by this verse is no, i.e. the two persons are not equal. This question is similar to our saying, ‘Is a blind person like one who can see?’ Natural disposition tells us no, just as it underscores that darkness and light are not equal, and shade and heat are not equal. In this verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* trusts us with the answer because He knows that this question has only one answer which is what the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* concludes this verse by saying: ‘...In this way the evil deeds of the disbelievers are made to seem alluring to them.’ (*al-An'am*: 122). This means that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has left them liable to allurements and temptation. Allah *Glorified is He* has not protected them from committing mistakes while choosing because He has given man the freedom of choice, ‘...let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so...’ (*al-Kahf*: 29).

Then, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ أَكْبَرًا مُّجْرِمِيهَا لِيَمَّكُرُوا
فِيهَا وَمَا يَمْكُرُونَ إِلَّا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

And so We have put chief evildoers in every city to perpetrate their schemes there – but they scheme only against themselves, without realizing it [123] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 123)

‘And so...’ indicates that something is likened to something else; just as there are in Mecca enemies who oppose you, show hostility towards the Call of Allah *Glorified is He* and hinder the path of Truth, the same thing happened with the former messengers in the procession of Faith. There is nothing new. ‘And so...’ also means, ‘Just as We have placed in Mecca evildoers who mastermind plots against you, We did the same thing with the greatest

criminals who conspired against their messengers in their cities. You are not anything new among Allah's Messengers. So, be steadfast like those messengers of firm resolve. You should even have more patience and exert more efforts because your mission is greater since you are a messenger to the entire world, while other messengers were sent only to their communities to purify them from definite evils at definite times. You have been sent for all nations, times and places until the establishment of the Hour. Thus, the hardships that confront you must match the universality of the Message Allah has chosen you for'.

'And so We have put chief evildoers in every city...' (*al-An'am*: 123). Per Arabic, *ijram* (evildoing or crime) is taken from the three radical letters in Arabic *jim*, *ra`* and *mim*, from which we get the words *jarm*, *jurm* and *jareema* which all have the meaning of cutting. *Mujrimeeha* (their 'evildoers') is the plural of *mujrim* or 'evildoer'; a *mujrim* is someone who has committed a *jurm* or a *jareema* (a crime). This means that such a person, by committing a crime, has cut himself off from his society. He thus separates himself for no one's benefit except his own, as if he is engaged in a process of social isolation. He has made everything for himself while making himself for none to realise his own desires, paying no heed to consequences.

Again, *ijram* means hasty engagement in the evils that make man isolate himself from the goodness of his society because he wants everything for himself. Since he wants everything for himself, he tends to be unfair and corrupt. Being corrupt, he wants all the members of the society to commit immoral acts so that none may be better than him '...to perpetrate their schemes there—but they scheme only against themselves, without realizing it.' (*al-An'am*: 123)

Per Arabic, *makr* (scheming) is related to the branches when they are wound around one another, in a way that you cannot learn if a certain leaf belongs to a definite branch because boughs and branches are intertwined and twisted closely together. A schemer behaves in a twisted manner because he wants to hide his plots lest anyone expose them. Acting this way, he proves to be of weak character. Only weak people are the ones who tend to conspire and scheme, while strong people never conspire or scheme; they rather meet others face to face. A poet says:

Though being weak, the cunning person always has a deceitful stance

This is the power of the powerless; he kills whenever he seizes the chance

When the weak person has the upper hand, he is convinced that he should finish off his enemy because if he passes up this chance, he will regret it for the rest of his life. However, when the strong person confronts his enemy, he has the choice to forgive him the first time. Whereas, when the enemy repeats the irresponsible action, he deserves to be faced. Thus, he who cunningly conspires against others is the weak person. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* refers to the evildoers of the most powerful people, i.e. those who demonstrate authorities over others and spread corruption where no one can stand against or to oppose them. There are many debatable verses related to this concern. It is astonishing that this controversy among Muslim scholars has not been settled yet, as each group sticks to its opinion. The verse under discussion goes together with Allah's saying: 'When We decide to destroy a town, We command those corrupted by wealth [to reform], but they persisted in their disobedience; Our sentence has passed, and We destroyed them utterly.' (*al-Isra'*: 16)

This verse is somehow ambiguous; the matter which stirred up a debate among the scholars. Some of them wondered, 'How can Allah *the Almighty* command people to sinfulness'? They tried to find an interpretation so they said, 'Indeed, Allah compels and forces the most powerful people to be engaged in sinfulness'. The other team of scholars said, 'Definitely, Allah does not compel human beings to be engaged in sinfulness; but rather, His Command can likely be obeyed or disobeyed by the man who is legally responsible for his choice. Therefore, sinfulness is the consequence of the man's choice. In this way, the most powerful people disobey Allah's Command'; yet, Allah *the Exalted* says, 'Though all they are commanded to do is to worship Allah alone...' (*al-Bayyina*: 5).

On looking over the meaning of 'Allah's Command', it is represented in the working of the universe where no creation can disobey Allah. As He *the Almighty* says: 'When He wills something to be, His way is to say unto it, "Be" and it is done.' (*Ya Sin*: 82)

Allah's Command is also represented in the Heavenly Legislation whereas, the human beings to whom this Legislation is sent down have the choice to

obey or disobey. Allah *Glorified is He* says about His Command to human beings to follow the Heavenly Legislation, 'Though all they are commanded to do is to worship Allah alone...' (*al-Bayyina*: 5).

Referring to this verse: 'When We decide to destroy a town, We command those corrupted by wealth [to reform], but they persisted in their disobedience...' (*al-Isra'*: 16), Allah *the Exalted* does not destroy a community oppressively. However, He guides the evildoers to the right path; if they obey they will be rewarded, but if they disobey they will be punished.

The scholars, who thought that sinfulness was a consequence of Allah's Command overlooked that the Command came in the Quran in two types. The first is the subjugating irreversible command regarding the working of the universe where human beings are disallowed to contravene it. This subjugating command is mentioned in Allah's saying: 'When He wills something to be, His way is to say unto it, "Be" and it is done.' (*Ya Sin*: 82) Since the world of eternity, Allah's Command has been decreed and is ready to be manifested when He *the Almighty* wills. The second is the legislative command where man is legally responsible for his choice either to obey or disobey. Within this framework, we can understand Allah's saying: 'When We decide to destroy a town, We command those corrupted by wealth to reform, but they persisted in their disobedience; Our sentence has passed, and We destroyed them utterly.' (*al-Isra'*: 16)

Thus, it is indisputable that Allah *the Exalted* does not command to sinfulness; He sets a doctrine to all human beings to sincerely worship Him alone. However, the most powerful people of this community refused to obey Allah's Command and choose sinfulness and disobedience as a way of life. Hence, they deserve being destroyed by Allah's punishment. If the command is regarding the working of the universe, then they are not legitimately responsible. As for the legislative command, then we should understand that there is a choice.

Using a cross-reference approach, this verse sheds light on the meaning of the other verse under discussion. In the first one, Allah *Glorified is He* shows that He decrees to destroy a community to whom He previously has shown the right path because the most powerful people of the community disobeyed

Allah's Command to lead the right path; thus, they are punished by being destroyed. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* tells in this verse, '... but they scheme only against themselves, without realising it.' (*al-An'am*: 123), that the cunning person is scheming to attain his goal by twisted means because he is weak and is unable to accept truth. This truth is only perceived by a sound natural disposition, inversely to his falsified disposition which gets him bent out of shape. Such a cunning schemer aims to realise immediate benefit and temporary pleasure for himself, but if he calls to mind the punishment that will be in store as a result for himself and, likewise, for the others whom he has led astray, he will realise how evil comes about. As Allah *the Exalted* tells us about the schemers, '... but they scheme only against themselves, without realising it'; i.e. the schemer does not identify the repercussions because he does not weigh matters properly to achieve actual benefit.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ حَتَّى نُؤْتَىٰ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ رُسُلُ
 اللَّهِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا
 صَغَارٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

When a revelation is brought before them they say, 'We shall not believe unless we ourselves are given a revelation as God's messengers were.' But God knows best where to place His messages: humiliation before God and severe torment will befall the evildoers for their scheming [124] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 124)

This verse shows that even the Quran, sent by Allah *the Almighty* with His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to prove prophethood, did not persuade, or suffice the disbelievers; conversely, they demanded more miracles. As Allah says: 'They say, "We will not believe you [Muhammad] until you make a spring gush out of the ground for us or until you have a garden of date palms and vines, and make rivers pour through them or make the sky fall on us in pieces, as you claimed will happen; or bring Allah and the angels before us face to face...."' (*al-Isra'*: 91-93) They do not believe; but rather, they want to be engaged in wrangling and arguing to avoid having

faith. This is the cause behind their fabricated arguments against the call of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They said that he is a magician separating between man and his wife, as well as between the child and his father. Moreover, they alleged that he uses his powers which he claimed to be from Allah to cause sedition within families. However, they do not bother themselves to think that if he had the power to bewitch others, so why has he not bewitched them as well? Have they had the power of choice to refuse being bewitched? Indeed, the evildoers were deceitful in this concern.

Subsequently, they said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a poet. If other people said this allegation; it would be plausible from unacquainted strangers who did not know him, and who were, also, uninformed of the sciences of eloquence, rhetoric, and oration, whereas, it is known that the Arabs excelled in poetry, prose, oration and writing.

There were sporadic individual voices amongst them declaring, 'By God, it is neither the speech of a soothsayer nor the speech of a poet'. For those individuals, Allah *Glorified is He* asks them to specifically utter their opinion away from the collective consciousness because the shared beliefs within society operate as a unifying force and confuse truth with falsehood. As Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Say [Muhammad], "I advise you to do one thing only: stand before Allah, in pairs or singly, and think": there is no sign of madness in your companion [the Prophet]...' (*Saba'*: 46). Allah *the Almighty* tells them not to utter their opinion collectively, while they are agitated, and accusing the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* of being mad because their opinion would be based on the collective consciousness. However, they are required to take the witness stand before Allah in pairs; each pair observes the status of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* whether he is a soothsayer, a sorcerer or a poet. The truth is never lost between two people as they are discussing with each other, and the defeated party in the discussion will not be exposed in front of others. However, in a multi-party (three or four people) discussion, each defends himself, fearing of being defeated in front of the others. For this reason, Allah commands them to stand before Him in pairs or singly; each delivers his testimony about the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on whether he is mad or not.

Indeed, the actions of the insane are neither coherent nor proper; whereas, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is indeed on an exalted standard of character. This is never the trait of an insane because the reactions of the insane are unexpected and incoherent. On the contrary, being on an exalted standard of character means that the character of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is governed by values; they are not a camouflage for deception, but rather, they are outstanding inherent traits. If someone is said to be bountiful, this means that the attribute of generosity is deeply rooted so that he willingly and easily makes sacrifices, especially when the trait is inherently possessed. On the level of semantically immaterial actions, it is called *khuluq* (trait); whereas, on the level of material actions, it is called 'behaviour'; i.e. mechanism showing the inherent traits through actions.

It is known that if someone wants to learn driving, he studies the mechanism that runs the car until he gains proficiency and can drive without difficulty. The same illustration is applicable to the character; when the man manifests actions with experience and proficiency, this simply shows that this is his inherent trait. Another example, in case that someone is a jurisprudent and is asked about the ruling for a specific matter; if he spends a long time examining the matter from all aspects, he is still an inexperienced beginner. However, when he is experienced and professed in jurisprudence, he has the trait of being an inherently expert jurisprudent who does not have to toil to find a ruling.

Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* tells them that before they accuse Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of madness, they should sit in pairs or alone and to study his behaviour. They will find that his behaviour is, unlike the insane, governed by rationality and coherence. Likewise, it is impossible for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be a poet because they would have known because they are acclaimed in poetry. Similarly, it is impossible for him to be a soothsayer because fortune-tellers may tamper with Allah's words for a paltry sum. Contrariwise, he is the one who declared his rejection of any power, wealth, or eminence. However, they argued, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'When a revelation is brought before them they say, "We shall not believe unless we ourselves are given a divine) Message as Allah's messengers were...."' (*al-An'am*: 124)

Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughirah privately claimed prophethood within himself. He told himself that he had all the elements to be a messenger; in terms of age, he was older than Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; in terms of wealth, he was affluently rich and as per ancestry, he had a strong lineage. He weighed the matter using the parameters of human beings, overlooking the concept that prophethood is completely different from leadership. Assuming that he exclusively had all these bounties, he did not have the traits and natural disposition of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* granted by Allah. Nevertheless, some of them kept on saying: ‘And they said, “Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

The Quran responds: ‘Are they the ones who share out your Lord’s grace...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32). Allah explains that they share out His worldly graces, but they cannot share out His mercy. There is a difference between mercy in sending messages which is a divine gift and mercy in supplying nourishment and wealth which are Lordly gifts. In this life, if someone is distinguished by wealth, children, and gardens, there is nothing peculiar about him, but this is the working of the universe that needs complementary, rather than repetitive talents. If all mankind received all worldly graces such as lands and wealth, there would be no one to cultivate the land and no one to saddle the horses. This is the reason that Allah *the Almighty* has made wealth alternate; no one has them perpetually.

When people asked Abu Jahl about the message, he said, ‘We have competed with Banu Abd Manaf in honour; so that we became like racehorses’. They said, ‘There is a prophet amongst us to whom Allah gives revelation with whom we will not be pleased and we will never follow him until we get some revelation as he does’. The meaning of racehorses is that when horses were released in a race at the same time, they would drive a stick into the earth at the end of the race and whoever pulls it out of the earth, would achieve a great success. The stick of success is the objective of the competition so that no competitor can claim that the other one scarcely precedes him or something like that.

Allah *the Exalted* says, ‘When a divine message is brought before them...’ (*al-An‘am*: 124), and, in another instance, says, ‘We have brought you a

divine message from your Lord.' (*Ta Ha*: 47) Thus, the divine message, due to its clarity, independence, identity and peculiarity is personified as a human being who is indeed coming and brought before them.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* quotes the disbelievers' saying: '...They say, "We shall not believe unless we ourselves are given a divine message as Allah's messengers were..."' (*al-An'am*: 124). Yet, Allah, in refutation of their words, warns them not to suggest this heresy because '...But Allah knows best where to place His messages...' (*al-An'am*: 124). The message only comes to spread goodness amongst people, but it refrains itself from taking benefit from this goodness. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* has come to convey goodness for others, while he himself obtains nothing from it, whereas, ordinary people firstly want this to themselves and then leave some to the others. For example, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before he died, ordered his family not to receive *zakat* (the obligatory charity) and to give any money left after his death as *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) to the needy. He *peace and blessings be upon him* did not get any benefit from the prophethood in this life, as well as, he did not want to leave any money to his family to inherit; this is the reason that he was entrusted with it. Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* sets His goodness to be for all mankind; thus, the message is a responsibility rather than an achievement. The reward and compensation for Prophethood is not in this life, but it is in the Hereafter.

When Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made the Pledge of Aqabah with the disbelievers, they said, 'Stipulate something for your benefit.' He said, 'I would be deprived of what you deprive yourselves of and you should do such-and-such.' They said to him, 'What is the reward for doing this? You have stipulated for yourself, so what about if we abide by this? What is the recompense?' The Messenger said, 'You would have paradise.' This is the recompense that the Prophet has; paradise for whoever chooses faith, and whoever wants something other than paradise has no place with the believers. Although, he gave them other glad tidings of many things afterwards; he did not tell them this at the beginning because some people amongst them did not see goodness in this life in adopting Islam; they died while Islam was in its infancy and its followers were few. That is why he offered them the reward guaranteed for all of them. He *peace and blessings be upon him* was

teaching them that the pleasures of this life are of less value to be a reward for righteous action. The righteous action is duly rewarded by an eternal dedicated recompense.

Reflecting on their saying, ‘...We shall not believe...’ (*al-An‘am*: 124), it is an insisting statement showing that they will not believe even in the future. They have made up a decision about the future. Allah disgraced them; some died as disbelievers and others become believers after the beginning of the Islamic reign in Mecca. It is amazing that the expression they are articulating is out of agitation; it does not fit with their disbelief. They said, ‘We shall not believe unless we ourselves are given a divine message as Allah’s messengers were...’” (*al-An‘am*: 124). Their saying expresses their bitter opposition associated with stupidity; as they believe in Allah’s messengers and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the seal of the prophets. If they recognise that Allah has selected messengers, how can they attempt to determine Allah’s will regarding whom He chooses?

Although Allah’s messengers did have universal, tangible, visible, and credibly timed miracles, they were not everlasting. For example, whoever witnessed the miracle of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* striking the sea with his staff causing it to split apart, would never deny this universal miracle, so long as he experienced it. However, whoever did not witness the miracle, but rather, heard it as a transmitted piece of information, would notice that the miracle was timed as being suitable to the limited message of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to the children of Israel. Likewise, the miracle of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* when he cured the blind and the leper with Allah’s permission was also limited to a certain time. These miracles worked for a limited time and for a particular people. However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came with the miraculous unlimited message that would remain everlasting until the Day of Resurrection. Hence, miracles are of two kinds; the tangible which targets only particular people witnessing this unrepeatable timed matter. On the other hand, the intangible unlimited miracle of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which perpetually remain until the Hour of Resurrection. This is the reason that made the miracle intangible, conceptual, and perpetual regardless of various nations or times. Nevertheless, they wanted a tangible miracle and another conceptual to

easily deny either of them. Putting an end to the matter, Allah *the Exalted* says, '...But Allah knows best where to place His messages....' (*al-An'am*: 124)

Allah's words 'knows best' indicate that He *the Almighty* may enable some of His creation to know the reason of choosing Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be a messenger. As per the believers of the call of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they did not wait for a miracle. They believed him at once because they used to recognise him as the ever truthful and trustworthy in worldly accounts, so he ought to be trusted with the news from the Heavens. Hearing about the message, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* believed this at once, saying, 'You have spoken the truth'; as well as the Mother of the Believers, Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* who immediately believed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as he spoke of signs of prophethood. Her belief was based on the anticipated early stages of his life, where she set the first example on the jurisprudential derivation in Islam. Before jurisprudence (*fiqh*) was known in its modern terminological sense, Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* originated this science and indicated that derivations of proofs depend on sound, natural, dispassionate and intellectual disposition, which can investigate the matter and inevitably be guided. As Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told her that he feared that he had been afflicted by some illness, or by some jinn, as she contested this, since he maintained the ties of kinship, helped, and supported all people against calamities of life. She said to him, 'By Allah, He will never disgracefully desert you.'

Thus, she anticipated that Allah will never forsake him because of his outstanding merits and the sublime human virtues appeared, before the heavenly message came, due to his sound natural disposition. This first jurisprudential derivation in Islam was the reason of Allah's choice to Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* to be the first wife of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. During this period, not only did he need a supportive wife, but also a mature woman, having a comprehensive sanity to be able to perceive the signs of prophethood, to bring him food when he went to the cave and to accompany him to Waraqa ibn Nawfal. But for his first wife Khadija, no younger woman could have given the first model of jurisprudential derivation in Islam.

As Allah says, ‘...But Allah knows best where to place His messages...’ (*al-An‘am*: 124); yet, they persisted in overlooking the truth even though it made them conclude that he had the qualities of a messenger. Subsequently, Allah says: ‘... humiliation before Allah and severe torment will befall the evildoers...’ (*al-An‘am*: 124). In this verse, there is a transitional breach in the reference; beforehand, Allah refers to them as the most powerful people as they called themselves, whereas, He currently mentions them as evildoers who will encounter humiliation. The meaning of humiliation is not only the shame publicly brought upon them by others; but rather, it is the humiliation and shame from within each one of them such that each of them feels humiliated in front of himself. Thus, this humiliation that befalls man within himself and comes from Allah will never cease because there is no other power that can put an end to Allah’s Preordainment. Hence, constant unavoidable humiliation will befall them, in addition to being afflicted with severe torment, even though they are the most powerful people.

Why is the torment characterised by being severe? It is previously said that torment is occasionally described as ‘grievous’, sometimes as ‘shameful’ and other times as ‘severe’. Man has a physical structure and abstract self; the shameful torment is that which bears humiliation to the self; however, the grievous torment is that which causes pain to one’s physical structure. In terms of physical structure, he is afflicted with torment, whereas, in terms of psychological abstraction, he is afflicted with humiliation. There are people who experience pain but cannot be humiliated; they bear the hardship with fortitude and the more they are subjected to humiliation, the more they regard themselves as noble for having endurance. In this concern, a poet said,

I show my endurance to those who celebrate at my misfortune

Indeed, with the passing of time, I will not become insubstantial

This is the reason that Allah’s Preordainment decrees torment of two types; the first type causes pain to the physical structure and the second type bears humiliation to the abstract self. This is the humiliation and the severe unbearable punishment which Allah does not set upon the evildoers haphazardly, but rather due to their cunning schemes. He *the Almighty* says, ‘...We did not wrong them; yet, they persistently wronged themselves.’ (*an-Nahl*: 118)

Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies that He does not enforce, with His Preordainment, any of His creation in matters of choice within the scope of legal responsibility. He *the Almighty* establishes a framework of this issue in the verse, ‘... “Let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so...”’ (*al-Kahf*: 29). Thus, Allah *the Almighty* makes it clear in this verse, ‘...humiliation before Allah and severe torment will befall the evildoers...’ (*al-An'am*: 124). As for the matter of legal responsibility, He does not punish them compellingly; but rather with consideration for the evil deeds resulting from their own choice. Hence, the punishment and the humiliation were a reward for their scheming.

Sequentially, Allah *the Exalted* mentions an issue causing justificatory argument among some people who have sinned. They claim that this transgression against themselves is subject to Allah’s will. They quoted this verse to support their viewpoint:

فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُ
يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِي السَّمَاءِ
كَذَلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

**When God wishes to guide someone, He opens their breast to
Islam; when He wishes to lead them astray, He closes and
constricts their breast as if they were climbing up to the skies.
That is how God makes the foulness of those who do not believe
rebound against them [125] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 125)**

Someone may ask that if Allah wills to open a man’s heart to grasp Islam, so what about Allah’s guidance concerning the sins of those who are legally responsible?

In response to this, it should be notified that guidance has two meanings. The first meaning is that of indicating direction to the right path; the matter which is desired and required, even for the disbeliever. Thus, Allah’s guidance for the disbeliever implies showing him the right path. The other type of guidance is that of support presented to the believers who deserve Allah’s assistance to lessen the burdens of the commandments, make them passionately abide by all commands and intensely detest and avoid all prohibitions.

Some of the righteous people say, 'O Allah, I fear that you will not reward me for my obedience because I have come to passionately demand it'. The righteous person no longer sees any burden in fulfilling commandments. Thus, he is afraid because he expects to encounter some hardships in fulfilling commandments. Such persons have become accustomed to worship and obedience in a reciprocal attractive relation. He took Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a role model. As Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* noticed that people performed prayers in an inactive laziness when they were called to it, as he ordered Bilal *Allah be pleased with him* at the time of prayer (to call for it), 'O Bilal! Call for the prayer, provide relief to our souls with prayer.'⁽¹⁾

Paradoxically, this concept of comfort is contrary to what some people say nowadays when they perform the prayer, 'Let us hurry up and get this over with'; they perform it as if it is a burden, whereas, when something beyond the scope of reason afflicts those who have become used to comfort their souls with prayer, they will perform further prayers to draw nearer to Allah by way of optional extra acts of worship. This is the reason that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* rose for prayer whenever something afflicted him; i.e. something that humans were incapable of dealing with. Thus, rising for prayer represents a logical matter in times of distress. Similarly, on childhood, we used to go to our parents to solve some problems beyond our means; surely, to Allah ascribed the utmost example of perfection.

Therefore, ardently sticking to the commandment shows that the person has tasted the sweetness of obedience. It may be possibly hard on him because it detaches him at first from what he was habitually accustomed to. By then, he says, 'Indeed, Allah causes this hardship to deserve an excellent reward'. As he comes to ardently desire the prayer as it becomes beloved to him. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave an example when he said, 'None of you [truly] believes until his desires are subservient to that which I have brought,'⁽²⁾ i.e. his desires come in accordance with Allah's commandments, and then he is indeed a sound believer.

(1) *Related in Sunan Abi Dawud*

(2) *Narrated by An-Nawawi*

If the person is induced by the guidance of indication to the right path and he believes in Allah *Glorified is He* then He *the Almighty* will ease his ardently fulfilling of commandments. Thereupon, the people of righteousness conceive that He *the Exalted* deserves to be prayed for more than five obligatory times a day, as well as more than the stipulated 2.5%-quota-share of *zakat* (obligatory charity) because He is the Giver of everything. This is the ardent fulfilment of the commands in Allah's verse, 'Whomsoever Allah wills to guide, He opens his heart to Islam...' (*al-An'am*: 125).

This verse means that He *the Almighty* shows His right path to all human beings, but He will ease the fulfilment of the commandments for those who are induced by the guidance and believe in Him, as Allah says, 'But Allah gives more guidance to those who are guided, and good deeds of lasting merit are best and most rewarding in your Lord's sight.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 76)

This is the guidance of support and assistance where there is a difference between 'being Muslim' and 'having faith'. Faith does not only involve creed; but also, it incurs the self with the requirements of faith. Accordingly, the most prominent figures of Quraysh refused to declare that there is no god but Allah because they knew that these were not mere words uttered, but rather, they entailed fulfilling the requirements of faith that would embarrass them by inconvenient subsequent obligations and prohibitions! The commandment would drive them to fulfil difficult obligations and evade desirable prohibitions. To that end, Allah says, 'Whomsoever Allah wills to guide, He opens his heart to Islam...' (*al-An'am*: 125).

Allah *Glorified is He* opens man's heart to Islam after admitting Allah's monotheism. Afterwards, he complies with the commandments because his faith entails compliance with the commandments. Whoever takes the first guidance and believes in His Lord, Allah opens man's heart to Islam and makes his actions easier as a reward for his faith. As Allah says, 'Have we not opened up your heart?' (*ash-Sharh*: 1)

The verse shows that Allah rewards the believer with this because he persists with the truth; thus, he seeks to know the required commandments. As Allah finds that he is exceptionally prepared to accept the commandments,

as He *the Almighty* makes them easier by making him desire them. He may willingly restrain himself with more requirements beyond Allah's Commandments to seek to be among the superior people of divine manifestation who have affection and desire with Allah. He considers his decreed acts of worship insufficient as compared to Allah's bounties; thus, he increases his acts of obedience as per the Qudsi Hadith, 'Whosoever shows enmity to a friend of Mine, then I have declared war against him. And My servant does not draw near to Me with anything more loved to Me than the religious duties I have obligated upon him. And My servant continues to draw near to me with supererogatory deeds until I Love him. When I Love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, and his sight with which he sees, and his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks.'⁽¹⁾ Allah speaks about extra acts that go beyond the commanded requirements from the stipulated prayer, obligatory charity, fasting, and pilgrimage.

Therefore, the verse, 'Whomsoever Allah wills to guide, He opens his heart to Islam...' (*al-An'am*: 125) means that He *the Almighty* facilitates and eases matters on those who ardently desire these acts of worship and embarks on them with submissiveness. These acts are thought to be laborious because of the persistence of some people with them. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* gives examples in His creation; for instance, wealth is eagerly beloved by humans especially when it comes by a legislative and permitted way through toil and hard work. Therefore, Allah fills the righteous' heart with compassion to give and spend from this beloved bounty.

Indeed, the believer donates to the needy because the needy is a bridge for the giver to attain a reward from Allah. Thus, the believer is grateful to the needy who carries his provision to the Hereafter without any charge; i.e. the needy gives him causes to be recompensed in the Hereafter for his bounties. When a Muslim came to Ali *Allah be pleased with him* asking him, 'How can I know whether I am one of the people seeking for the pleasures of this worldly life or the people seeking for the rewards in the Hereafter?' Ali *Allah be pleased with him* set a standardised measure for assessing faith of every believer. He said to the man, 'Upon receiving two kinds of people; a needy asking for a

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

donation, and a giver coming to offer you something, if you are courteous towards the giver then you are from the people seeking for the pleasures of this worldly life. If you are courteous towards the needy then you are from the people seeking for the rewards in the Hereafter; because the man loves the one who grants him what he loves.'

Therefore, this verse under discussion means that Allah *Glorified is He* makes the laborious aspects of the commandment easier for the believer such that there is no hardship. After that he is elevated to another rank in which he ardently desires the commandment and Allah guides him to Paradise because there is guidance to the right path and guidance to the reward for choosing the path. To this end, the Quran says about those who have gone astray, 'Allah will not forgive those who have disbelieved and do evil, nor will He guide them to any path except that of Hell....' (*an-Nisa'*: 168-169)

Thus, there is guidance to action and another to reward, as Allah says, '...That is the way, Allah could have defeated them Himself if He had willed, but His purpose is to test some of you by means of others. He will not let the deeds of those who are killed for His cause come to nothing. He will guide them in the hereafter as well and put them into a good state. He will admit them into Paradise He has already made known to them.' (*Muhammad*: 4-6)

Somebody may ask: How does Allah guide a human being who has been killed? Is there any legal responsibility after being killed? It is the guidance of reward as per Allah's saying, 'He will guide them in the hereafter as well and put them into a good state. He will admit them into Paradise He has already made known to them.' (*Muhammad*: 5-6) Whoever perseveres in doing righteous actions, Allah rewards him with paradise, whereas, whoever does evil actions, Allah punishes him in the worldly life and the Hereafter, as per Allah's saying, '...And whomsoever He wills to send astray, He makes his chest tightened and constricted as if he is climbing up the skies. That is how Allah makes the foulness of those who do not believe rebound against them.' (*al-An'am*: 125) Someone may wonder: Is this considered an oppressive behaviour from Allah towards His creation? Certainly, this is not the case because Allah has called all people to have faith, yet only some of them do and become worthy of divine manifestations; whereas, others disbelieve and

become worthy of heavy-heartedness. The meaning of 'tight' is that something is too small to carry out its function. When a family says that its house has become tight for itself, this means that the two-room house was relatively spacious in the beginning for the two spouses; whereas, it became tight after they had several children. Certainly, no change has taken place to the surface area of the house, but when the number of individuals increased, they felt that the house had become too small or tight.

There are various derivatives from the term 'tight' used in the Quran in various ways; 'tight', 'tightened' and 'being tightened'. Allah says, '... Do not be distressed (have tight chests) by their scheming' (*an-Nahl*: 127). Additionally, there is the word 'tightened' used in the verse under discussion. Moreover, the third term appears in Allah's saying, 'Is it, then, conceivable [O Prophet] that you are going to abandon any part of what is being revealed to you because the deniers of the truth dislike it, and because your chest is being tightened....' (*Hud*: 12)

It is known that the chest is the place where the two fundamental organs; the heart and the lungs, are located, where life without them cannot go on. Concerning the intestines, they might slow down or partially stop, while man can survive without food for a long time depending on his own storage of fats or flesh. Likewise, he can survive for a shorter time without water; however, he cannot survive without air for more than a few minutes. No human being can leave off inhaling and exhaling.

As previously mentioned, Allah may allow some people to have the right to control other people's need of food, and allow fewer people to control other people's need of water, but He does not allow anyone to control other's right to breathe. It is well known that pleasure and anger are subject to human vicissitudes; thus, if someone is angry with another and he owns his air, he can withhold it from him and the other person will die before their differences can be resolved. For this reason, Allah has never allowed any of His creation to own air.

Therefore, the entire matter is explained in His saying, '...He makes his chest tightened and constricted...' (*al-An'am*: 125). It is known that the chest is the place where lung takes in oxygen and take out carbon dioxide. When a man is afflicted with a cold, he has a difficulty breathing, as if his chest has

become smaller and more tightened, i.e. there is not enough air getting in to make the lungs operate. The doctors diagnose this as being a case where the patient wants to inhale his need of oxygen and thus he gasps for breath because the chest has become more constricted. Likewise, when man ascends a staircase, he also gasps for air because the ascent requires effort to resist the earth's gravitational force that pulls man downwards. Whoever ascends upwards needs strength to move higher and resist gravity. On the contrary, descending the staircase is easy because coming down goes with gravity. If the chest becomes constricted, it means that the space within the chest is not able to inhale enough air that suffices the body. That is why it is said that 'this person has a tight chest'.

In the currently discussed verse, 'constricted' means that the one is prevented from doing something, as if you say, 'I prevented someone from doing something', i.e. I constricted and hindered him from carrying out this work.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...As if he is climbing up the skies....' (*al-An'am*: 125) 'Climbing up' means to move the entire body in that direction with exhaustion. That overtiredness caused on climbing up is due to opposing gravity. This requires two forces; one for doing the action itself and the second for resisting gravity.

This verse shows that man always feels exhausted on adopting acts of commandments because of the difficulties of legal responsibility; he does not embark upon them with ardent love. No one embarks upon the difficulties of legal responsibility except the believer, and he is the one who accepts these commandments with an open heart while remembering the reward which facilitates the difficulty of actions. For example, the scholar who is diligent in his studies calls to mind the pleasure and the fruits of success on himself and his family in the future. As for the one who does not call to mind the fruits of his work, the action becomes difficult for him.

The sky is everything that is above and overshadows the human being, so the atmosphere and the clouds above are among the sky. Allah *Glorified is He* has made it clear that He *the Almighty* has established the seven skies. In that respect, some scientists wanted to use this current verse to prove the veracity of the Quran as being incorporating universal miracles until the Hour is established. They used an emphatic form to demonstrate that Allah's verse is

the first reference signifying that the person climbing up into the atmosphere becomes tired and needs two efforts; the first is for doing the action and the second is for resisting gravity. This is the reason that makes man's chest constricted because he cannot find sufficient air to give him energy.

In reacting to their view, certainly, there is nothing that prevents the derivation of a universal issue from the Quran to prove Quranic veracity, but let us restrain ourselves from connecting the Quran to all universal issues. If we use the commentary of a verse to confirm an existing theory, then the verse is liable to be refuted afterwards by any scientist who may uphold the mistake of this theory in the future.

It is obligatory upon those who are sincere to connect the verses of the Quran with the universal miracles to be attentive in order not to connect the verses to any refutable issue but to scientific facts only. There is a difference between the theory and the fact because the theory is hypothetical and may be refuted. Thus, do not expose the Quran to uncertainties or doubts; do not connect it to any refutable theories, but rather to scientific facts whose veracity has been approved by scientific experiments.

Allah is the Creator of the universe, and therefore there is no contradiction between the Quran and the universal facts. Therefore, you should not restrict Quranic facts to your understanding, and you should be well aware that the Quranic fact remains as pure as the universal fact.

Per Allah's saying, '...That is how Allah makes the foulness of those who do not believe rebound against them' (*al-An'am*: 125) Allah makes 'foulness' to be their punishment. It only comes to them because of their disbelief and their non-acceptance of legal responsibility. Subsequently, Allah says:

وَهَذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيمًا قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٢٦﴾

[Prophet], this is the path of your Lord, made perfectly straight. We have explained Our revelations to those who take heed [126] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 126)

The demonstrative pronoun 'this' refers to the preceding verses from the Quran, which opens the heart to accept faith. The Quran is the bearer of

Islam, and the demonstrative pronoun refers at times either to the Quran, or to Islam. There is no difference between the Quran and Islam.

‘This is the path of your Lord, made perfectly straight...’ (*al-An'am*: 126). The path is straight; it could be twisting in some parts, but it goes straight as a whole. We know that the straight path is the shortest way that takes someone to the sought destination. Thus, the word ‘path’ should come with ‘straight’ to infer the meaning of the shortest way to the sought destination without any obstacles. Similarly, the engineers calculate the dimensions and measure the length of the way, as well as they bring specific tools to straighten and pave a road. The straightness of the road may be exposed to hindering obstacles such as mountains, for example. Thus, engineers either drill a passageway through the mountain to make sure that the road is straight, or bend the road around the mountains to ensure the quality of the road’s construction. This is the case so that the vehicle can avoid obstacles.

However, if the path has been paved by Allah, will there be any obstacle? Absolutely no; therefore, it is a straight path. It is noticeable that Allah says, ‘... The path of your Lord...’ (*al-An'am*: 126), i.e. it is the path that comes as a gift from Allah, the Lord and *the Exalted*. He is the Creator and the Warrantor Who supports His creation in their mission and makes it easy for them. This is the right, paved and straight path granted by Allah, that is, the easiest shortest way driving us to a good ending of life.

In this verse ‘[O Prophet!] This is the path of your Lord...’ (*al-An'am*: 126), Allah *the Almighty* has associated the word ‘Lord’ to ‘Muhammad’; i.e. Allah, for Prophet Muhammad’s sake, has made the path straight because He *the Almighty* is the Lord of Prophet Muhammad, as He is the Lord of the entire universe. Messenger Muhammad is the most important being in the universe.

Allah’s verse, ‘...We have distinctly explained in details Our revelations...’ (*al-An'am*: 126) means that everything in this universe is distinctly created for what suits it, and that Allah has created everything in the universe to achieve its objective without any difficulty or adversity. The path that Allah has drawn is only to rectify the universe and make everything therein suited its mission. All human beings, per Allah *the Exalted* are equal because He does not grant life to any creation in the universe without providing him with the

necessary tools needed for leading it. Every person has a tool, either a talent or an ability, granted by Allah Who makes them as numerous as the number of human beings. When someone wants to build a house, does he learn in an engineering school how to draw a design for a house? Does he learn how to be a technician, electrician, or wall painter? Obviously, the individual cannot specialise in all these, and that is why Allah has distributed talents amongst His creation. This is how society complements itself so that individuals do not overlap one another.

If we were all doctors or engineers, we would not have any benefit to the world. Those, whom we accused of being unsuccessful in education, are undertaking indispensable tasks. Indeed, Allah has created them with limited mental abilities to grant them other abilities suiting their tasks. If the entire society was highly educated, the pyramid would become inverted. That is why Allah has attached every task to the need for it. Whoever being excellently satisfied with Allah's preordainment for him, will be granted all goodness in his work.

It is noticeably remarkable that any employee is subjected to a fixed salary, whereas, the plumber, for example, self-reliantly estimates his work and freely earns his wage in remuneration for effort exerted. The great suffering and toil afflict those whose work is estimated and controlled by someone else.

By examining every issue in the universe kept from the interference of the human being, it remains sound and proper, whereas, every corruption is found in the matters where man poked his nose deviating them away from Allah's path. If we settle every issue per Allah's Law, the universe would be entirely proper and organised. Allah *the Almighty* draws man's attention towards the superior order of the universe from which human's interference is denied. Definitely, man has no control over the skies, celestial bodies, sun, moon, or the movement of the earth, whereas, they work per a superior order organised by Allah. Allah informs us, 'He has raised up the sky. He has set the balance so that you may not transgress the due balance.' (*ar-Rahman*: 7-8) Man should refer everything under his choice to Allah's Law; without any interference, he would find that these matters would be carried out as should be.

Therefore, man should remember how to use the available preliminary measures that lead him to results. Should sound preliminary measures be

taken, he would inevitably reach the objectives liable to natural disposition. The simplest truth he can reach after deep contemplation of, 'Who created you'? 'Did you create yourself'? 'Certainly, you did not.' 'Were you created by some creatures like you'? 'Definitely, you were not'. 'Has any creature claimed – and how many are their claims – that he created you or created your soul'? 'Unquestionably, there are no claims'. Consequently, we, and the entire universe are Allah's creation. Thus, Allah is the Only One Who has the right to lay down the law of human being's maintenance. Further, mankind will remain tired and weary until they become submissive to their Creator.

As Allah *the Almighty* says, 'We have distinctly explained in details Our revelations to people who take heed.' (*al-An'am*: 126) He *the Almighty* does not explain revelations to only one person, but rather, he says 'to people'. Accordingly, when one of believers deviates or is heedless, another one will give an advice to correct him. They have mutual responsibility of reminding each other so that everyone should protect the other from himself. If there is any inadequacy, out of forgetfulness or heedlessness or personal desires, another believer will give an advice to correct this. This is a universal issue; by examining all existences, it never differs. The objective that Allah has mentioned in the subsequent verse should be remembered:

لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلَامِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

They shall have the Home of Peace with their Lord, and He will take care of them as a reward for their deeds [127] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 127)

Allah promises those people who were patient in adversity, were vied in patience with others and were ever ready to do what is right (having prayer, or warding off an attack), by having the abode of peace. The Quranic style brought forward those who deserve paradise for a specific reason that Allah intends. He *the Almighty* mentions them at first to indicate that this abode is specified for them alone and no one else. It is purely specified for them alone on the Day of Resurrection. 'Abode' is the place where man dwells and which contains everything that needed in his stay. It has a slightly broader meaning than the word 'home' which simply refers to the dwelling-place.

The word *bayt* means a place for lodging, but the word *dar* means a place to live in that contains all the necessities of life. Here the word *dar* is affixed to the word *as-salam* which refers to one of Allah's Magnificent Names. Allah clarifies that those who deserve the reward will have an abode of peace which belongs to Allah. Therefore, it is expected to contain bounties and facilities that suit the status of Allah, to Whom this abode belongs. Allah has not said, 'the abode of Allah' because He has willed to mention one of His Attributes that give them the feeling of peace, security and tranquillity. There is a difference between the abodes of the worldly life and this abode of peace; the abodes of the worldly life contain pleasures, but you have two options: either you leave these pleasures or they leave you. Therefore, there is no security in the worldly life because you may be subjected to enmity and hostility or suffer from diseases. All these sufferings disturb your peace and security in the worldly life; therefore, Allah made the Hereafter an abode of peace for the people who believe in Him, and will let them feel secure from all the problems of the worldly life.

"For them will be the home of peace with their Lord." (*al-An'am*: 127) The verse indicates that the abode of peace is not just a promise from Allah of something that does not exist now, but Allah has already prepared it for the believers. Allah *Glorified is He* has created paradise that can accommodate all the believers from among His servants, and He has created Hell that can accommodate all the disbelievers from among His servants. The believers will be rewarded with the abode of peace which has been prepared for them, and will inherit the abode which has been prepared for the disbelievers if they had believed 'Those are the inheritors. Who will inherit *al-Firdaus* (Heaven), they will abide therein eternally' (*al-Mu'minun*: 10-11). Allah has not created limited gardens; rather, He has prepared gardens that could accommodate all of mankind if they believed and has created hell that could accommodate all of mankind if they disbelieved. As long as these abodes of peace are attributed to Allah, they are secure. Then, Allah will not leave the believers in the abodes He has prepared for them without guardianship, He says, '...and He is their guardian because of what they did.' (*al-An'am*: 127)

Allah prepares paradise for the believers and he becomes their guardian. We should note that guardianship in the worldly life is provided through the

means that Allah has created and subjected to the believers. However, in the Hereafter this guardianship will not be provided through the previously mentioned means, but it will be directly provided by Allah to the believers because He will give them immediately whatever will cross their minds. People are not familiar with this pleasure because in the worldly life people enjoy the means which Allah has created for them, but in the Hereafter, no one will possess anything except Allah. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...to whom belongs all sovereignty this Day?' (*Ghafir*: 16) The answer to this question is His saying, '...To Allah, the One, the Subduer of all.' (*Ghafir*: 16)

Allah will guard the believers and He will be close to them to provide them with all that they want to the extent that they will not need to call on Him, but in the worldly life, the believers ask Allah to bestow bounties on them and to keep harm away from them. He will be the guardian of the believers as a reward for what they used to do in the worldly life. People will reap in the Hereafter the rewards of their deeds in the worldly life. Allah gives the believers rewards in return for their patience because whatever good deeds the believers may do will not measure up to even a very small amount of Allah's bounties and will not be enough to show gratitude to Him. In addition, Allah's rewards in return for the believers' good deeds are considered grace from Him. Therefore, Allah clarifies that when you manage to make success, beware of being tempted by your deeds; rather, you must remember that it is a grace from Allah, 'Say, "In [this] bounty of Allah and in His grace – in that they should rejoice; it is better than that which they gather."' (*Yunus*: 58)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained this matter saying, 'The good deeds of any person will not make him enter Paradise.' That is none can enter paradise through his good deeds. They (the Prophet's Companions) asked, 'Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'Not even myself, unless Allah bestows His favour and mercy on me.'⁽¹⁾

Therefore, success is achieved by Allah's grace, provided that one does righteous deeds. A person does righteous deeds and our Lord gives him double

(1) *Related by Muslim in the chapter, Descriptions of the Hypocrites, and this is his wording; Related by Al-Bukhari in the chapter, Making the Heart Tender, and the chapter, Patients; Ibn Majah in the chapter, Asceticism, Ad-Darimi in the chapter, Making the Hearts Tender and Ahmad in Al-Musnad, 2/235, 256*

the reward of his deeds, which certainly, do not benefit His Majesty and do not increase any of His Attributes or Sovereignty. However, He rewards the believers in return for their deeds to benefit them.

Therefore, Al-Razi *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘Doing righteous deeds cause happiness and spiritual ease, which are regarded immaterial matter that exists in a physical form (human beings). Psychological issues affect the physical form; when a person becomes angry, this anger affects his physical appearance as his face turns red, and his body may shake. Likewise, if something that pleases you occurs, happiness affects the outward appearance and is reflected in the facial expressions. Therefore, deeds affect the physical form and vice versa.’ Then, Allah says:

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا يَمْعَشَرُ الْجِنَّ قَدْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ وَقَالَ
أُولِيَاؤُهُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ بَعْضُنَا بِبَعْضٍ وَبَلَّغْنَا أَجَلَنَا الَّذِي أَجَلْتَ لَنَا
قَالَ النَّارُ مَثْوٍ لَكُمْ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢٨﴾

On the day He gathers everyone together [saying], ‘Company of jinn! You have seduced a great many humans,’ their adherents among mankind will say, ‘Lord, we have profited from one another, but now we have reached the appointed time You decreed for us.’ He will say, ‘Your home is the Fire, and there you shall remain’– unless God wills otherwise: [Prophet], your Lord is all wise, all knowing [128] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 128)

‘And [mention, O Muhammad], the Day when He will gather them together...’ (*al-An’am*: 128). The word “yawm” which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse is an adverb of time, i.e., the verse tackles an event. This means that all creatures will be gathered. When we consider the next part of the verse, we find that it does not tackle the event; rather, Allah says, ‘O assembly of jinn...’ (*al-An’am*: 128). This is a vocative case, which requires the presence of someone calling – Who is Allah in this case - and someone being called, which is the assembly of jinn and human beings. This saying means that the Day when Allah gathers all creatures, He will say, ‘O assembly of jinn...’ The word *hashr* means ‘gather’ and the word *ma’shar* means ‘an assembly of individuals who mix and coexist with each other while having all the elements

necessary for life.' The word '*ma`shar*' can also refer to a group of people who share a certain profession, such as the company of merchants, scientists or ministers. However, the expression '*ya ma`shar al-misriyyin*' (O Egyptians) refers to a group of individuals who mix and coexist with each other.

'O assembly of jinn, you have misled many of mankind....' (*al-An'am*: 128)

The Arabic verb '*istakthar*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means 'to take a great deal of something', such as the person who takes or gathers a great deal of money or makes many friends. What does '*istakthartum min al-ins*' mean? We know that some of the jinn are obedient and some are disobedient, and the reason for disobedience amongst the jinn is Satan who vowed, 'By Your Might, I will surely mislead them all...' (*Sad*: 82). Allah clarifies that the assembly of jinn have strived to mislead humans and have increased the number of the disobedient by doing so. At the beginning, the disobedient were only the devils from among the jinn, and then they have attracted some humans to the side of the disobedient. Therefore, they have increased in number and thought that by doing so, they would gain might and dominance because if the humans obeyed their whisperings, the jinn would become their masters; that is what happened. When someone entered a valley, he would say, 'I seek refuge in the Master of this valley from the jinn' and would ask Allah to protect him and his property. However, when the jinn whispered something to him, he rushed to carry it out. Accordingly, the jinn were increasing in number by attracting the humans to their side. '...And their allies among mankind will say, "Our Lord, some of us benefited others..."' (*al-An'am*: 128).

Not only did the jinn benefit the human beings, but humans also benefit from the jinn. Therefore, there is an exchange of benefits between the jinn and humans in contradiction with Allah's law. The first group have tempted and dominated the second as they have ordered them to carry out deeds that contradict with Allah's law, while the second group benefit from the first group as they help them attain their desires in a manner relevant to creed and religion. The second group urge the first to worship idols, the sun, or the moon, and they obey them, as this satisfies their natural inclination towards religious obedience because everyone is created with an instinct to resort to a higher power; when man considers his status and that of other humans, he

will realise that they are subject to changing circumstances. Their statuses change between health and illness, and wealth and poverty, so what guarantees protection for the human from these vicissitudes of life?

A person loves to attach himself to certain powers so that they can support him during the vicissitudes of life. The believers seek power in religion, rely on Allah *Glorified is He* and have faith in Allah while observing the instructions of religion regarding the commands and prohibitions. However, the associates that some people worship instead of Allah do not give any instructions or commands, except that which they consider complying with their vain desires. This is regarded as lying to oneself which does not last long because man does not cheat himself. Faith protects oneself if something happens beyond his means. No one can invoke the sun, the moon, the devil, or the stone because he would never lie to himself. An example on this meaning is Allah's saying, 'And when affliction touches man, he calls upon Us, whether lying on his side or sitting or standing; but when We remove from him his affliction, he continues in disobedience as if he had never called upon Us to remove an affliction that touched him....' (*Yunus*: 12)

Allah says about humans in this verse, "...and their allies among mankind will say, "Our Lord, some of us benefited from others, and we have [now] reached our term, which you appointed for us..." (*al-An'am*: 128). This means that this exchange of benefits has a certain term and will end with the end of life. Then the reckoning of their deeds will begin and they will hear Allah's saying, '...He will say, "The Fire is your residence, wherein you will abide eternally, except for what Allah wills." Indeed, your Lord is Wise and Knowing.' (*al-An'am*: 128)

The word *mathwa* means residence and the word *mathwakum* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means 'your place of residence'. Then the exception in the following part of the verse, '...except for what Allah wills...' (*al-An'am*: 128), was a cause for long discussions among scholars. Some scholars said that it means that Allah has absolute power and will and does what He wills. However, he has specified the misdeeds which He will not forgive and those He will forgive to whom He wills, 'Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills....' (*an-Nisa*: 48)

Here Allah has specified that 'what He wills' applies to any sin other than idolatry which He will not forgive. Some scholars understand from the part of the verse '...except for what Allah wills...' (*al-An'am*: 128), that as soon as those polytheists will be resurrected and gathered, they will abide in hell, but this will happen only after they will be held to account. This exception indicates that no one will enter paradise or the hell until the reckoning of their deeds; therefore, the time of resurrection and reckoning and is excluded from the time of eternity in Paradise or in Hell.

There is also '...except as your Lord pleases...' in the chapter of *Hud* in which Allah says, 'As for those [who were destined] to be wretched, they will be in the Fire. For them therein is [violent] exhaling and inhaling. They will be abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except what your Lord should will. Indeed, your Lord is an effecter of what He intends. And as for those who were [destined to be] prosperous, they will be in Paradise, abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except what your Lord should will - a bestowal uninterrupted.' (*Hud*: 106-108)

The verse shows that there is the exception regarding residence in both Hell and Paradise. Allah says, 'They will be abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure except what your Lord should will....' (*Hud*: 107) The fact that the exception comes after stating the eternal residence in both Paradise and Hell indicates that there is a time excluded from the eternal residence in both Paradise and Hell although it has been indicated that the dwellers of paradise will remain eternally in paradise, and the dwellers of the Hell will remain eternally in Hell. How can this happen? The dwellers of hell will not only suffer from the torment of the fire eternally, but they will also be punished by freezing cold and other types of torment besides the fire. These types of torment also include Allah's wrath and curse upon them, and their dismissal and humiliation. The dwellers of paradise will have a reward greater and more distinct than paradise: Allah's goodly pleasure, as He 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). In addition to paradise, Allah bestows on them

bounties which no one other than Him knows. This is the purpose of the use of exception in this verse, which is proved by Allah's saying, '...a bestowal uninterrupted.' (*Hud*: 108) As for the dwellers of hell, Allah says, '...surely your Lord is the mighty doer of what He intends.' (*Hud*: 107) This means that Allah punishes the dwellers of hell as He wills just as He gives to the dwellers of paradise uninterrupted bestowal.

Allah ends the verse saying, '...Indeed, your Lord is Wise and Knowing.' (*al-An'am*: 128). He is Wise in His punishment, All Knowing of the person who deserves punishment and the extent of the punishment he receives. He is also All Knowing of the person who deserves rewards and bounties and the extent of the rewards and bounties he receives. He is also Wise regarding showing mercy. Then Allah says:

وَكَذَلِكَ نُؤَيِّ بِعَظْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾

**In this way, We make some evildoers have power over others
through their misdeeds [129] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 129)**

The word *wa kadhalika* which is mentioned in the Arabic text refers to the debate that took place between the jinn and human beings, so Allah says quoting the humans as saying, '...Our Lord, some of us made use of others...' (*al-An'am*: 128).

He has not mentioned what the jinn said because this is stated in another verse. Allah says, 'And Satan will say when the matter has been concluded, "Indeed, Allah had promised you the promise of truth and I promised you, but I betrayed you. But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; but blame yourselves. I cannot be called to your aid; nor can you be called to my aid...."' (*Ibrahim*: 22)

In addition, Allah has stated what Satan says in another chapter, 'The hypocrites are like the example of Satan when he says to man, "Disbelieve." But when he disbelieves, he says, "Indeed, I am disassociated from you...."' (*al-Hashr*: 16)

Allah also has mentioned in other verses the sayings of people who have gone astray, '...And those who disbelieved will [then] say, "Our Lord, show us those who misled us of the jinn and men [so] we may put them under our

feet that they will be among the lowest.”” (*Fussilat*: 29) ‘...And thus will We make some of the wrongdoers allies of others....’ (*al-An'am*: 129)

This means that as the jinn have increased the number of the deviant people by attracting some people to their side, and as they have benefited from one another in misguidance, temptation, and submission, Allah causes wrongdoers to be their allies and does not let any righteous people to be their allies. This is because the righteous people’s hearts are filled with mercy and do not have the ability to punish the wrongdoers because they adopt the approach of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the disbelievers on the day of the liberation of Mecca, as he said, ‘Go, you are free.’ Allah honours the righteous people, so He does not entrust them with punishing the wrongdoers; rather, He causes them to see the wrongdoers punishing one another. History has proved this point; wrongdoers have inflicted a great deal of sufferings on one another, but if their real enemies had gained the upper hand, they would have shown them mercy because their hearts are filled with mercy.

It was narrated on the authority of Malik ibn Dinar, who was a righteous person, that he said, ‘I read in the *athar* (narrations from the Companions) a Divine Hadith (Revelation from Allah in the Prophet's words) in which Allah says, ‘I am the King of kings; the hearts of the kings are in My Hand.’⁽¹⁾

The tyrant ruler should not believe that he has assumed power because of his intelligence or strength; rather, Allah has brought him to power in order for him to discipline the wrongdoers. The evidence is that when Allah wills to put an end to the reign of this ruler, He removes fear from the hearts of his guards, and instead of using their rifles to defend him they aim their rifles at him. Thus, no one should think that a king assumes power against Allah’s Will; rather, when the slaves of Allah oppress and transgress Allah causes a tyrant ruler to rule and oppress them. Therefore, it is said, ‘The oppressive ruler is considered as Allah’s sword on earth, as He takes revenge on wrongdoers using him, and He takes revenge on him.’

“...And thus will We make some of the wrongdoers allies of others for what they used to earn.” (*al-An'am*: 129) This indicates that the great evil which Allah

(1) *Tadhkira Al-Mawdu'at by Ibn Al-Qisrani*

causes to dominate the life of some people is due to their misdeeds. One of the righteous people said, 'I know whether my Lord considers me righteous or not from the behaviour of my riding beast. If it bolts while I am riding it, I ask myself about the reason for that and consider my sins the reason for the beast's behaviour'. This is how Allah deals with righteous people; when they commit a sin, they are held to account for it immediately so that their record of deeds can constantly be free of sins. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'There is no trouble that comes to a believer except that it obliterates from his sins, even if it is the pricking of a thorn.'⁽¹⁾

When a righteous person commits some misdeeds, Allah holds him to account for them by afflicting him with an illness in his body or depletion in his wealth, as Allah does not want him to be punished severely in the Hereafter. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'A believer does not undergo (the trouble) of running a thorn or more than that when Allah effaces his sins in the manner tree leaves fall.'⁽²⁾

'And thus will We make some of the wrongdoers allies of others for what they used to earn.' (*al-An'am*: 129) The wrongdoers believe that Allah is not aware of their sins, but Allah will hold all people to account, and will either reward or punish them, depending on their deeds. Then, Allah says:

يَمَعَشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ
ءَايَاتِي وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا قَالُوا شَهِدْنَا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِنَا وَغَرَّتْهُمْ
الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَشَهِدُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَافِرِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

'Company of jinn and mankind! Did messengers not come from among you to recite My revelations to you and warn that you would meet this Day?' They will say, 'We testify against ourselves.' The life of this world seduced them, but they will testify against themselves that they rejected the truth [130] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 130)

We notice that Allah says in this verse, 'O company of jinn and mankind...' because He wants to establish the proof against them that He has incriminated

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad

(2) Related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Ibn Mas'ud

their actions and has set punishments for them only after He sent messengers to convey His commands and prohibitions. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has not oppressed them.

Both the jinn and human beings are addressed by this verse, '...did there not come to you messengers from among you....' (*al-An'am*: 130) Some of the scholars said that the jinn have messengers and human beings have messengers, while others said that the messengers are only from amongst human beings because the Quran states that they said, '...indeed we have heard a [recited] Book revealed after Moses...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 30). Therefore, the jinn stated that a book was revealed after Musa (Moses) which they knew about. This means that the jinn received their message from human beings, and that Allah sent messengers only from among human beings and conveyed the message to the jinn. Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse, 'O company of jinn and mankind, did there not come to you messengers from among you....' (*al-An'am*: 130)

When you come across two people, the first of whom has a hundred pounds and the second has nothing, you may say that these two persons have a hundred pounds. Thus, His saying, '...did there not come to you messengers from among you...' (*al-An'am*: 130) means the humans and jinn in general. It may also mean that the messengers came to human beings then one of the jinn conveyed the message of the messenger to the other jinn, 'And [mention, O Muhammad], when We directed to you a few of the jinn, listening to the Quran. And when they attended it, they said, "Listen quietly." And when it was concluded, they went back to their people as warners.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 29) This means that warners from the jinn received the message from the human messengers and conveyed it to the jinn.

Did '...messengers not come from among you to recite My revelations...' (*al-An'am*: 130)? The word *ayat* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse refers to the miracles that affirm the veracity of the messengers and proofs from the universe that prove the veracity of the messengers. The phrase '...to recite My revelations...' (*al-An'am*: 130) means that the messengers related to them about all the messengers, starting from Adam until Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The part of the verse, '...recite My revelations to

you...’ (*al-An‘am*: 130) is a statement that shows accurate wording relevant to history because the word *qas* is derived from ‘*qas al-athar*’ which means to follow someone’s footsteps exactly without any deviation. Therefore, the story should be inspired by history.

‘...recite My revelations to you and warn that you would meet this Day....’ (*al-An‘am*: 130) It is the day of disgrace on which they will stand before Allah Who will remind them that they were warned against what will happen in the Hereafter. ‘...They will say, “We testify against ourselves.”’ (*al-An‘am*: 130) The life of this world seduced them, but they will testify against themselves that they rejected the truth.

Their saying, ‘...We testify against ourselves...’ (*al-An‘am*: 130), is an acknowledgement against themselves. They will bear witness that they received the messengers; what prevented them from believing the messengers and having faith? Allah answers this question saying, ‘...The life of this world seduced them’ (*al-An‘am*: 130). The thing that causes seduction should be influential; it is described in this verse as being ‘*dunya*’ (literally means ‘most inferior’, but the intended meaning is the worldly life). Therefore, seduction caused by the worldly life is due to the lack of insight. ‘...but they will testify against themselves that they rejected the truth.’ (*al-An‘am*: 130) There is a verse in the Quran that reads, ‘...By Allah, our Lord, we have not set up partners beside Him!’

Therefore, one time they negate that they have disbelieved and another time they affirm that they are disbelievers due to the confusion that will take place in different situations. The statement, “...they will testify against themselves...” (*al-An‘am*: 130) means that their limbs will bear witness against them because in the worldly life man has a will which controls his limbs and abilities enabling him to carry out voluntary actions. However, the involuntary actions are not subject to man’s will. For example, no one can order his heart to beat a certain amount of times per hour or his intestines to move in a certain way, but he can walk to the mosque or to the bar. He is also able to read the Quran or a book of no benefit.

Therefore, man has control over the limbs to carry out voluntary actions while observing Allah’s commands. However, on the Day of Resurrection

man will not have any will over his limbs which will become free. In the worldly life, the limbs are subjugated to man's will and are forced to do whatever he wants, but in the Hereafter they will not accept to do whatever he wants and will bear witness against their owner; the skin, the hands and the feet bear witness against people, saying, 'And they will say to their skins, "Why have you testified against us?" They will say, "We were made to speak by Allah, Who has made everything speak...."' (*Fussilat*: 21)

They will say, '...we have not set up partners beside Him...' but their limbs will bear witness against them and will state all their misdeeds,

Then, Allah says:

ذَٰلِكَ أَن لَّمْ يَكُن رَّبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا غَافِلُونَ ﴿١٣١﴾

Your Lord would not destroy towns for their wrongdoing if they had not been warned [131]


(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 131)

The word *dhalika* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse refers to what was stated in the previous verses, clarifying that Allah sent messengers who conveyed Allah's message so that no one can have any pretext for their disbelief. They will affirm that Allah sent messengers to them and will bear witness against themselves. Therefore, this confirms that Allah would never destroy towns if they had not been warned because before Allah punishes for a sin, He sends down divine text via messengers. This means that Allah will not destroy them for their wrongdoing unless He has sent revelation. '...if they had not been warned.' (*al-An'am*: 131) The word *ghaflah* (heedlessness and the mind's inattentiveness) which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the word is the opposite of *yaqazhah* (heedfulness and constant attentiveness). Therefore, if they were heedful and attentive, they would not need messengers because when Allah created the creatures, He sent Adam to his offspring. Parents should instruct their children about means of sustenance in which they may be creative, they should also teach them the values of their religion, so that the values remain associated with people's lives in the manner the other means of sustenance do.

Why have the means of sustenance survived and we have passed them on to one another and added things to them? Because religion is that which people may be heedless to, as it restricts them by its commands and prohibitions, while they seek luxury in their lives. Why is man keen to further luxury in life but he is not keen to promote values? In the past, people used to drink water from springs with their hands, after which they made cups to use them for drinking, purified the water of impurities, and transferred it from springs to tanks. People are keen to make their life luxurious, but they do not pay attention to the values of religion.

If they had been heedful of their religion, every father would have taught his son the values that he learned from his father. However, Allah has shown mercy for this heedlessness and He has warned them again by His messengers. Whenever the values of religion get lost, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* sends a messenger out of His Mercy, Grace, and Justice and does not destroy towns while their people have not been warned.

Therefore, if they had been heedful to religious values, there would not have been any need for messengers because parents would teach their children the religious values just as they teach them worldly matters. This is the case up to now. For example, a father will censure his son if he is absent from school one day, neglects his lessons or fails. This is out of earnest concern for the son's future, while he has no concern for the son's performance of religious obligations. If people had as much concern for their religious values as they do for their worldly matters, the religious values would be maintained in their lives and they would be accustomed to observing them. Then Allah says,

 وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَةٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ

**Everyone is assigned a rank according to their
deeds; your Lord is not unaware of anything they
do [132] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 132)**

This means that all human beings and jinn have ranks according to their deeds, and this means that deeds differ; externally they may appear to be similar, but they differ in case of the abundance of deeds or according to the sincerity of the one doing them. Someone may perform a deed with complete

sincerity, while someone else may perform it without showing complete sincerity. This issue of sincerity is not defined by regulations or laws, but it is only defined by Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad conveyed from Allah the following Qudsi Hadith (Revelation from Allah in the Prophet's words): 'Sincerity is one of My secrets that I place in the heart of whomever I love of My slaves.'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, only Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* knows the degrees of sincerity, according to which people are assigned ranks. The ranks also depend on the amount of supererogatory deeds the slave of Allah performs; an example, is when the slave of Allah performs ten supererogatory units of prayer in addition to the five obligatory prayers which Allah has enjoined. Another example is when the slave of Allah fasts on Mondays and Thursdays in addition to fasting in *Ramadan*.

If a person performs only obligatory deeds, Allah rewards him according to the degree of sincerity in performing his deeds. When a nomad asked Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the position of the person who only carries out his obligations, he said to him, 'He will be successful if he is true to what he affirms.'⁽²⁾ The one who performs supererogatory deeds in addition to the obligatory deeds will be more successful, and no one can reach the rank of more successful people unless he attains a higher degree. The Arabic word *darajat* (degrees) indicates elevation, while the word *darakat* indicates descent. Allah is All-Aware of the inward and outward intention of the deeds of every slave. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْ
بَعْدِكُمْ مَا يَشَاءُ كَمَا أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ قَوْمٍ ءَاخِرِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

Your Lord is self-sufficient and full of mercy. If He pleased, He could remove you and put others in your place, just as He produced you from the offspring of other people [133] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 133)

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* endears His worship, commands, and obedience to us for our benefit, and out of merciful Lordship. He makes us earning to

(1) Related by Abu Al-Qasim Al-Qushayry in *Ar-Risalah* from the narration of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib

(2) Related by An-Nisa'i and Al-Bayhaqi in *As-Sunan Al-Kubra*

attain His reward and He encourages us to perform good deeds for our own benefit because all our deeds - as previously mentioned - do not increase Allah's sovereignty by a mosquito's wingspan, and all our acts of disobedience do not decrease Allah's sovereignty by a mosquito's wingspan. He created us with having all the attributes of perfection and we have not increased Him in anything. He brought the worldly life into existence from nothing, and differentiated between an attribute that is ascribed to Allah's Essence and the creation of the creatures to whom Allah's attributes are related; Allah has been the Most-Gracious, the Most-Merciful, the Supreme and the Creator even before the creation of His creatures. He has created His creatures because He is the Creator, and He has been the Bestower of sustenance before the creation of the creatures that receive sustenance. Certainly, He has the Attribute of providing sustenance which has caused Him to provide His creatures with sustenance. As He has all these attributes, He tells anything to be and it is, and the entire universe belongs to Him. He has no need of His slaves and to Him belongs the entire kingdom. He also accepts repentance. Messenger Muhammad, *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*, says, 'Allah is more pleased with the repentance of a believing servant than of a person who set out on a journey with a provision of food and drink on the back of his camel. He went on until he came to a waterless desert....' ⁽¹⁾

'Your Lord is self-sufficient and full of mercy. If He pleased, He could remove you and put others in your place, just as He produced you from the offspring of other people.' (*al-An'am*: 133)

Allah continues to bring things into existence out of nothingness proving that Allah's attribute, the Creator exists.

Adam cannot be - by logic - the first creature in the universe,

By inductive analogy, many creatures were created before him. Thus, the entire universe was created before Adam, and it submits to Allah Who subjugated it to Adam as a vicegerent on earth. If He wills He can get rid of the creation and bring a new one.

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari in the chapter on Invocations, Muslim in the chapter on Repentance and At-Tirmidhi in the chapter on Invocations 'Saqata `ala ba`irahu' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the Hadith means 'he found it expectedly'

Then Allah says:

إِنَّمَا تَوْعَدُونَ لَأَيُّهَا وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ

What you are promised is sure to come, and you cannot escape [134] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 134)

As Allah is the only God, when He promises, His promise will inevitably be fulfilled; and when He threatens, His threat will inevitably be carried out. The word *wa'd* (promise) which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse indicates goodness while the word *wa'id* (threat) which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse indicates evil. It may occur that a person does not fulfil his promise or threat because he is subject to changing circumstances, so his opinion may change and he may no longer deem his promise suitable because perhaps he promised to do something thinking that it is within his capacity, after which it turned out to be beyond his capacity. He does not have control over things, but if the one who makes the promise is fully capable, and there is no other god who can oppose him regarding his promise or threat, it will inevitably be fulfilled. Therefore, when Allah gives a judgement, the believer should take it for granted because no deity besides Allah can change the judgement. In addition, Allah is not subject to change, a fact that is proved by Allah's saying, 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too! Neither his wealth nor his gains will help him. He will burn in the Flaming Hell— and so will his wife, the Hell wood-carrier, with a palm-fibre rope around her neck.' (*al-Masad*: 1-5)

This is a threat regarding a voluntary matter; however, they did not embrace Islam. Every Muslim should be confident of Allah's sayings and should never think that Abu Lahab and his wife could have repented and become Muslims, as Hind and Abu Sufyan became Muslims. However, Allah *Glorified is He* always knew what Abu Lahab and his wife would choose to follow, as both had the ability to choose. There is no other god who can alter what He says. 'Say, 'He is Allah the One.' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1) This means that there is no other god to change what Allah says.

'What you are promised is sure to come, and you cannot escape.' (*al-An'am*: 134). Some people think that Allah may bring about what He has

promised, but they may escape from it; yet this is simply not the case. The promise will come and they will not be able to escape, and no one can prevent Allah from fulfilling what He has promised or threatened, and they will never escape His promise or His threat. Also, they will never overcome Allah, or escape from Him or incapacitate Him for Allah is Predominant.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ يَقَوْمِ اَعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَاتِرِكُمْ اِنِّي عَامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ
 مَن تَكُونُ لَهُ عَقِيبَةُ الدَّارِ اِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

[Prophet], say, ‘My people, you carry on as you are, and so will I: you will come to realize who will have a happy homecoming in the Hereafter.’ The evildoers will not prosper [135] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 135)

The word *qawm* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means (a group of people), and it usually refers to men because they are working and life tasks are assigned to them, as the original matter regarding women is that they stay at home to take care of the household affairs. When the word *qawm* is mentioned in the Quran, it refers to a group of men who are related to each other. An example is the Allah’s saying, ‘...let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them....’ (*al-Hujurat*: 11)

As long as the opposite of *qawm* is women, then *qawm* refers to men, and the words ‘*al-qiyam bilmuhimmat*’ (fulfilling tasks) and ‘*al-qawamah*’ (protective care) are derived from it.

A poet said:

I do not know and I do not think I know,

Are the tribe of Hisan “qawm” (men) or women?

‘[Muhammad] say, “My people, you carry on as you are....”’ (*al-An’am*: 135)

The word *makan* means the space which someone’s body occupies. Every organism has a ‘*makan*’ whether in the standing or sitting position, and *makan* is a piece of the land that is occupied and assigned to a certain person. When

you stand in a place, no one else can stand in the same place where you stand, as he must move you from it. If a certain space can only contain one person, then it cannot be occupied by two people at the same time, a fact which is known innately. You also find when a little child with limited knowledge wants to sit on the chair on which his brother or sister is sitting he pulls whoever is sitting on it because he innately knows that two things cannot exist in a specific space.

We also find this outside the visible realm; when we put a bottle in water, we hear air coming out of it because water cannot enter the bottle unless the air comes out. As water's density is higher than the air's density, it presses the air and forces it out. This proves that there is no overlapping between two things in the same place, i.e., two things cannot occupy one specific space. The word '*makan*' also means the space which a person takes hold of; therefore, even regarding armies and wars, plans are formulated by different forces to take control of different spaces.

'...you carry on as you are...' is a saying that addresses the group who opposed the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and adopted the stance of rejection towards him. Allah tells them, as a threat and rebuke, that they will never be able to harm Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He also tells them to do whatever they can do and to persist with the opposition and resistance because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is also carrying out his mission. Their persistence in opposition will not prevent him from carrying out his mission. They act per their capacity and he acts per his capacity and faith which were bestowed on him by Allah. '[Muhammad], say, "My people, you carry on as you are, and so will I; you will come to realise who will have a happy homecoming in the Hereafter." The evildoers will not prosper.' (*al-An'am*: 135)

'...you will come to realise who will have a happy homecoming...' (*al-An'am*: 135). The word *lahu* which is mentioned in the Arabic text indicates that the believers will have the happy homecoming because the other party will receive a bad outcome. As the letter '*lam*' is mentioned in the word '*lahu*', it indicates good outcome, but if the word '*ala*' was mentioned in this context, it would indicate that they would receive a bad outcome. Therefore, the evildoers will not receive a good outcome, and they will not prosper.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ مِمَّا ذَرَأَ مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ نَصِيبًا فَقَالُوا هَذَا لِلَّهِ
بِرْعِمِهِمْ وَهَذَا لِشُرَكَائِنَا فَمَا كَانَ لِشُرَكَائِهِمْ فَلَا يَصِلُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَمَا
كَانَ لِلَّهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ إِلَى شُرَكَائِهِمْ سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

They apportion to God a share of the produce and the livestock He created, saying, ‘This is for God’—so they claim! – ‘and this is for our idols.’ Their idols’ share does not reach God, but God’s share does reach their idols: how badly they judge! [136] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 136)

This verse tackles those who oppose Allah’s religion. The word *dhara’a* means ‘create and spread out’. The crops are called ‘*harth*’ because they are obtained only through cultivation, and the word *al-An’am* (livestock) which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse is represented in eight mates which will be mentioned subsequently in another verse. They are the camels, cows, sheep, and goats.

‘They apportion to Allah a share of the crops and the livestock He created...’ (*al-An’am*: 136). This means that they only cultivated the land, but Allah causes the plants to grow; He gives the seed its nutrients from the soil so that it can make roots to absorb the nutrients from the soil. He also creates all the nutrients that exist in the soil, and causes the seed to take the elements that are beneficial to it and leaves that which is not beneficial, per the following verse, ‘Who creates, then makes complete, and Who destines and [then] guides.’ (*al-A’la*: 2-3) They imagine that they can act freely regarding the crops and livestock which Allah has created although Allah is the One Who has created them and can do what He wills.

They apportion to Allah a share of the crops and the livestock He created, claiming that a share of the crops and livestock is assigned to Allah and another to their idols. It would be fairer and more appropriate that the One Who has created the crops and livestock to make this division instead of them because they have taken that which is not their right to take. Furthermore, they did not give the poor, as a charity, the share which they assigned to

Allah. The other share which was assigned to the partners they worship besides Allah was given to the idols and the custodians who surrounded them along with the servants, and those who drew marked arrows. They did not make a fair division, and the reason is mentioned, '...Their idols' share does not reach Allah, but Allah's share does reach their idols....' (*al-An'am*: 136)

They were not even honest about the share they assigned to Allah. If there was crop failure, they had a specific way of allotment, and if the crops provided a surplus to sell, they followed another way of allotment. When there was a crop failure they would give what was apportioned to Allah, to the partners they worshipped beside Allah, and would say that Allah is free of need. Although they divided the shares, but they did not give the poor the share they claimed to apportion to Allah.

They adopted the same approach when they dealt with the livestock; they counted the number of livestock and apportioned a share to Allah and another to the idols. However, if an animal which had been apportioned to Allah died, they would not replace it. If an animal which had been apportioned to the idols died, they would replace it by taking an animal from the share apportioned to Allah. Furthermore, if a spring flowed to irrigate the crops that belonged to Allah's share, they would take some water from it to irrigate the land cultivated for the idols. Therefore, it is an unjust allotment from the outset, and they did not abide by it. Therefore, their judgement was bad and corrupt.

Then Allah says:

وَكَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ
أَوْلَادِهِمْ شُرَكَائِهِمْ لِيُرْدُوهُمْ وَلِيَلْبِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ وَلَوْ
شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

In the same way, their idols have induced many of the pagans to kill their own children, bringing them ruin and confusion in their faith: if God had willed otherwise they would not have done this, so [Prophet] leave them to their own devices [137] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 137)

They also adopted the same unfair approach regarding their children. The idols they worshipped besides Allah induced many of them to kill their

children. The word *tazyin* means beautification of a certain matter due to strong attraction to it, a process which may be accidental. If the pagans were poor, they would think of killing their children so as not to be poorer; and if they were rich, they would think that their children will squander their wealth and will impoverish them. Therefore, the point is that there was either an actual state of poverty or fear of poverty. Hence, the verses that tackle this meaning have two styles; the ending of the verse differs according to its beginning. Some people may not understand clearly the reason for the Quranic styles used in the following two verses, 'And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you...' (*al-Isra*: 31), And '...We will provide for you and them....' (*al-An'am*: 151)

What is the difference between the two expressions? 'We will provide for you and them' and 'We provide for them and for you' are parts of two different verses. If the beginning of each of the two verses is matched with its ending, we will find that its ending is suitable for its beginning. As long as the beginning of each of these two verses differs from the other, the ending should differ. In the following verse Allah says, '...and do not kill your children in fear of poverty....' (*al-Isra*: 31) This means that there is an actual state of poverty, so the poor people referred to in this verse are more preoccupied with their own sustenance than that of their dependents. Allah says to them: 'We will provide for you and for them.' (*al-An'am*: 151)

Therefore, Allah reassures them that He will provide for them and for their dependents. However, if there is not an actual state of poverty, Allah says, 'And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you....' (*al-Isra*: 31) This means that Allah orders people not to kill their children out of fear of poverty. In this case, they have their own sustenance, and when they beget children, Allah will provide for the children and them. Therefore, the ending of the two verses differ because their beginnings differ. The idols whom the pagans worshiped beside Allah made killing children pleasant to the pagans. This process is very tough because humans innately love their children and love to have offspring, as they understand that no matter how long they live, they will die. Therefore, a person wants his remembrance to last and survive in the future generations, so he becomes full of joy when he has a grandson, as he guarantees to be

remembered for the next two generations. He forgets that his deeds, not his children and love for extending the progeny, will cause him to be remembered. Killing children requires a severe kind of persuasion, as the pagans' associates may persuade them that if they begot children, they would impoverish and humiliate them because of raids and wars in which their nation were engaged. In addition, their children may cause them to be involved in fighting, and they would have two options: either to lose their children or their wealth. If they had daughters, they would be taken as captives after their death. This is an exaggerated incitement for the people to go against human instinct which urges them to have children. 'In the same way, their idols have induced many of the pagans to kill their own children, bringing them ruin and confusion in their faith....' (*al-An'am*: 137)

Many '...of the pagans...' (*al-An'am*: 137) indicates that some of them refused to kill their children and bringing them ruin. And '...confusion in their faith...' (*al-An'am*: 137) means that these associates brought them confusion in their religion. These people had inherited some of the religious values of the religion of Islam which were followed by the people who preceded them. Then, they deviated from this religion and turned towards idolatry. The idols induced the pagans to do some misdeeds bringing them ruin and confusion in the residual religious values they had.

If '...Allah had willed otherwise they would not have done this, so [Muhammad] leave them to their own devices.' (*al-An'am*: 137) This is because burying children alive and killing them contradicts the idea of creation because Allah has created people, and no one has the right to kill any person.

It seems that they are in conflict with Allah's will to bring beings into existence. However, if Allah *Glorified is He* had not willed, He would not have done so. He gave them the choice, per which they carried out everything they intended to do. If Allah had not created them with the ability to choose, they would not have done this because if He had willed for them not to go astray, they would not have done so. Allah has indeed brought into existence living beings that do not disobey Him, and [always] do what they are commanded to do: the angels.

Thus, this matter is not difficult for Allah, and when He imposes His will, it is only for the benefit of the creation. When He leaves man to choose, the

Creator grants him this freedom of choice. Yet, when man chooses, he does not do anything despite Allah's disapproval or in defiance of His will because divinity requires two things. It requires power that is manifested in coercive matters that the servants cannot oppose, and man is the only being that has the right of choosing between alternatives within his own will. As for the rest of the universe, it is under the law of subjugation and they have no choice.

Subjugated creatures are a proof of Allah's absolute power, but they do not prove the creation's love for Allah because love can only exist when the being has free choice. Man prefers Allah's will to his own will. (Yet, unless Allah had so willed, they would not be doing all this: stand, therefore, aloof from them and all the falsehood they invent.)

'*Ifтира*' (inventing of falsehood) means to invent and lie on purpose, and they are intentionally fabricating because they wanted to change the truth of the matter regarding procreation. Indeed, Allah created two mates – the male and the female – for the sake of procreation.

Allah *the Exalted* then says:

وَقَالُوا هَذِهِ أَنْعَمٌ وَحَرَّتْ جَبْرٌ لَا يَطْعَمُهَا إِلَّا مَنْ نَشَاءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ
وَأَنْعَمٌ حُرِّمَتْ طُهُورُهَا وَأَنْعَمٌ لَا يَذْكُرُونَ أَسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِرَاءٌ عَلَيْهِ
سَيَجْزِيهِمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ

They also say, 'These cattle and crops are reserved, and only those we allow may eat them' – so they claim! There are some animals they exempt from labour and some over which they do not pronounce God's name [during slaughter], falsely attributing these [regulations] to Him: He will repay them for the falsehoods they invent [138] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 138)

This is persistence in idolatry; for they divided the animals and crops and allotted a share for the idols. These cattle were secured for the idols and no one could do anything to them. No one could take milk from them or ride them, or use them to benefit people in any way. They did not realise that these cattle were a blessing from Allah and should be benefitted from. It does not make sense to do nothing with animals that has been subjugated for your

benefit. They indeed did this, and the True Lord tells us about them: 'And they say, "These animals and crops are forbidden; no one may eat from them except whom we will (to do so)", so they (falsely) claim...' (*al-An'am*: 138), i.e. cattle that were forbidden to use, and they were also forbidden to ride.

'And there are those [camels] whose backs are forbidden [by them]....' (*al-An'am*: 138) They persisted in disbelief and pronounced the names of the idols over them, 'and those upon which the name of Allah is not mentioned - [all of this] an invention of untruth about Him....' (*al-An'am*: 138)

This is a type of fabrication that they did and they attributed it as being from Allah claiming that He commanded it. If they had said that these matters were from them, then the fabrication would not be so bad, but it is a severe fabrication because they put these assumed rules and attributed them to Allah. They deviated from the religion and said that some of their practices were from the religion, and that is why Allah will requite them for what they fabricated as confirmed by His statement: 'He will punish them for what they were inventing.' (*al-An'am*: 138)

The True Lord says after that:

وَقَالُوا مَا فِي بُطُونِ هَٰؤُلَاءِ الْأَنْعَامِ خَالِصَةٌ لِلَّذِينَ كُونُوا وَمُحَرَّمٌ عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَإِنْ يَكُن مِّيتَةً فَهُمْ فِيهِ شُرَكَاءُ سَيَجْزِيهِمْ وَصْفُهُمْ إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٣٩﴾

They also say, 'The contents of these animals' wombs will be reserved solely for our men and forbidden to our women, though if the offspring is stillborn they may have a share of it.' He will punish them for what they attribute to Him: He is all wise, all aware [139] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 139)

A falsehood leads them to another falsehood. They claimed that what was in the wombs of these cattle such as milk or foetuses if they came out alive, they would be for the males only and the women would not eat any of them. If anything from the wombs died both the men and the women would eat it, and this shows a split in the allotment.

The True Lord concludes the verse with the noble statement, 'He will punish them for their description. Indeed, He is Wise and Knowing' (*al-An'am*: 139),

i.e. He will requite them for their lies and fabrications with a suitable punishment for liars because He is wise in His actions, statement, legislation and power. He is All Knowing of the good and evil that they do, and He will punish them for what they have done in the most perfect and complete way.

The True Lord says after that:

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَحَرَّمُوا مَا
رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ افْتِرَاءً عَلَى اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

**Lost indeed are those who kill their own children out of folly,
with no basis in knowledge, forbidding what God has provided
for them, fabricating lies against Him: they have gone far astray
and have heeded no guidance [140] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 140)**

The purport of loss is that they did not realise that Allah provides sustenance for them and He also provides sustenance for their children. Perhaps a father, killed his child, and he was making a living in the vastness of his sustenance. Many children have an abundant provision and it is said about these children that their faces are faces of goodness, felicity, and blessings (their presence is the cause of good things to happen). From the day they are born, goodness is also born, and this is so that man is not ungrateful for Allah's gifts, for when you show lack of gratitude for Allah's gifts, you deprive yourself from His gift by thinking that it is not a gift, and this is a massive loss.

Indeed, we notice that the Arabs were in an environment that responded to and answered cries for help. Whenever someone cried for help, they would find someone to rescue them, and the first people to help were men and their sons. An example⁽¹⁾ of this is what happened to the grandfather of Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* when he wanted to dig a well. The people of Quraysh came and stopped him from digging and he said, 'If I had ten sons I would sacrifice one of them' (referring to the famous story concerning the father of our prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, having many sons in such situations provides family support and increases the

(1) *The story of 'Abd Al-Muttalib the prophet's grandfather digging the well of Zamzam and his vowing to sacrifice one of his sons*

number of sounds seeking help. This is only effective among people who are naturally disposed for helping others.

If you kill a child for fear of poverty, then you may lose the blessings correlating with the offspring you kill. More than this, you lose the joys of having ancestry as well as family succour. In this verse, at the very least, they have lost because they have gone against Allah's will of procreation and bringing new children into existence. 'Those will have lost, who killed their children in foolishness without knowledge....' (*al-An'am*: 140) *Safahan*, 'in foolishness' means that they acted recklessly and out of stupidity and ignorance. And '...prohibited what Allah had provided for them, inventing untruth about Allah. They have gone astray and were not [rightly] guided.' (*al-An'am*: 140) When they prohibit the cattle that Allah has provided for them as sustenance, they are indeed people of misguidance and loss. If they made use of them they would have benefitted from them, in carrying their loads, providing them with milk as well as meat. Because of their ignorance, they lost a great deal. They did what they did and deliberately lied about Allah. They went astray and they were not people of guidance. It would be sufficient to describe them as 'gone astray' but He added 'and were not [rightly] guided.' (*al-An'am*: 140) This is because going astray means that one is not heading towards the intended destination and this could be due to not knowing the route. However, the True Lord showed them the way and they preferred to go astray even though the path of truth was available.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ جَنَّاتٍ مَّعْرُوشَاتٍ وَغَيْرَ مَعْرُوشَاتٍ وَالنَّخْلَ وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا
أُكْلُهُ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ كُلُوا مِنْ ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا
أَتَمَرُوا وَأَتَوْا حَقَّهُ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهِ وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾

It is He who produces both trellised and untrellised gardens, date palms, crops of diverse flavours, the olive, the pomegranate, alike yet different. So when they bear fruit, eat some of it, paying what is due on the day of harvest, but do not be wasteful: God does not like wasteful people [141] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 141)

In the True Lord's statement, '...causes gardens to grow...', *`ansha`a* means that He brought things into existence originally and there was no previous

example. Allah did not use any illustrating models. He started them without there being any previous model because there is no creator besides Him. If there is no other partner or equal besides the Creator, then when He creates He brings a creation into existence for which there is no prior example or likeness.

The word *jannat* 'gardens' indicates what we know of as a defined space in which there are different kinds of plants and fruits that we eat, and it is called both *janna* and *jannat* because the three radical letters all imply covering and veiling. From these letters, we have the word *junoona* (madness) which is the covering and concealment of the intellect, and we also have the *jinn* who are veiled from our eyes. There is also *al-mijann* (a shield) because it protects man from the attacks of enemies.

A garden is a place that is filled with plants and fruits. The trees tower over from above and the branches and twigs intertwine such that they veil whoever is inside and they veil him from all other places, because he has no need for other places. In the garden, there are all the essentials of life such as food, fruits, pasture, water, verdure, enjoyment etc. It contains everything. Likewise, a massive house that is complete and has all the necessary rooms is called a *qasr* (palace) because it limits your need '*qasarak*' for any other place. Everything you need is there, and you do not need anything else.

'And it is He who causes gardens to grow, [both] trellised and untrellised...' (*al-An'am*: 141). He says, '*ma'rooshaten wa ghayri ma'rooshaten*' (trellised and untrellised). The word '*arsh*' indicates height. The ceiling can be called '*arsh*' and the word '*arsh*' can also refer to a throne '*sarir*' such as in the True Lord's statement, 'And he raised his parents upon the throne...' (*Yusuf*: 100), '*arsh*' is (throne). '*Arsh*' can also apply to kingdom, such as in the True Lord's statement, 'and hers is a mighty throne' (*an-Naml*: 23), where '*arsh*' is (throne).

All of this indicates height and elevation. Here, the True Lord says, 'trellised and untrellised...' (*al-An'am*: 141), i.e. there are plants like grapes that require stands and supports that we provide when we take care of them because their branches are very supple and cannot stand on their own. However, there is another type of plant that stands by itself and we call ground grapes. It is as if the statement refers to vines. If you look at plants that do not have a stem such as watermelons, cantaloupes, and courgettes, you

find, that all other plants that do not have a stem are, spread out on the earth, and they are not held up by any stands or supports, even though, nowadays, we try to elevate them to enhance their ability to produce. The verse here is describing what was present in the Arab lands, at the time of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'And it is He who causes gardens to grow, [both] trellised and untrellised, and palm trees and crops...' (*al-An'am*: 141), *zar'a* refers to the grains and seeds that we eat.

'...of different [kinds of] food and olives and pomegranates, similar and dissimilar...' (*al-An'am*: 141) When we look at this verse, we find that it has been preceded by a verse that contains all these meanings. He says, 'And it is He Who sends down water from the cloud, then We bring forth with it buds of all (plants), then We bring forth from it green (foliage) from which We produce grain piled up (in the ear); and of the palm-tree, of the sheaths of it, come forth clusters (of dates) within reach, and gardens of grapes and olives and pomegranates, alike and unlike; behold the fruit of it when it yields the fruit and the ripening of it; most surely there are signs in this for a people who believe.' (*al-An'am*: 99)

Some people have tried to criticise the Quran by saying that it repeats the same meanings because they do not have the shrewdness to realise that the One speaking is Allah, and He talks about everything for a wise reason. Here, He is talking about these things as a proof of His existence and His oneness, and this is proven by how He concludes the verse, '...Verily, in all this there are messages indeed for people who will believe!' However, the discussion in the verse that we are currently looking at, has to do with taking benefit from them. He says, '...Eat of [each of] its fruit when it yields...' (*al-An'am*: 141)

There is no doubt that having proper faith by believing in the One Creator, Allah, requires evidence first and foremost because its benefit is more inclusive, more general, more profound and longer lasting than eating for example. The most that eating can do is nourish us in this life. However, first proofs give us lasting rewards and abiding blessings. Therefore, the first verse is connected to proof, whereas this verse relates to benefit. Here we notice that He says, '...Eat of [each of] its fruit when it yields...' This contains permission to consume fruits before they ripen without causing any kind of harm as a result;

if so, we should treat it with any way we are capable of, to remove, and negate the harm. Whenever you find food that has not ripened yet, you can eat it. The True Lord has not placed any restriction on us in tilling, sowing, or irrigating. Yet, Allah is the One Who causes things to grow and we are the ones who eat from it. We find that people of the countryside barbecue corn before it ripens. The True Lord says, '...and give its due (*zakat*) on the day of its harvest....' (*al-An'am*: 141)

Some said that the verse specifically refers to crops that are harvested. It does not include plants which are not harvested such as fruits. However, Imam Abu Hanifa *Allah be pleased with him* rejected this and said that everything the earth grows comes under the application of this context because it is not correct to take the meaning of *hasad* (harvest) from custom. Rather, it should be understood from the language.

What does *hasad* mean in Arabic? Linguistically, *hasad* means to cut, and when we split the desired fruit this is *hasad*. However, the harvest day '*yawm al-hasad*' is for grains, when they are still on the ears. Imam Abu Hanifa *Allah be pleased with him* is of the opinion that, from the beginning, you give to whoever is present at the time of division. Likewise, when you thresh and scatter you give, and when you filter the grains you should also give. The harvest begins from the moment you weigh and what precedes it is not counted. Whatever right you give on the harvest day is not obligatory, because He does not state that it is 'a known right' (*al-Ma'arij*: 24). In this way, the sphere of goodness expands to others who are not farmers.

'...And be not excessive....' (*al-An'am*: 141) '*Israf*' (wasting) means to exceed the bounds, and some people have explained wasting as merely an increase, but the truth is that any exceeding of the bounds, whether an increase or a decrease, is called '*israf*', because it is taken from *saraf al-ma'a* (the wasting of water) which is releasing water and letting it be wasted and not used for any benefit. Mujahid said, 'If someone had an amount of gold the size of Mount of Abu Qabis, and he then spent lawfully, it would not be considered wasting, but if he spent a single *dirham* on disobedience it would be considered wasting.'

Therefore, the meaning of '...And be not excessive...' contains two matters; do not exceed the bounds that the True Lord has legislated by using this in disobedience, or do not waste by giving the poor less than they deserve.

Hatim At-Ta'i was very generous, and people blamed him for this generosity. One of them said to him, 'There is no goodness in wasting', to which he replied, 'there is no wasting in goodness'. That is, so long as it is in goodness it is not waste.

If we consider the matter according to the two meanings, decrease and increase, then what prevents us from giving more to the poor? There is a story related to some people who were overcome with generosity, sacrifice, and munificence when they saw the abundance of their crops, and the returns from their land that Allah had given them. They gave a lot as Thabit ibn Qays⁽¹⁾ had done, who had fifty date palms and gave them all to the poor and did not leave anything for his children. This matter was raised in front of Allah's Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and he said, 'Give and do not waste'. Why? It is due to the fear that afterwards you might need that which you have given and thus you will regret having given.

The True Lord then says:

وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ حَمُولَةً وَفَرْشًا كُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ
وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

[He gave you] livestock, as beasts of burden and as food. So eat what God has provided for you and do not follow in Satan's footsteps: he is your sworn enemy [142] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 142)

After talking about His blessings upon us in cultivation and His blessings upon us in livestock, He says, 'And of the cattle...' which are camels, cows and sheep, '...beasts that carry loads...' i.e. those which carry loads '*humula*'. It is also said that a person can be '*hamool*', i.e. he is tolerant and bears a lot of burdens. The True Lord says: 'And they carry your heavy loads to regions which you could not reach but with difficulty to yourselves....' (*an-Nahl*: 7)

(1) *The story of the palm tree of Thabit ibn Qays*

That which they carry on their backs is also called '*humula*', and that is why we say about a car that carry goods from a place to another that it has a load capacity '*humula*' of such-and-such number of tonnes. 'And of the cattle (He created) beasts that carry loads and those which are fit for slaughter only....' (*al-An'am*: 142)

On camels' backs we carry men, and all our necessary things. The meaning of '*farshan*' is the opposite of '*hamula*'. '*Hamula*' are the strong animals that can carry loads. Every other grazing animal that cannot carry due to its small size, or because it has not been prepared for such a task, when you superficially look at it, you see it as something that covers the ground. The statement, 'And of the cattle (He created) beasts that carry loads....' (*al-An'am*: 142) It may also mean animals that carry your goods to a place that you would be unable to reach without great hardship to yourselves. '*Farshan*' refers to animals which you use to make a carpet that covers the ground, by knitting its fur, wool, and hair. 'And of the cattle (He created) beasts that carry loads and those which are fit for slaughter only; eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely, he is your open enemy.' (*al-An'am*: 142)

In the discussion about cattle there is mention of those that carry loads, those that do not; and the fact that we eat them because we consume their flesh, milk and all the derivatives of their milk. This is how their benefits are multiplied. They carry us and we take their *wabar* (fur), their wool, and their hair to make carpets. *Wabar* is the hair of camels and *soof* (wool) is the hair of sheep, while the hair of goats is distinguished by lustre and a separation between its hairs.

We notice that He *the Almighty* says in the first verse 'Eat!' and in the second verse 'Eat!' and that is because it came after discussion about Allah's provision on earth that they had deemed impermissible for themselves, so this meaning had to be emphasised, and He makes it clear, The One Who created is Allah, and the One Who commanded is Allah, so do not declare anything permissible or impermissible unless it is from the One Who created and commanded.

‘...eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of Satan; surely, he is your open enemy.’ (*al-An'am*: 142) Satan is the one who whispers to them to make them contravene Allah’s way, and Satan’s enmity is manifest. If this enmity is from the past - as Adam and Eve *peace be upon them* descended from the rank of obedience to the rank of disobedience after he enticed them to contravene, and thus they left paradise - we must be on our guard against accepting his whispering.

The True Lord then distinguishes for us between the animals that carry loads and the animals that do not. He says:

ثَمَنِيَّةَ أَزْوَاجٍ مِّنَ الضَّأْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ قُلْ ءَلَاذِكْرَيْنِ
حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ نَبِّئُونِي بِعِلْمٍ إِن
كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

[God gave you] eight animals, in [four] pairs: a pair of sheep and a pair of goats – ask them [Prophet], ‘Has He forbidden the two males, the two females, or the young in the wombs of the two females? Tell me based on knowledge if you are telling the truth’ [143] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 143)

The word *azwaj* (pairs) is the plural of the word *zawj* (one pair). *Zawj* refers to something that has something else that goes with it, such as a pair of sandals or shoes. In our customary language, we understand it to mean two, but originally it refers to one which has another that goes with it except when there is no difference between the two; we cannot benefit from one except when it is put with the other, and one might not be distinguished from the other like socks. In cases like this we have allowed for the language to call both together a *zawj*, but if there is a difference between the two we do not refer to the two as a *zawj*.

The male and the female are both human beings, and it is true that both are linked in that each one of them is a person, but the male has a task and the female has a different task. As for socks, either sock can be put on either foot as there is no difference between them.

Therefore, the word *zawj* refers to a singular thing that has something else that goes with it. The True Lord says, 'And We said, "O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the garden..."' (*al-Baqara*: 35). He says '*zawjuka*' (your wife). And the word *zawj* here applies to Eve *peace be upon her* because Adam *peace be upon him* is a '*zawj*' and Eve *peace be upon her* is a '*zawj*'. The True Lord says: 'And that He creates the two mates - the male and female...' (*an-Najm*: 45). He says, '*al-zawjaini*' (the two mates). He does not say that both together are a '*zawj*'. Otherwise, He would say that He created a '*zawj*' that comprised of a male and a female. Therefore, the word '*zawj*' refers to one that has something else that goes with. It is similar to the word '*tawa'm*' (twins), which is never said for two people but rather, for one along with another. If there are two, we say '*tawa'man*' (twins).

'They are eight in pairs - two of sheep and two of goats...' (*al-An'am*: 143). '...two of sheep...' means the male and the female. The male is called a *kabsh* (ram) and the female is called a *na'jah* (ewe). As for the two sexes of goats, we call the male *tais* (buck) and we call the female '*anza* (doe). All in all, there are four, and from this we understand that the word *zawj* indicates an individual that has something else that goes with it. 'Say, "Has He forbidden the two males or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Inform me with knowledge if you are truthful."' (*al-An'am*: 143)

If you are the ones declaring things to be permissible and impermissible, and you say that this is from Allah, then tell us: has He forbidden the two males or has He forbidden the two females? They will not find an answer, because Allah has not forbidden this and He has not forbidden the other. Therefore, the matter is accentuated by being put in the form of a question. When something is presented in the form of a question it means that the matter is decided; such that when you ask your opponent, he will only say what you would expect him to say. This is called a rhetorical question. The True Lord says, '...Inform me with knowledge if you are truthful.' (*al-An'am*: 143), i.e. tell me what knowledge you have of prohibition if you are people of truth because you are not able to prohibit anything. Indeed, only He *the Exalted* Who created and legislated can declare things permissible and impermissible. If you have any knowledge of this, then let us know about it.

Then the True Lord mentions the four remaining types of cattle by saying:

وَمِنَ الْإِبِلِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ قُلْ آلَّذِكْرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ
أَمَّا اسْتَمَلْتُ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ وَصَّيْتُكُمْ
اللَّهُ بِهِذَا فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا لِيُضِلَّ النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ
عِلْمٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

And a pair of camels and a pair of cattle – ask them
[Prophet], ‘Has He forbidden the two males, the two females,
or the young in the wombs of the two females? Were you
present when God gave you these commands?’ So who is
more wicked than he who fabricates lies against God with no
basis in knowledge in order to lead people astray? God does
not guide the evildoers [144] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 144)

And ‘...two of cows’ are also male and female. We call the male a *thawr* (bull), and some people make the mistake of calling the bovine female a *baqarah*. *Baqarah* is the name for both; the male and the female. The *ta`a* in *baqara(t)* is to indicate one. The female is actually called a *thawra*. ‘And two of camels and two of cows. Say, “Has He forbidden the two males or the two females...”’ (*al-An'am*: 144). They said, ‘We have not been following a messenger. We are living in a period in which no messenger has appeared for a long time, and that no messenger has been sent to us’. So, there can be no prohibition except from Allah and Allah will only convey a prohibition to them via a messenger. Were they witness to this prohibition? Did they witness their Lord and see Him when He commanded them with this prohibition, or are they prophets? Indeed, they are deliberately lying about Allah to lead people astray. Therefore, the True Lord does not guide those who wrong themselves and wrong others.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* and then says:

قُلْ لَا أَحَدٌ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلَى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يَكُونَ
 مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خَنزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا أُهْلًا لِّغَيْرِ
 اللَّهِ بِهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾

[Prophet], say, ‘In all that has been revealed to me, I find nothing forbidden for people to eat, except for carrion, flowing blood, pig’s meat – it is loathsome – or a sinful offering over which any name other than God’s has been invoked.’ But if someone is forced by hunger, rather than desire or excess, then God is most forgiving and most merciful [145] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 145)

The True Lord *the Exalted* has spoken about prohibition in several verses, as there is the verse in which he says: ‘Forbidden to you is that which dies of itself, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that on which any other name than that of Allah has been invoked, and the strangled (animal) and that beaten to death, and that killed by a fall and that killed by being smitten with the horn, and that which wild beasts have eaten, except what you slaughter, and what is sacrificed on stones set up (for idols)....’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 3)

In the verse that we are currently discussing, we find that prohibition is restricted to only four things. He says, ‘Say, “I do not find in that which has been revealed to me anything forbidden for an eater to eat of except that it be what has died of itself, or blood poured forth, or flesh of swine - for that surely is unclean - or that which is a transgression, other than (the name of) Allah having been invoked on it”; but whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring nor exceeding the limit, then surely your Lord is Forgiving, Merciful.’ (*al-An’am*: 145)

So, how does this passage agree with the other passage? We say to whoever says this: You are not distinguishing between brevity and verbosity, and you are not distinguishing between the general and the specific. What has been left in this verse can be classed under carrion because the animal that has been strangled, killed by a fall, gored to death or savaged by a beast of prey, as well as that which has been slaughtered on idolatrous altars or as a sinful offering for other than Allah, can all be considered carrion.

Then, to whoever says: 'Is not the Quran the sole source of legislation?' we say that legislation is also for Allah's Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because Allah gave him authority to do so in His statement, '...and whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep back....' (*al-Hashr*: 7)

Thus, do not say that what is prohibited is confined to this verse because there are many forbidden things, and the proof is that sometimes Allah generalises. For example, He declares evil things *khaba'ith* impermissible for us, and every evil thing is impermissible. We said before that blood poured forth is impermissible, and blood poured forth is the fluid that pours out, flows, and emerges at the time of slaughtering. Is there blood that does not pour forth? Yes, and it is the blood that has acquired the ability to hold itself together to be an organ in the body, such as the liver and the spleen. That is why the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Two kinds of carrion and two kinds of blood have been made permissible for us. The two kinds of carrion are the *hoot* (fish) and locusts, and the two kinds of blood are the liver and spleen.'⁽¹⁾ In another narration it says, '...*samak*' (fish) and locusts.'

According to the logic of prohibiting carrion and blood we would not eat the carrion of fish or the liver and the spleen, but Allah has declared fish, locusts, liver, and the spleen permissible for us because they do not harm the body. Fish and locusts do not have any blood that flows so whenever we slaughter them no blood flows out. As for the liver and the spleen, they are made of blood that is formed to be an organ in the body, and no organ in the body that carries out a task is composed of corrupt blood. Rather, they must all be composed of pure blood.

The True Lord who has legislated, considers the propitious circumstances of His commanded servants, and the situations in which they will find nothing to eat but carrion, and in this case, they only eat out of necessity to stave off harm and hunger, but the Muslim must not fill his stomach with these things.

'...but whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring nor exceeding the limit, then surely your Lord is Forgiving, Merciful.' (*al-An'am*: 145) *Idtirar* (necessity)

(1) Narrated by Ibn Majah, Al-Hakim and Al-Bayhaqi from Ibn 'Umar

is of different types; if you cannot find anything permissible to eat, or there is permissible food to eat, but someone is forcing you to eat impermissible food, and force is classed under necessity, necessity urges you to protect yourself in a life-threatening situation, so you eat certain food to nourish yourself and avoid dying out of starvation. If Allah has allowed you to eat carrion if you think you are going to die of starvation, then what about being forced to eat under the threat of being killed instantly? Indeed, this situation is direr. He is the One Who gives and commences dispensations, which means that this is considered a commandment. Allah loves that his servants make use of His dispensations just as he loves that they abide by His rules. So long as dispensations are within the scope of the commandment, then there is forgiveness and mercy.

The True Lord says after that:

وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفْرٍ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنَمِ
حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُمَا إِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُرُهُمَا أَوْ الْحَوَايَا أَوْ مَا
اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ذَلِكَ جَزَيْنَهُمْ بِبَغْيِهِمْ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

We forbade for the Jews every animal with claws, and the fat of cattle and sheep, except what is on their backs and in their intestines, or that which sticks to their bones. This is how We penalized them for their disobedience: We are true to Our word [146] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 146)

Here the True Lord mentions the second prohibition which is a prohibition for correction and discipline. An example is what Allah says in a previous chapter of the Quran: 'Wherefore for the iniquity of those who are Jews did We disallow to them the good things which had been made lawful for them and for their hindering many (people) from Allah's way.' (*an-Nisa*': 160)

Zhufur (claw) is that which is apparent when we look at the feet of certain animals and birds, as there are animals whose digits are clearly distinguished and separated from one another, and these were not forbidden for them. There is another kind in which we find that the digits are not clearly distinguished and separated from one another, such as camels, ostriches, ducks, and geese,

and they are all considered animals that have claws. All animals that have claws were forbidden for the Jews, and they were not declared forbidden because of any harm in eating them but rather to discipline them because they transgressed by taking what was not their right. For this reason, Allah forbade for them some of that which was permissible for them, just as a father would punish his son who has wrongfully taken something from his brother, and thus he denies him his pocket money, even though pocket money is not intrinsically impermissible, but it is denied for the sake of discipline. The True Lord says: 'Wherefore for the iniquity of those who are Jews did We disallow to them the good things which had been made lawful for them and for their hindering many (people) from Allah's way. And their taking usury though indeed they were forbidden it and their devouring the property of people falsely....' (*an-Nisa'*: 160-161) It was because they did all of this, prohibition comes to them as a form of punishment and discipline: 'And to those who were Jews We made unlawful every animal having claws, and of oxen and sheep We made unlawful to them the fat of both, except such as was on their backs or the entrails or what was mixed with bones: this was a punishment We gave them because their rebellion, and We are surely Truthful.' (*al-An'am*: 146)

When you slaughter an animal, you find some fat on the kidney and inside you find something called the fatty tissue, also the fat tail of a lamb. When you cut the head, you find that it contains a kind of fat. The True Lord forbade them from consuming the fat of cows, sheep, and goats. Likewise, all beasts that have claws were forbidden and there is an exception in the case of cows, sheep and goats, which is '...except such as was on their backs or the entrails....' (*al-An'am*: 146)

The fat that is on the backs was declared permissible for them, as well as the fat that is in the entrails. *Al-hawaya* (entrails) is the plural of *hawiya*, or *haawiya* or *hawiya`a*, and it is that which contains the intestines, i.e. it gathers and wraps around. In the countryside, a woman who has a piece of cloth that she twists and rolls up to making a round spiral, then, places it on her head to protect it when she is carrying other things on top of it, will say, 'I made a *hawaya*. *Hawaya* here is the large intestine, and it is about a metre long. Due

to Divine Wisdom, the intestine is in the form of a spiral that revolves around its centre. That is why it is called '*al-hawaya*'. We also call it '*al-mombar*' (in Egypt). Likewise, they were permitted to eat whatever is mixed with the bone in the legs, sides, head and eyes as well as any fat that is mixed with a bone in the buttock because the buttock clings to the end of the tail, i.e. its starting point. It is the molecule in the starting point of the tail at the head of the coccyx. Due to Allah's Mercy, He sends down a punishment that contains mercy, as He permits something and He forbids something else.

The True Lord concludes the verse by saying, 'this was a punishment We gave them because their rebellion, and We are surely Truthful.' (*al-An'am*: 146) This prohibition is not a transgression against them or rigidity in dealing with them, but rather, it is because they acted unjustly, and the one who acts unjustly must have his share of the sanction, so that he reflects on what benefit acting unjustly brings about, and what benefit of which he deprives himself. When he compares between the two he may adjust his persistence on acting unjustly. They had turned away from the path of Allah, taken usury to increase their wealth, and wrongfully devoured other people's wealth. That is why the True Lord declared some permissible things to be impermissible for them, and He is truthful in everything He conveys. We know that the rationale behind prohibiting some permissible things was because of their wrongdoing and disobedience; it was a punishment for them.

The True Lord says after that:

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ رَبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ وَلَا يُرَدُّ
بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

If they [the disbelievers] accuse you [Prophet] of lying, say, 'Your Lord has all-encompassing mercy, but His punishment cannot be diverted from the evildoers' [147] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 147)

It was necessary, when they denied you regarding what you had conveyed to them from Allah, that Allah would hasten their punishment. Yet, the True Lord did not do so because He is the Lord of All-Encompassing Mercy. '...say: "Your Lord is the Lord of All-encompassing mercy..."' (*al-An'am*: 147)

However, beware of greedily desiring constant mercy; it is only a mercy of deferment. His punishment will never escape you. Here, He is also softening their hearts because He is saying, ‘...All-Encompassing Mercy...’ It is as if He is saying to them, ‘Check yourselves, have shame before Allah, and do not delude yourselves from the fact that he is the Lord’. He created out of nothing, provided out of nothing, He is in charge of educating, and disciplining you, but His punishment and chastisement will not be withheld from the criminals that are amongst you.

He *the Glorified* says after that:

سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ
كَذَلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّى ذَاقُوا بَأْسَنَا قُلْ هَلْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِنْ
عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ لَنَا إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

The idolaters will say, ‘If God had willed, we would not have ascribed partners to Him – nor would our fathers – or have declared anything forbidden.’ In the same way, those before them continually denied [the truth] until they tasted Our punishment. Say, ‘Have you any knowledge that you can show us? You follow only supposition and tell only lies’ [148] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 148)

Whenever you read a verse that contains the words ‘will say’, then know that it comprises one of the Quran’s inimitable secrets, and the one who this secret is conveyed through is an opponent, so that you know how the enemy of Allah conveys proof of Allah’s veracity, which would indicate that he is in a state of heedlessness. In a previous verse, the True Lord says: ‘The fools among the people will say...’ (*al-Baqara*: 142). The meaning of ‘will say’ is that they do not say this now. The Quran tells that they will say it, and the Quran does not hide or conceal this verse. Rather, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed it as part of the Quran that is read and recited in prayer. If they had reflected on the matter they would have concealed the statement so that they could show that the one conveying and reciting the Quran did not tell the truth, or at least say, ‘he said, “The fools among the people will say”, but we are not fools and we do not say this’. But they uttered this foolish statement even though the verse preceded them by informing that

they will say it because the One informing is Allah and no one from Allah's creation can take precautions to find fault with Allah's veracity. They heard these words from the Quran, and despite that they did not remain silent. Rather, the words just slipped their tongues, to corroborate the Quran.

Every individual who sins beyond measure against himself by not following Allah's way says, 'Indeed, our Lord is the One Who guides and He is the One Who leads astray'. They say this out of disdain and insolence to justify their foolish deeds. Those who sin beyond measure against themselves as well as the polytheists will go on saying this and they will try to make permissible what Allah has prohibited. The polytheists raised two issues: one issue regarding faith and another issue regarding the onus. They said, regarding the issue of faith, 'If Allah had pleased we would not have associated [anything with Allah]...' (*al-An'am*: 148) as if they had associated with Allah's will. They said about what they prohibited though Allah had made permissible, that what they did was also out of Allah's will, to excuse themselves. This statement is illogical because if it were logical, it would have to apply to both good and evil. Someone could say, 'Our Lord foreordained for us – and we seek refuge in Allah – that we would do evil, so why should he punish me'? This person will never say, 'Allah foreordained for me to do goodness'. This is what logic would assume and require, but they are only talking about evil and not saying anything about goodness.

Their statement, 'If Allah had pleased we would not have associated [anything with Allah]...' (*al-An'am*: 148) is correct in meaning because if He had willed that all mankind be guided to the right path, He would have done so, but He willed for us to have the ability to choose and within the framework of this choice, no matter goes beyond His universal will. It is disbelief and evil actions that are outside of His legislative will, and we know from before that there is a difference between the universal and the legislative. The disbeliever's disbelief does not take place forcibly and coercively against Allah's will. Rather, it occurs simply due to free will that Allah has allowed for man, for man is capable of choosing among various options.

Let '...him who so pleases believe, and let him who so pleases disbelieve...' (*al-Kahf*: 29). Man can direct the energy that Allah had granted him towards

goodness or towards evil. Thus, either man's choice will bring him to faith or it will lead him to disbelief. Therefore, the True Lord says about those who claim that their disbelief is out of His will: '...even so did those before them reject until they tasted Our punishment...' (*al-An'am*: 148). Those who had come before them had said this and they had denied the truth just as these people denied the truth, and a severe punishment and chastisement had come to them from Allah. Therefore, the True Lord commands Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* '...Say, "Have you any knowledge with you so you should bring it forth to us? You only follow a conjecture and you only tell lies."' (*al-An'am*: 148)

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked them for some knowledge to confirm the truthfulness of what they were claiming, i.e. 'do you have something that Allah has conveyed to you'? The truth is that they do not have any knowledge and they do not have any proof. They are merely following conjecture and guessing; i.e. what they are saying does not have any clear purport. It is just guessing, conjecturing, and lying. He then says:

قُلْ لِلَّهِ الْحُجَّةُ الْبَلِيغَةُ فَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَيْتُكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾

Say, 'The conclusive argument belongs to God alone.
Had He so willed He would have guided you all' [149]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 149)

Certainly, if Allah *the Glorified* had so willed, He would have forced them to be guided and not even one of them would have been able to escape this guidance, but He did not will that. Rather, Allah wanted people to have faith in Him and follow His commandments as part of their (granted by Allah) ability to choose. He created creatures who 'they do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded.' (*at-Tahrim*: 6) Has He not created a universe that is entirely under His command? 'Say, "Then Allah's is the final evidence (of all truth)..." (*al-An'am*: 149).

Al-hujja (the final evidence) is the proof you establish to support what you say in a dispute, and that is why we call our contracts *hujjat al-milkiyyah* (the evidence that proves our possession of something), or the 'final evidence' is that which can never be penetrated or have its purport negated by anything.

The True Lord says after that:

قُلْ هَلُمُّ شُهَدَاءَكُمْ الَّذِينَ يَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ هَذَا فَإِنْ شَهِدُوا
فَلَا تَشْهَدْ مَعَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِعَايِنَتِنَا وَالَّذِينَ
لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

Say, 'Bring your witnesses to testify that God has forbidden all this.' If they do testify, do not bear witness with them. Do not follow the whims of those who have denied Our revelation, who do not believe in the Hereafter, and who set up equals with their Lord [150] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 150)

If you do not possess any knowledge, then it is possible that you have witnesses to what you are saying. The statement, '*halumma shuhada'kom*' 'Bring your witnesses', is addressed to a group, and the verb *halumma* (bring) equally applies to the masculine singular, the feminine singular, the masculine and feminine dual and the masculine and feminine plural. Thus, we can say, '*halumma* (Bring yourself to me) O Zayd!', or '*halumma* (Bring yourself to me) O Hind!' You can also say '*halumma*' to a group of males or to a group of females, and this is the language of the people of the Hijaz. It is different from the language of the tribe of Banu Tamim, who add to this verb by saying, '*halumma* O man!' and '*halumma* O woman!', as well as '*halumma*' (masculine and feminine dual), '*halummu*' (masculine plural) and '*halumamna*' (feminine plural). The Quran was sent down in the language of the Hijazi people of Quraysh. The True Lord says, '*halumma*' (bring) your witnesses that He has prohibited this. Indeed, you have no knowledge and, likewise, you have no witnesses to what you are claiming. If you do have witnesses then bring them.

What if they bring false witnesses? Indeed, He warns His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and makes it clear to him that even if they do bring witnesses, he should be wary of believing them because they are liars.

It is as if Allah wants to shame the witnesses as well in front of the audience before whom the witnessing will take place, and He also introduces

two issues. He refutes and invalidates their argument, and He disgraces the witnesses that they brought. It is as if He says, 'Bring these people who said this to you', and thus shames those who dictated these orders on them.

The True Lord commands Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not to follow those who have denied His signs *Glorified is He*. The word *ahwa`a* (vain desires) is the plural of *hawa* and it is that which ripens in the mind to turn man away from the truth. Thus, it is desires that cause the mind to deviate from the truth. '...and follow not the low desires of those who reject Our communications and of those who do not believe in the hereafter....' (*al-An'am*: 150)

They do not only deny Allah's signs, but they also do not believe in the Hereafter because if they had believed in the Hereafter, they would have known that they would be requited with a punishment that is appropriate for their crimes. If they understood this matter, it would have prevented them from yielding to their vain desires.

The True Lord concludes the verse with His noble statement, '...and they make (others) equal to their Lord.' (*al-An'am*: 150) We understand that the word *ya`dil* (regard as equal) is from *`adl*, meaning justice. If it is said that someone '*adala*' in such-and-such, or someone '*adala*' between so-and-so, or '*adala* in giving a verdict, or '*adala* in such-and-such, it means that he made it equal and equivalent. This meaning appears in another verse in which the True Lord says: 'All praise is due to Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth and made the darkness and the light; yet those who disbelieve set up equals with their Lord.' (*al-An'am*: 1)

They make that which is not equal to Allah be equal and equivalent to Allah. This is what was done by those who associated partners with Allah and the same goes for those who do not believe in Allah. One of them turns away in relinquishment of his Lord and he inclines and turns away from him, associates partners with Him and regards others as equal to Him. We notice that in the articulation of the word *tawhid* (monotheism), which is, 'there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah', we must not stop at 'there is no deity' because this would be a denial and negation of the existence of any God, and this - we seek refuge in Allah - is disbelief. Therefore, we must connect it to

that which comes after it by saying, 'there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah'. Or, when we utter the words 'there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah', our hearts have firm belief in His Oneness and the attributes of Majesty and Perfection that are due Him *the Almighty*. The meaning of 'there is deity worthy of worship but Allah' is that none deserves to be worshipped except Allah because those that are wrongly worshipped are many such as the idols, the stars, the jinn, human beings, angels and others.

The phrase '...and they make (others) equal to their Lord' (*al-An'am*: 150) indicates that they are people of idolatry. Likewise, whoever denies Allah's existence is also regarding others as equal to Our Lord and is turning and deviating from acknowledging Him as a God.

The True Lord says after that:

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّي عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا
وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ ۖ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ
وَأَيْسَاهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنٌ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا
الْأَنْفُسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ ۖ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ذَلِكُمْ وَصَّيْتُكُمْ بِهِ ۖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾

Say, 'Come! I will tell you what your Lord has really forbidden you. Do not ascribe anything as a partner to Him; be good to your parents; do not kill your children in fear of poverty' – We will provide for you and for them – 'stay well away from committing obscenities, whether openly or in secret; do not take the life God has made sacred, except by right. This is what He commands you to do: perhaps you will use your reason [151]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 151)

When we consider this verse, we find that what is forbidden does not include any of the foods that contain the essentials of life. However, we find that it contains forbidden things that if we follow, we will ruin our abstract values that are the essentials of our spiritual life. Indeed, they are values which are the essentials of life: 'Say, "Come, I will recite what your Lord has (really) forbidden to you"' (*al-An'am*: 151). Here the Quranic rendering uses the expression *ta'al* (come) which goes deeper than the direct meaning of the

word which is 'coming'. It is as if the True Lord says, 'Come to Me as someone who wants to come to elevate himself by receiving My commands would do'. You approach Allah's commands to be raised and elevated above the state of decay of human legislations. Do not take your laws from the decay of human legislation because the necessary condition for the Legislator is that he must not be equal to the one He is legislating for. Otherwise, He stands to benefit from some of what he has legislated. Furthermore, it is a must that He be all encompassing so that He would miss nothing or overlook it. The created legislator does not legislate unless he is fully mature and his intellect is fully developed, and he is not able to prevent himself from benefitting from the legislation.

A capitalist, for example, legislates to derive benefit. A Marxist legislates to derive benefit, and each of them legislates with bearing his own personal desires in mind. Afterwards, legislations are amended when we notice that they have become insufficient and do not cover all the issues of life. It is as if the first legislator, due to the inadequacy of his knowledge, was unaware of certain realities that society revealed when issues came up. He looked at his statute and found that there was nothing covering those issues, so he says, 'We will amend the law and correct it'. Correcting the law means that there was something that he was unaware of when he made the law.

Therefore, it is necessary for the legislator not to be equal to the one he is legislating for, and no issue should be hidden from him so that he would have to supplement it later. Furthermore, he should not stand to benefit from the legislation, and this is never found amongst human beings. The True Lord made it clear, 'Leave the state of decay of human legislation, and elevate yourselves to the heavens to take your legislation from it'. When Allah calls, 'Come...', He is telling us to raise ourselves above the decay of our human legislation and to take our legislation for our daily activities from above because He does not benefit from what He has legislated, but rather, we are the ones who benefit. This is because nothing is hidden from Him. He is the Creator and He is the most entitled to legislate us.

'Say, "Come, I will recite what your Lord has (really) forbidden to you..."'
(*al-An'am*: 151). *'Atlu* (recite) is from the word *tilawa* (recitation) '...what

Allah has (really) forbidden to you...’, i.e. what He has made impermissible or what is forbidden for you to do “...that you do not associate anything with Him...” (*al-An‘am*: 151). Here Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the prohibition of polytheism, by way of a linguistic arrangement that affirms to us that we should not associate partners with Him. When you give orders to someone you oversee you say, ‘Listen to what I forbid you from doing, and follow my rules’. Then, you will start going into detail. The True Lord mentions the first clause of that which is forbidden and prohibited which is that we must not associate anything with Him. He conveys to us the prohibition of polytheism. This is the first thing to be prohibited. We must declare Allah to be One. Every prohibition of something is a command to do the opposite and every command is a prohibition to do the opposite. Thus, every command necessitates a prohibition and every prohibition necessitates a command. So, do not confuse commands and prohibitions. The meaning of ‘*alaykum*’ (‘to you’) is actually ‘upon you’ and it is the beginning of a new sentence, i.e. it is obligatory upon you not to associate anything with Him, and it is obligatory upon you to show kindness to your parents, and not to slay your children, and not to draw nigh to indecencies etc., i.e. adhere to this.

Then He says, ‘...and show kindness to your parents...’ (*al-An‘am*: 151). Here, He commands with emphasis that parents must be treated with goodness, and as it is an affirmative command, it necessitates that the opposite is prohibited which is to show disrespect to parents. Not showing goodness to parents is part of what Allah has prohibited. Then He says, ‘...and do not slay your children for (fear of) poverty - We provide for you and for them...’ (*al-An‘am*: 151).

Preserve the lives of your children. If you want to consider it as a prohibition, then it is a prohibition of killing children. If you want to consider it an affirmative command, then say, ‘preserve life’. The statement ‘...for (fear of) poverty...’, means impoverishment, as if they are poor and poverty is present, man will work to provide for himself before working to provide for those who come after him. So, to the people of poverty, remember that Allah shall provide sustenance for you and He will provide sustenance for those who come afterwards, and these are the children.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and do not draw nigh to indecencies, those of them which are apparent and those which are concealed...’ (*al-An'am*: 151). This is a prohibition against approaching or even drawing near to accompanying circumstances and situations that could lead to the action. It is not just a prohibition of the action itself. When Allah wanted to forbid Adam and his wife *peace be upon them* from eating from the tree He says, ‘...but do not go near this tree...’ (*al-A'raf*: 19).

This is because going near or approaching the tree could lead to eating from it. The same goes for ‘...and do not draw nigh to indecencies...’ (*al-An'am*: 151), i.e. avoid antecedents that lead to indecencies, by having a glance or even staring at that which is forbidden. The same applies for the woman who adorns herself - in front of men other than her husband and unmarriedable kin - for indeed, by doing so, she approaches antecedents that lead to indecencies. If she refrains from this, she will be safe from tribulation and committing sins. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘What is lawful is clear and what is unlawful is clear, but between them are certain doubtful things which many people do not know. So, he who guards against doubtful things keeps his religion and his honour blameless. But he who falls into doubtful things falls into that which is unlawful, just as a shepherd who grazes his cattle near a pasture declared prohibited by the ruler; he is likely to stray into the pasture. Mind you, every ruler has a protected pasture and Allah's involved limits are those which He has declared unlawful. Verily, there is a piece of flesh in the body, if it is healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Verily, it is the heart.’⁽¹⁾

The True Lord is prohibiting you. (Do not approach) means to distance yourself from situations in which things will entice you, and this is similar to ‘shun’ totally. He says, ‘So shun the abomination (worshipping) of idol, and shun lying speech.’ (*al-Hajj*: 30) Here Allah says, ‘And do not approach immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed.’ (*al-An'am*: 151) All shameful deeds that are manifest are the actions of the limbs that commit

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nisa'i and Ibn Majah* from *Nu'man ibn Bashir*

grave sins while 'concealed' refers to hidden actions such as hatred, rancour, and envy.

He continues, '...And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right.' (*al-An'am*: 151) People differ over the meaning of the word soul which can only refer to the spirit encountering the material. The spirit, in its essence, is a good thing, and the material in its essence is a good thing that glorifies and worships 'And there is not a thing except that it exalts [Allah] by His praise.' (*al-Isra*': 44)

Life starts when both the material and the soul meet, which makes the killing a mean that separates the spirit from the material by destroying the physical structure; and this is not death because Allah is the One Who causes the soul to die, whereas man kills the soul by means of killing the material structure [preserving] it. The One Who grants life is Allah and no one takes life except Him. Allah legislated for us to take life as retribution, or for adultery, married men, or women or for apostasy. This is killing in pursuit of justice, but He curses those who destroy what Allah has built without right. Man is what Allah has built, so do not transgress against it. Therefore, Allah has commanded us to take retribution for someone killing someone else so that everyone protects his own life, and when man protects every life, he himself is safe and secure.

This is how Allah commands us to kill the married adulterer, whether a male or a female. The same goes for the apostate. We are vigilant over freedom of belief, and the proof is that we do not kill an original disbeliever for their disbelief. However, the individual must understand that having faith in Islam requires that he studies it exhaustively and sufficiently, and he must know that his life is inviolable so long as he does not leave this religion. If he knows this, he will never enter it unless he is absolutely convinced. We defend choice, and we declare to whoever approaches Islam, 'Beware of entering with merely an outward statement without understanding the meaning of Islam because if you enter and then apostate, you will be killed'. If the price of something is life, the individual must be extremely cautious. Furthermore, we are also confident that whenever an individual researches and studies the evidence they will become convinced that they truly have Allah, but we do not kill a disbeliever that has not entered Islam.

Therefore, killing the apostate is protecting the sanctuary of choice. So, beware of entering without deliberation because if you enter and then apostate, you will be killed. With this, the True Lord settles the matter in a way that it makes it necessary for the one approaching Islam to consider all the arguments and then enter having this knowledge. In any contract the individual attempts to know his obligations and to have these obligations made clear to him. He does not enter the religion in a foolhardy, thoughtless, or hasty manner. Rather, it is necessary for him to enter it unhurriedly and with deliberation.

In the case of marriage, the individual enters it with a simple phrase and exits with a simple phrase, which is 'you are divorced'. For this reason, the woman is cautious, and as long as she knows that the continuance of her marriage is the security of a simple phrase, then she must be careful not to put this right except in the hands of someone who is trustworthy. When her father says to her, 'Listen to me. It is for you to choose a husband who will honour you if he loves you and if he does not like you, he will not oppress you'; married life comes to an end with a simple phrase. Therefore, the woman must think about someone who can be trusted with this simple phrase.

Considering all this, there is still a caution against heedlessness. A man marries with a simple phrase and it is only said once. However, in the case of divorce, there are three stages; so watch out for heedlessness. A man marries a woman with a simple phrase, 'I marry you to myself', or her guardian marries her off and the husband accepts; by then, the marriage contract is completed. However, in the case of divorce, Allah has allowed, due to man's heedlessness and thoughtlessness, to divorce once and then overturn the decision without anyone coming in between them. Then he can give a second divorce and overturn it, but after the third divorce he finds the notice from the True Lord, 'We have made provisions for you by watching out for your heedlessness, but now if you want her to be your wife this cannot happen unless she marries someone else; and after that, she may go back to you or she may stay with whomever she has married'. Thus, you must be very careful with the matter you are embarking upon and the contract to which you are bound. If this is the case with contracting a marriage, then what about it regarding apostasy? Indeed, killing the apostate is only observable after he has believed, declared

his faith, and become one of the believers, so that he knows that if he abandons Islam, he will be killed. In this way, entering Islam is made difficult and at the same time choice is defended.

He continues, ‘...This has He instructed you that you may use reason.’ (*al-An‘am*: 151) The instruction is only for important matters without which life cannot be carried out properly. They are the main issues that cannot be neglected. This is why when we look at the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*, we find he spent twenty-three years receiving revelation and conveying it to the people on earth. He then went to his farewell pilgrimage, and he concentrated all the principles of the religion within His statement, ‘This has He instructed you that you may use reason.’

‘Instructed’ is not the same as legislating because legislating requires full coverage of all related details, while instruction includes the main issues of the legislation. The intellect must comprehend the matter from the beginning to the end, and if you used your intellect regarding everything that is prohibited or commanded in the verse, you will find discernment giving you balance in decisions. The True Lord concluded the five things that He mentioned in this verse with, ‘This has He instructed you that you may use reason.’ These matters are agreed upon amongst all divine messages and amongst all religions, and they call them ‘The Ten Commandments’.

The five things that He enjoined are:

- Do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to others beside Him.
- Do good unto your parents.
- Do not kill your children for fear of poverty.
- Do not approach any shameful deeds, be they open or secret.
- Do not take any human being’s life – [the life] which Allah has declared to be sacred – except in the pursuit of justice.

We would expect Him to have said, ‘These things have He instructed you’ but He said, ‘this has He instructed you’, as if all of Allah’s commands and prohibitions are one inseparable entity and all of them are embodied in ‘adhere to what Allah has commanded and shun what Allah has prohibited’.

His statement, 'that you may use reason', means that if intellect was free to consider these things, independent of the way of the heavens, it would find that life on earth requires the existence of these things.

Therefore, how do we prevent people's personal desires from clashing? There must be one Allah so that everyone does not follow his/her own personal desires. Indeed, we know that the origin of man is from the father and the mother. That is why He enjoined regarding this origin by saying, 'and to parents, good treatment.' He enjoined that we do not kill children for fear of poverty because life continues through them. After that life must be clean and pure for all individuals and must never be contaminated by filth; and this can only happen when we leave off shameful deeds, open or secret. This is because we notice that all illegitimate children are neglected. The True Lord wants progeny to be pure in life so that everyone bears responsibility for their lineage and they are reckoned for it in front of society. He warns us against taking a human life without right because the soul is the source of life's perpetuation.

Then the True Lord, in the following verse, mentions that which completes the enjoinsments:

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ. وَأَوْفُوا بِالْكَيْلِ
وَالْمِيزَانِ بِالْقِسْطِ لَا تُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا
قُرْبَىٰ وَبِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ أَوْفُوا ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّيْكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

Stay well away from the property of orphans, except with the best [intentions], until they come of age; give full measure and weight, according to justice' – We do not burden any soul with more than it can bear – 'when you speak, be just, even if it concerns a relative; keep any promises you make in God's name. This is what He commands you to do, so that you may take heed' [152] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 152)

We know that the orphan is the one who has lost their father and has not yet become an adult, and this is the case with man. As for an orphaned animal, it is the one that has lost its mother. The True Lord says, 'And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best...'.

Allah *the Exalted* presupposes that the orphan has wealth and He did not say, 'Do not consume the wealth of an orphan'. Rather, He has commanded you not to approach it, or even desire it or think about it. You must distance yourself from this. Yet, does this mean that it is an absolute command? No, because after that He added, 'except in a way that is best.' In other words, we invest their wealth profitably so that it suffices for their livelihood, while the original amount and profit belongs to them. That is why He said in another verse, 'but provide for them with it.' (*an-Nisa'*: 5)

Thus no one should take the wealth of an orphan, save it, give them a monthly allowance until they grow up, and then finds that the wealth has decreased or disappeared. That is why He did not say, 'but provide for them from it'. Rather, He said, 'but provide for them with it', i.e. provide them with sustenance that is profited from it which would not exist unless invested for the benefit of the orphan. Trusteeship of an orphan to manage their wealth is not prohibited when it is administered by those qualified for business administration and trusteeship. A qualified businessman and a trustee may be established, but his situation does not support him to bear the responsibilities and troubles of his own life and administer the wealth of the orphan. Allah says regarding this, 'and whoever amongst guardians is rich, he should take no wages.' (*an-Nisa'*: 6) The guardian should volunteer this custodianship for the sake of Allah without taking a wage in return for it; this guarantees that if there is an orphan in his progeny, until the Day of Resurrection, he will find someone who will support him voluntarily for the sake of Allah, and his wage will be with Allah. The True Lord says, 'And let those [executors and guardians] fear [injustice] as if they [themselves] had left weak offspring behind and feared for them. So, let them fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice.' (*an-Nisa'*: 9)

When an orphan finds someone to take care of him and society shows compassion to every orphan in it, and the affairs of the orphans are taken care of by people who are trustworthy and able to administer their affairs, people will be less worried about dying and leaving their children behind. People fear death because they have children who are dependent on them and they can see that society does not take care of orphans. However, if someone finds an

orphan being honoured, and sees that he has numerous fathers from amongst the Muslims, then he will feel at ease regarding his children when death comes. However, do not wait for society to rectify itself. Rather, you must rectify yourself and act righteously towards any orphan, as this will allow you to be at ease regarding your children as they will find somebody to take care of them after you die. There is a clear example of this in the chapter of *al-Kahf* between the righteous servant and Musa (Moses) when they passed by a village, 'So they set out until when they came to the people of a town, they asked its people for food....' (*al-Kahf*: 77)

They did not ask for money, but had asked for food to stave off hunger, and this is a pressing need even though they asked the people of the village for food, the people of the village refused to take them in as guests. The meaning of this is that it was a village of wicked people. Despite the righteous servant receiving such a response and being refused food, when he found a wall and realised, with his intuitive knowledge, that the wall wanted to fall, he rebuilt it. Musa (Moses) reproached him and as he was looking at the situation logically. He and his sheikh had asked the people of the village for nothing but food and they refused; how can you respond to them by building a wall for them? You should take a payment for building it, as they are wicked people, and this is what Musa (Moses) said. However, the righteous servant rewarded them with what they deserved because by building the wall, he had made it impossible for them to gain access to the treasure. If he had left the wall to collapse, the treasure underneath it which belonged to two orphans would have been discovered. This is how the righteous servant knew how to raise them. After that, Allah explained to us that the wall belonged to two orphan boys living in the town. 'So, your Lord intended that they reach maturity and extract their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord.' (*al-Kahf*: 82)

It is as if bringing forth the treasure is to coincide with reaching puberty, and it is as if the righteous servant built the wall to last for a limited period such that it would not collapse until the boys reached the age of reason. The righteous servant built the wall in such a way that it would not hold together once the two boys had come of age which at that point, they would bring forth their treasure. After that He mentions to us the reasons behind all of this. He said, '...and their father had been righteous....' (*al-Kahf*: 82)

It is as if the righteousness of the father is what the True Lord wanted to use to show us how He protected the children's treasure. Thus, the righteous servant and Musa (Moses) came to the wicked people of the village and asked for food, but they did not feed them. Then the righteous servant rebuilt the wall as a temporary measure to protect the treasure from these wicked people. The True Lord says here, 'And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best.' Whoever is not able to approach the wealth of an orphan and use it in a way that is best should stay away from it.

And so that people do not become wary of taking care of an orphan's wealth, He said, 'whoever amongst guardians is rich, he should take no wages, but if he is poor, let him have for himself what is just and reasonable.' (*an-Nisa'*: 6) The words 'what is just and reasonable' means that the wealth should never be stored away or hidden from him. Rather, he should consume only what he needs to stave off hunger and clothe himself with what he needs to cover his body. In this case, we know that the orphan's intellect has not yet fully matured and the same goes for the adult who is weak-minded, as he is also unable to act independently. That is why the True Lord says in His eloquent rendering where He conveys the expression that reveals vast meanings, 'And do not give the weak-minded your property.' (*an-Nisa'*: 5)

The True Lord classed the wealth of the weak-minded in the same category as the wealth of a legal guardian because a weak-minded person abuses his possessions and may squander them. However, the wealth can be returned to this person once they regain their intellect. The True Lord says, 'if you perceive in them sound judgement, release their property to them.' (*an-Nisa'*: 6)

Indeed, the Quranic rendering is amazing. It encourages people not to leave a weak-minded person to squander his wealth as it will be a loss for the whole society. Thus, as long as the person is weak-minded, then regard his wealth as your wealth, and be a trustee over it as you would do over your wealth. When you find the person to be mature of mind, and you are confident of that, then the True Lord commands you to give their wealth back to them, and we return it to the orphan. Here the True Lord says, 'And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best.'

This is if he has wealth, so what about the orphan that does not have wealth? Here the enjoinder is stronger. It is narrated from Sahl ibn Sa'ad Allah *be pleased with him* who said, 'Prophet Muhammad said, "I and the carer of the orphan are like this in paradise." He indicated with his index finger and middle finger and separated between them.'⁽¹⁾

It is narrated from Abu Hurayra Allah *be pleased with him* who said, 'Prophet Muhammad said, 'The one who strives to take care of widows and the poor is like the one who fights in Allah's cause, and he is like the one who fasts during the day and prays during the night.'⁽²⁾

Be careful, and make sure that supporting an orphan is done for Allah's sake, because it is possible for an orphan to have a beautiful mother and a guardian may want to get closer to her by means of the child. Beware of this because, in addition to incurring Allah's wrath and anger, it is vileness, wickedness, and depravity.

'And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best until they reach maturity.' It is to stress the importance of vigilance over an orphan's wealth until they reach maturity, at which point they will have an independent identity. How do we determine this? It is when an individual can reproduce. This is how we measure maturity. It is similar to when a fruit ripens, i.e. it contains a seed and we can place that seed in the ground and it will eventually grow into a tree. If you pick a fruit before it has ripened, it will not have a sweet taste. You will not enjoy its taste until it contains a seed and is ripe.

'Reach maturity' means that the individual has become capable of reproducing and this is what we call maturity. He is also able to act independently with regards to his wealth and everything else. The True Lord continues, 'And give full measure and weight in justice.' (*al-An'am*: 152)

Measures are the means for measuring a size, while scales are the means for calculating density, so there is a criterion for size and a criterion for density. The criterion for size is measures and the criterion for density is weight. There

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, At-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*

are also just calculations in measurement. For soft goods, for example, and the measurement therein are done in metres. Therefore, everything has its own way of calculation. If you want to weigh something, then you must do so with justice.

This matter is difficult to achieve. That is why scales differ according to the preciousness of things. When we weigh beans, or lentils or potatoes, we weigh them with a large scale. Conversely, when we weigh things that are slightly costlier, we use a more precise scale. If the thing being weighed is gold, we surround the scales with glass walls because a gust of wind could decrease or increase the weight.

Indeed, we attempt to prevent air currents from affecting it, and when we weigh chemical substances we use a scale that functions according to the atom. Therefore, everything that is weighed, is weighed according to its preciousness and the degree to which it can be affected by external factors. This is because achieving justice in weighing is a difficult matter, and the same goes for measures. When someone measures the size of something, they take the scale and they shake it so that the measure can be precise and clear. If he wants to ignore his conscience and take more than his right, he fills the measure with more than it can bear and holds up the extra weight with his hand so that it does not fall. Our Lord says, 'Woe to those who give less [than due]. Who, when they take a measure from people, take in full. But if they give by measure or by weight to them, they cause loss.' (*Al-Imran*: 1-3)

When he is to receive his due, he demands that it be given in full and takes more when he is making a purchase, but when he is selling, he decreases the measure or the weight and takes a price that exceeds whatever is being weighed or measured. The foundation of exchanges, in most cases, is between two parties. Some obstinate people say, 'How can the True Lord say, "Woe to those who give less [than due]"', when giving short measure in any matter has to do with increase and not decrease'? Bear in mind that the One speaking is Allah, and giving short measure leads to an increase for one party and a decrease for the other. Every transaction between two people consists of a sale and a purchase, and if one of the two parties wants the other to lose out and for himself to be given in full, then he is giving short measure.

That is why the subtle Quranic rendering comes from our Lord, 'And give full measure and weight in justice. We do not charge any soul except [with that within] its capacity.' The True Lord says this because He knows that weighing and measuring with justice is a matter that is very difficult because the True Lord, due to the vastness of His Mercy in legislating for us, did not make the scope of our ability something that can be dominated by things that are beyond our ability. Regarding the accuracy of measures and weights He said, 'We do not charge any soul except [with that within] its capacity' because weighing and measuring are two matters dominated by circumstances which man has no control over. That is why we said that when we weigh things that we know are not precious, we use a certain tool. If it is slightly more precious, then another tool is used. If the things are very precious such that they can be affected by the tiniest of external factors, then we use an accurate tool that is protected from these factors so that not even a current of air can affect it. As a result, any increase or decrease that is beyond our capacity is excused. He then says, 'And when you testify, be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative.'

Is justice limited to one's statements or is it extended to action as well? In a dispute between two people, justice can be achieved by speaking not by just taking an action. When justice has become the norm in your speech, you become accustomed to it and you love it until it permeates all your other actions.

Speaking justly includes admitting something one has in a manner conforming to justice and truth, like when you bear witness, give a verdict, bequeath, give a fatwa, speak truth. Thus, being truthful in speaking has a place in several circumstances. This balance is shaken when falsehood is preferred over truth because if you judge in someone's favour who is not deserving, you have given them what is not rightfully theirs. Indeed, this action of yours restricts others in their life. However, if you protect the interests of everyone, and everyone takes their share of life according to their actions, then all matters are balanced and there would be no one living off the efforts of others. Therefore, speaking the truth is that which anchors life's interests.

That which affects justice is personal desires which prejudices one's decision away from truth. Justice is most required when you or one of your

relatives is involved. One may be leaned to unjustly favour one's relative to please them. This, however, is not giving your relatives their right because the right of your relatives requires that you deny them all that is forbidden and you protect their honour and religion before securing for them any temporary benefit. That is why the True Lord commands you to speak with justice even if it is for, or against a relative because when you judge wrongfully, you are actually judging against them and not for them.

'And the covenant of Allah fulfil.' We know that Allah's covenant is that which He has contracted with us, and the first bond and the peak of bonds is to have faith in Him which consequently requires the reception of commandments from Him. This is because every commandment that Allah gives His creation is considered a bond within the framework of faith since Allah does not give a ruling or clarify it for those legally responsible unless He says beforehand, 'O you who have faith.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1) It refers to those who have believed in the original bond underpinning all values, which is creed; 'You have believed in Me as your God; thus, take commandments from Me because you have entered into a bond with Me which is the bond of faith'.

That is why Allah does not give commandments to someone who does not believe in Him. We must accept the proof for every ruling from our faith in the One Who gave it, so do not look for proof in every ruling. The rationale behind every ruling is only that you believe in the One Who commands you to do such-and-such which makes the rationale of everything is the ruling itself.

The True Lord concludes the noble verse with His statement, 'This has He instructed you that you may remember.'

Ibn `Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* said about these verses, 'Indeed they are firm principles that are not abrogated in any of the revealed Books. It has been said that they are the mother of the Book. Whoever acts in accordance with them will enter Paradise but whoever abandons them will enter the Fire.'

No legislation has come to abrogate any one of these enjoinders. That is why Ka`ab Al-Ahbar (a Jew who became Muslim) said, 'By the One who has Ka`ab's soul in His hand, indeed these verses are the first thing in the Torah, "Say, "Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you."'" Then we

find that this last enjoinder gathers everything. We find that nine enjoinders have already been dealt with; five of them are concluded with, 'so that you might use your reason', the other four are concluded with, 'so that you may take heed.' For the tenth one, He said, 'you may become righteous.' This tenth enjoinder gathers all the kinds of virtues that have been commanded, and it is in the following statement of the True Lord:

وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ
بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّيْكُمْ بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

This is My path, leading straight, so follow it, and do not follow other ways: they will lead you away from it – ‘ This is what He commands you to do, so that you may refrain from wrongdoing’ [153] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 153)

He concluded the nine enjoinders with this statement because the straight path includes the nine preceding enjoinders and includes whatever else He did not mention here. I referred above to the ending of the previous commandments; so what is the difference between reason, taking heed, and becoming righteous?

Indeed, the first five things which the True Lord stated are, 'Say, "Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you. [He commands] that you not associate anything with Him, and to parents, good treatment, and do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them. And do not approach immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed. And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason.' These matters were present in the environment in which the Quran was sent down. People were associating partners with Allah, showing disrespect to their parents, killing their children, yielding to shameful deeds and killing human beings that Allah had forbidden to kill (except in the pursuit of justice). He made it clear to them: use your reason regarding these things. If you use your reason, you will find that Allah's commandment prohibits you from those things. It is a matter that requires a sound intellect that can make sound

conclusions. However, the other four are things they used to do and regard as praiseworthy which included dealing with the wealth of orphans, giving full measure in weights and measures, speaking justly and observing bonds; He said, 'so that you might take heed', i.e. beware of neglecting them. If you are doing them in a state of ignorance, then do them and attach more importance to them now that you are in Islam. Then the conclusive commandments, 'And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous.'

Seeing as this commandment comprises all rulings, positive and negative, prohibitions and commands, He made it clear to them that they must follow the straight path to protect themselves from the consequences of the True Lord's attribute of Power, and the first of His soldiers is the fire.

The path is a paved way leading to the Hereafter, which is – as has been said – finer than a hair and sharper than a sword. What does this mean? It means that it is walked upon with absolute wakefulness. If one leans right or left, he will fall. It is a path that has been made with precision and it is not a wide road, so you must walk along Allah's path and His straight way. Do not deviate towards the right or the left because leaning – as we have said – will take you further away from the objective. If you begin from a place, and then you make a mistake of one millimetre in balancing yourself, and then wherever you go the imbalance will become greater, i.e. the slightest deviation at the starting point will make the abyss bigger and the distance farther.

The same goes for religion. Whenever we come together and we draw closer to one another, we travel along the straight path. Whenever we distance ourselves from the legislation, we divide ourselves into different paths.

The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* illustrated clearly what was intended in this verse when he sat amongst His Companions and drew a line. He then said, 'This is Allah's path.'

Then he drew lines going towards the right and lines going towards the left. Then he said, 'These are paths and at the head of every path is a devil, calling to it.' He then read this verse, 'And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be

separated from His way.' That is why whenever the people of truth and the people of goodness come closer to the centre, the meeting continues to get closer and closer until it disappears and they will be all standing at a single point.

Look at the True Lord's majesty when He lays down the straight path in His religion and He attributes it to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'this is My path, which is straight.' The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* adheres to this path. The one doing this and walking in it, is commanding you to walk along. He is not commanding you to something, while he himself abstains from it. Even if he was cheating all of us, he would never cheat himself. This is his straight path to which he adheres.

The 'way' here is known because it is to Allah, so it is as if Allah's 'way' is the path of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, but the action is attributed to Allah alone. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has not made that path for himself but rather, Allah wanted it to be for all the believers, and the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one who takes them by the hand and leads them to it.

When we look at all the disputes that have come about between the various religions; for example, between the Jews and the Christians, 'The Jews say, "The Christians have nothing [true] to stand on," and the Christians say, "The Jews have nothing to stand on."' (*al-Baqara*: 113) The idol-worshippers said, 'neither of those people are upon anything.' 'Thus, the polytheists speak the same as their words.' (*al-Baqara*: 113)

We are faced with three statements. The Jews say that the Christians have no valid ground for their beliefs and the Christians say that the Jews have no valid ground for their beliefs. The people of Mecca said the same thing. Then we find that the one religion they had between them, has divided into numerous sects, and each sect has something to which is fervently adhered. Each sect regards what it says as the truth and whatever is said by anyone else is falsehood. How did this come about when the source is one and the divine revelations that the messengers were sent with is one message? Indeed, desire for temporal power is the source of this dissention. Everyone wants to have status, influence and a dynasty to succeed them. This person wants to be the leader of a group and that person wants to be the leader of a group. If they had united upon the one path, there would not be any groups.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The Jews divided into seventy-one sects, and the Christians divided into seventy-two sects. My nation will divide into seventy-three sects....' ⁽¹⁾

In another narration, he said, 'All of them are in the Fire except one, and they are the group. The group is *Ahl as-Sunna wal-Jama'ah* (Muslim Orthodoxy). In another narration he said, '...what I and my companions are upon.'

We notice the precision of this statement in the number of denominations and sects, even if you have not heard of some of them because they died out after the death of those who fervently adhered to them as well as of those who wanted to bask in its glory.

Therefore, the problem arises whenever there is a ruling under consideration. One person will have an opinion and another will have another opinion, for no reason except to differ. We say to them, 'You should take note of the difference between a decisive ruling and a ruling that Allah has left to be an object of independent legal reasoning (*ijtihad*)'. When Allah wants a ruling to be decisive, He sends it down in an unequivocal manner, and this text puts an end to any differing. When Allah wants a ruling that will be alleviation in one way or another for those who are legally responsible, He brings a text that can be subject to independent legal reasoning. When the legislator brings a text of that nature, it means that it is allowed to apply independent legal reasoning to it because if He had wanted a ruling that was not differed over, He would have brought a decisive text.

A continuing example is what the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* left for us in his noble *Sunnah*. When the True Lord wanted him to maintain the condition of war to discipline Banu Qurayza, who fought alongside the idol-worshippers of Mecca, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'None of you should pray *'asr* (the mid-afternoon prayer) before reaching Banu Qurayza.'⁽²⁾

The Companions then made their way to the tribe of Banu Qurayzha and the sun gave notice that it was setting while they were still travelling. The companions

(1) Narrated by Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nisa'i and Ibn Majah from Abu Hurayrah

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in the chapter on Military Expeditions Al-Maghazi and Al-Bayhaqi in Ad-Dala'il and (As-Sunnan)

then split into two camps. One camp said, 'We will pray *`asr* before the sun sets.' The other camp said, 'The Messenger of Allah told us not to pray until we had reached Banu Qurayza.' Thus, some of them prayed *`asr* before the sun set, while the others did not pray until they had reached Banu Qurayza. This matter was brought before the legislator, (Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*), and he gave consent to both positions because the text allows for such.

Why? It is because every event must occur within a time and a place, so those who said that the sun was about to set and they had to pray *`asr* before it set were looking at the time. Those who said that they would not pray until they had reached Banu Qurayza were looking at the place. When the matter was brought to the legislator who knows best, he gave consent to both positions.

Therefore, if a ruling carries a decisive text, there is no possibility for a difference of opinion. If Allah has left it to be subject to independent legal reasoning, the text is not decisive, and we cannot condemn someone for following either position. That is why we have been left the etiquette of the imams whose schools are still in existence now. We find one of them saying, 'The position I took is correct with the possibility of it being incorrect, and the one who takes the opposite position is incorrect with the possibility of being correct'. It is their beautiful etiquette that has allowed their schools to last this long.⁽¹⁾ The lack of etiquette of others caused their schools to become obsolete and vanish. You do not know about them and may Allah be praised that you do not know about them. The True Lord says after that:

ثُمَّ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ تَمَامًا عَلَى الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيلًا
لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Once again, We gave Moses the Scripture, perfecting [Our favour] for those who do good, explaining everything clearly, as guidance and mercy, so that they might believe in the meeting with their Lord [154] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 154)

Whenever we hear the word 'then' we know that it is a conjunction. There are many conjunctions and each conjunction has a meaning that it conveys.

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

Here we have 'Then We gave Musa (Moses)', and Musa (Moses) was given the Book before this statement of Allah, 'Say, "Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you..."'. The Torah came before the Bible while the Quran came as the final Book; so how can this statement be preceded with 'then' when Musa (Moses) was given the book before the True Lord's statement, 'Say, "Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you..."'?

We say to the people who have this understanding: You have understood '*then*' to indicate a sequence of actions and events but forgotten that '*then*' can also indicate a sequence of information. Someone could come up to you and say, 'How come you do not ask about so-and-so and you do not give him his right that he has over you, such as the right of kinship'. You respond, 'How can this be? I did such-and-such for him. Then, I did such-and-such for his father, and then I did such-and-such for his grandfather'.

Thus, you are giving a sequence of information and you are adding to that sequence. The Arab poet said,

Indeed, whoever is a leader, then his father was a leader

And then, before that, his grandfather was a leader

Leadership first belonged to the grandfather, then to the father and then it was inherited to the son. '*Then*' in this case does not indicate a sequence of events, but rather a sequence of information, i.e. the sequence of conjoined elements is according to the order that they are spoken of, not according to any chronological sequence of events.

Look at the perfect rendering of the Quran when it says, 'And We have certainly created you, [O Mankind], and given you [human] form. Then, We said to the angels, "Prostrate to Adam"; so they prostrated, except for Iblis. He was not of those who prostrated.' (*al-A'raf*: 11) We know that Allah commanding the angels to prostrate to Adam was in the beginning, so He, in this noble statement, wants to put our state into sequence; He created us after He formed us, and He formed us after He told the angels to prostrate to Adam.

'Then We gave Musa (Moses) the Book...' Since this is the story of Musa (Moses), then the Book is the Torah. When the Book is used in an undefined sense, it applies to the Quran because it is the book that gathers and

supersedes everything that is in the other books. For example, if it is said, 'We sent down the Book to Musa (Moses)', the book being referred to is the Torah. If it is said, 'We sent down the Book to 'Isa (Jesus)', then the book being referred to is the Bible.

'In fulfilment' means the containment of all the attributes of goodness. That is why the True Lord says, 'This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favour upon you.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3)

This means that nothing is left out and nor will there be any reconsideration [of what is laid down]. Why did it come in fulfilment upon he who persevered in doing good with regards to Musa (Moses)? It is because those who confronted him *peace be upon him* with stubbornness and argumentation were the Jews. Thus, it is appropriate here to mention the story of Musa (Moses).

When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* came with the Torah as Allah had sent it down to him, people who lived with him believed in what the Torah contained. They were granted salvation and then died. As for those who were alive when the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* came, it was obligatory upon them to believe in Him because the True Lord had made it clear to them in the Torah that a messenger was coming, and they must believe so that the blessing of you persevering in good can be given to you in fulfilment. This is because if they truly believed in Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and acted according to his way, then they must have faith in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Those who preceded you persevered in doing good in the age of Musa's (Moses's) *peace be upon him* message, and now Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has come with the final message. So, if you want Allah to fulfil His blessings, Generosity and Perfection upon you, you must declare your faith in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Amongst you are those who have perfected their adherence to Musa (Moses) and believed in Muhammad, and their blessings have been fulfilled, '...and as a detailed explanation of all things, and as guidance and mercy, that perhaps in [the matter of] the meeting with their Lord, they would believe.'

'A detailed explanation of all things' means that it is suited to its time - and to Allah belongs the highest of example - when you have a young child, you

can say, 'I have tailored his clothes for him'. When he grows up, he will no longer be able to fit into his old clothes. The verse asserts that all things refer to the values fitting for the age that they were living in. So, whenever we find a new detail in the Quran, it is appropriate for its time. Someone could say, 'Here is a detail and here is detail, so what is the difference between this detail and this detail'? We say, 'Every detail is appropriate for its time, and the verses of the Quran are spelled out, ready and prepared for every age and for all of mankind until the Hour is established.

The bane – always – is with those who legislate because when they come across someone who has power and authority, they attempt to prepare and spell out a ruling that suits them. We say to this kind of man, 'You are spelling out the ruling even though the rulings are ready, prepared, and clear'. Indeed, we find that our physical bodies differ so our clothes need different specifications, but in an abstract sense we find that there is equality amongst all of mankind. Truthfulness for a child is the same as truthfulness for an adolescent and the same as truthfulness for a man, woman, a scholar, a merchant, and so forth. There is not a special truthfulness for each of them, and the same goes for trustworthiness. Islam has been merciful to us by giving us a theology and a law that is ready and suited to every human being. There is not any verse that has one standard for one person and no one else. The verses are for everyone.

'Guidance' is anything that shows the end because the religion of our natural disposition could be wiped out due to parents not conveying to their children the way of Allah *the Exalted* regarding their life and what pertains to it, and the values that must be predominant. The bane is that fathers teach their sons how to eat and drink, but they forget to teach them about values. The True Lord, however, shows us mercy when we become heedless. He legislated and sent a new messenger for every time and a new guidance to remind us.

'...that perhaps, in [the matter of] the meeting with their Lord, they would believe.' Every bane originates in turning away from Allah's legislation. They forget to bear in mind their meeting with Allah, but if they had kept their meeting with Allah in mind, they would have prepared for it because an objective is what makes a man embark upon the means. A poet said,

Is there not someone to show me my destination before I set off?

How can there be a destination after I have set off?

We say to this poet, the first part is correct. As for the second, it is not precise because the destination is that which defines the path. Likewise, Allah legislated for the destination first and afterwards He set down the path to it. Allah has legislated for everything that the circumstances of human life require, and that is why there will not be any amendments because everything has been spelled out. The True Lord says after that:

وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مُبَارَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَاتَّقُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

This, too, is a blessed Scripture which We have sent down follow it and be conscious of your Lord, so that you may receive mercy[155] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 155)

The word *book* shows that it has reached a degree of preciousness such that it must be written down and recorded because someone does not record or write anything down unless it is crucial. Our Lord has said the Quran is a book, and sometimes He calls it a Quran. As a Quran, it is recited from the hearts, and as a book it is preserved in writing. When they came to gather it, they wrote it down so that it would match what was in the hearts.

‘And this [Quran] is a Book. We have revealed which is blessed.’ This means that Allah *Glorified is He* commanded it to be sent down, and the trustworthy spirit (the angel Gabriel) came down with it. The word ‘blessed’ means it contains more goodness and benefit than expected. You might say, ‘So-and-so has a salary of two hundred pounds, but he is raising his children well and he is pleased’. Someone will say to you, ‘That is a *blessing*’. It is as if this salary would never allow for these responsibilities to be carried out. The word *blessed* indicates that the hand of Allah is affecting all means, and we know that people always look towards the positive type of sustenance without considering the vaster negative. Positive sustenance gives you two hundred pounds while the negative sustenance strips you of the expenditures of which extent you are unaware. Thus, we find someone whose salary is a thousand pounds, but some of his children become sick, and another child needs private tuition. At this rate, the thousand pounds will run out and he still needs more.

Therefore, when the True Lord prevents someone from having to spend out in disobedience or sickness, this is a blessing in sustenance. We find someone whose wealth comes from lawful sources and he toils for it, Allah enables him to buy everything that he needs. Allah grants this small amount of wealth the attribute of acceptance. We also find someone whose wealth comes from unlawful sources, and Allah is angry with his wealth, so he spends it in [remedying] afflictions and trials, and he will need even more than what he has.

When you compare the Quran to the Torah in size, you find that it is smaller, but if you were to look at the blessings that it contains, you would find them endless. Every day the Quran gives a new gift and its wonders do not cease. Someone reads it and understands a certain meaning, while someone else reads it and understands a new meaning. This proves that the One speaking is Wise, and He has placed great benefit in something small.

This is the meaning of 'And this [Quran] is a Book. We have revealed which is blessed...' because every book has a specified time, a specified era and for a specified nation. As for the Quran, from the day Allah sent it down and until the Hour is established, it has and will continue to address new issues as they emerge and provide solutions for them. What is important is that the Quran came at a time of high aspiration for humanity along with civilization and its intellectual advancements. Therefore, it had to address all these issues in a way that would give it a constant advantage, and this can only happen if it contains blessings.

We all know that the Quran was revealed to an unlettered man, amongst an unlettered nation. There is profound wisdom behind this because the meaning of 'unlettered' is that he did not receive knowledge from human beings, but rather, he is the same as his mother gave birth to him (regarding knowledge). His knowledge and education came from Allah.

Therefore, being unlettered is an honour and an elevation in his sources of knowledge. The Quran came down amongst an unlettered nation because this religion was only sent down amongst this primitive and nomadic nation, moving from place to place without a law, but ruled instead solely by the chief of the tribe. When these spiritual values and legislative rulings came down to them, this itself proves that the book bearing these values and rulings came from Allah. If the Quran had been sent down to a civilized nation, it

would have been called a transition of civilization. However, it was sent down to a nation that had not had any laws similar to those that governed the Persians or Byzantines.

Since this Book (the Quran) has these qualities that relieve the creation of the burden of legislating for themselves in such a way that absolutely guarantees for them the fulfilment of all what is good in this worldly life and the life to come, Allah *the Almighty* commands them to follow it and to be conscious of Him *Glorified is He* so that they might be graced with His mercy. (*al-An'am*: 155)

The word *la'all* in Arabic indicates the meaning of 'hope'. As a matter of fact, one may hope that somebody will do them a favour and thus say, 'So-and-so might give me such-and-such'. This statement indicates that a human being hopes that another human being will do them a favour. Yet, this human being, out of the fact that man is constantly subject to change, may do the favour or may not. They may even try to do the act required by the person but finds themselves unable to do it. When you say, 'I might do a favour for such-and-such', this clearly means that you are the one who is expected to do this favour, yet it is of importance here to know that you are also subject to change and thus may be unable to do the act even though you have the intention and the desire to do it.

But, the question is, 'Why did Allah *the Almighty* send down this Book'? Allah *the Almighty* wants to indicate the high and superior status of the adherents of Islam to which the Quran was revealed down. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

﴿١٥٦﴾ أَنْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أُنْزِلَ الْكِتَابُ عَلَى طَائِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا وَإِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغَفْلِينَ

Lest you say, 'Scriptures were only sent down to two communities before us: we were not aware of what they studied' [156] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 156)

This verse indicates that the Quran was revealed down to purify the previous beliefs that were previously sent down to the two groups, the Jews and the Christians. They have not studied the Torah and the Bible because they were an unlettered people whose members did not know how to read and write; the Quran was sent down so that they could not say, 'We were unlettered

and thus were unable to study the heavenly Books previously revealed to the Jews and Christians'. As a matter of fact, this indicates clearly that Allah *the Almighty* wanted them not to seize on any excuse.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

أَوْ تَقُولُوا لَوْ أَنَّا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتَابُ لَكُنَّا أَهْدَىٰ مِنْهُمْ فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ
مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَذَبَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَصَدَفَ
عَنْهَا سَنَجَرَىٰ الَّذِينَ يَصْدِفُونَ عَنَّا إِنَّا سَوَاءٌ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْدِفُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Or 'If only the Scripture had been sent down to us, we would have been better guided than them.' Now clear evidence, guidance, and mercy have come to you from your Lord. Who could be more wrong than someone who rejects God's revelations and turns away from them? We shall repay those who turn away with a painful punishment [157] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 157)

The polytheists could argue that if the Torah and the Bible had been revealed to them, they would have followed its guidance better than the Jews and the Christians. This statement on the polytheists' part indicates plainly that their minds were ready to accept faith. That is why Allah *the Almighty* did not want to let them seize on any excuse. He *the Almighty* says, 'Who could be more wrong than someone who rejects Allah's revelations and turns away from them'?

Linguistically, the verb *sadafa* or 'turned away' can be used as transitive and intransitive. 'Intransitive verbs' are those verbs that have or need no object. For example, when you say, 'So-and-so sat down'; the meaning of this sentence is crystal clear because you understand that someone has already done the action of sitting down. As for the 'transitive verbs', they are those verbs that have or need an object. For example, when you say, 'Zayd hit', the meaning of this sentence is not clear because you do not know the person who has been hit by Zayd and thus you expect the speaker to tell you the name of the person who has been hit.

As a matter of fact, the verb *sadafa* in this verse under discussion enjoys these two qualities. Allah *the Almighty* uses this particular verb in this context to convey two important meanings, as follows: when the verb is used in the intransitive sense, it indicates that the person themselves have committed the

act of turning and shunning away from the way of guidance; when the verb is used in the transitive sense, it means that they cause others to turn away from divine guidance and thus they will be punished first and foremost for leading themselves astray, and meanwhile for causing others to deviate from the way. As such, Allah *the Almighty* uses this verb to indicate the two possible meanings. Indeed, it is on that person who led them-self astray and causes others to go astray that Allah *the Almighty* will inflict His Punishment twice. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'We shall repay those who turn away with a painful punishment.'

The verse indicates clearly that the Allah's punishment will be inflicted upon those who turn themselves and others away from the way of faith and guidance. If those people in question carefully reflected on this worldly life, they would certainly realise that death seizes people every day without giving them any prior notice. We know for certain that people's life spans are predestined by Allah *the Almighty* in *Al-lawh al-mahfuzh* (preserved tablet), and that death is the inevitable end of all beings. This means that every human being with a sound mind should consider that they may die at any moment. It is if Allah *the Almighty* wants to say, 'If death is man's inevitable end, why do they turn away from My way of guidance? Is there any way that they can live eternally in the world'? Allah *the Almighty* then says:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ رَبُّكَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ بَعْضُ آيَاتِ
رَبِّكَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي بَعْضُ آيَاتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا إِيْمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ ءَامَنَتْ مِنْ
قَبْلُ أَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِي إِيمَانِهَا خَيْرًا قُلِ انْظُرُوا إِنَّا مُنْظَرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

Are they waiting for the very angels to come to them, or your Lord Himself, or maybe some of His signs? But on the Day some of your Lord's signs come, no soul will profit from faith if it had none before, or has not already earned some good through its faith. Say, 'Wait if you wish: we too are waiting' [158]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 158)

Allah *the Almighty* tells those people, i.e. the Polytheists, clearly to undoubtedly wait for nothing except for the angles who are assigned to take their souls!

The word 'angels' here is used in a general sense. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says that those people who sin against themselves will surrender to the angles when the latter causes them to die. (*an-Nahl*: 28)

Indeed, no one will ever escape the angels, and that is why they extend their submission to them, i.e. the angels. Allah *Glorified is He* then says, 'Are they waiting for the very angels to come to them, or your Lord Himself...?' Concerning this part of the verse, i.e. 'the Coming of Allah *the Almighty*', some scholars mistakenly wanted to explain it in the light of 'how humans do the act of coming'; they wanted to make between the two acts of coming, i.e. the divine one and the human counterpart resemble each other. Yet, this is totally wrong because man's coming entails that they move from one place to another, a matter which is impossible to apply to Allah *the Almighty*. To those scholars, we say, 'If you truly explain every act of 'coming' considering how we humans come, how do you then explain the act of coming of the 'stupor of death' in the saying of Allah in which He *Glorified is He* says that 'the stupor of death will come in truth' (*Qaf*: 19)?

So, the question to be asked here is 'How can we interpret the act of coming on part of death'? We do not really know how death will come even though it is created, so how come we know about how the act of coming is performed on the part of Allah *the Almighty*? We must explain everything that is connected to Allah in terms of what befits His Essence which is to be within the framework of the undeniable fact that there is nothing resembling Him *the Almighty* (*ash-Shura*: 11). In the same manner, if we take this sound understanding into consideration, we will be fully aware of the fact that the 'act of coming' on part of a child is totally different from it on the part of a young man and so on. So, how can we think that this particular 'act of coming' on the part of Allah *the Almighty*? Wrong then, are those who understand the 'act of coming' on the part of Allah in the light of its counterpart by human beings. That is why I constantly repeat that we must not understand anything pertaining to Allah *the Almighty* by the virtue of our own human laws, but rather, by the virtue of the fact that Allah *the Almighty* is *the Most High* and thus everything pertaining to Him *the Almighty* must be understood in the light of the undeniable fact that there is nothing resembling Him *the Almighty*. That is why

we must say, 'Allah *the Almighty* has hearing that is not like ours, sight that is not like ours, a hand that is not like ours and so on.'

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, 'Are they waiting for the very angels to come to them, or your Lord Himself, or may be some of His signs?' In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is related to have said, 'Hasten in performing good deeds before these six things happen; the appearance of the *dajjal* (Anti-Christ), the smoke, the beast of the earth, the rising of the sun from the west, the general turmoil (leading to large-scale massacre) and the death of masses and individuals.'⁽¹⁾ The word *khuwaysatu* in this Hadith is the diminutive form of *khassah* or something which is 'specific'. In this context of the Prophetic Hadith, it refers to death. It has been used in this diminutive form, to show how small it is when compared to the other great events to take place after death, such as the resurrection, the gathering etc. Other scholars yet opine that it may also refer to those deep concerns that occupy people's minds including property, offspring etc.

As for his saying, *amru al-'ammah* or 'the general turmoil', it refers to the Resurrection which will include all creatures. It may also refer to the tribulation that will totally overwhelm people, or even to those acts done by the masses of people and not their elite.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, "Are they waiting for the very angels to come to them, or your Lord Himself, or maybe some of His signs? But on the Day some of your Lord's signs come, no soul will profit from faith if it had none before..."

This divine ruling that no one will profit from their faith if they had not already believed before the coming of these signs, is since one believes only in what is unseen. That is why the term 'faith' cannot be applied to any act that is witnessed and comprehended by senses. In fact, one does not say, 'I have faith that I am now reading *Khawater Ash-Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawy Hawla Ayat Al-Quran Al-Karim*' because they are actually reading this book right now. In the same context, one does not say, 'I have faith that light is illuminating my apartment' because this is an act which is perceived by one's

(1) Narrated by Muslim

senses. That is why when the signs of the Day of Resurrection will come, we then move from having faith in what is unseen to what is perceived and tangible. When these signs already come or when the soul reaches the throat, no disbeliever will profit from their belief, nor will any kind of charity or righteous deeds be accepted. When one is in the agony of death, he thinks of doing good deeds and thus starts to allocate part of his wealth to the needy and the poor. In the same connection, when the disbeliever sees the occurrence of these signs shortly before the Day of Resurrection, they will attain faith, but this will not profit them anyway, for they had not previously believed. This is because the term 'faith' applies to the act of believing in what is unseen. So when these signs come, this means that what is unseen has turned into something tangible and thus attaining faith at that particular time will be of no benefit. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says, 'But on the Day some of your Lord's signs come, no soul will profit from faith if it had none before, or has not already earned some good through its faith.' This means that faith must precede the coming of these signs to be accepted. Yet, if there is a legal excuse that prevents one from attaining faith, such as insanity or not attaining the age of puberty, faith will be accepted from those people with such excuses even after the coming of the signs.

In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* tells us in the Quran about similar incidents that took place in the past and in which people attained faith at times when it, i.e. faith would not benefit them in any way. In the chapter of *Yunus*, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about the story of the children of Israel and Pharaoh; when Allah brought the children of Israel across the sea, Pharaoh and his hosts pursued them with vehement insolence and tyranny until they were overwhelmed by the waters of the sea. When Pharaoh was about to drown, he exclaimed, 'I have come to believe that there is no deity save Him in whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of those who surrender themselves unto Him!'' (*Yunus*: 90) Yet, Allah *the Almighty* did not accept his belief since he did not do that until fully realising that he would certainly drown (*Yunus*: 91). Therefore, it becomes clear that when the spirit reaches the throat, declaring one's faith will certainly be of no benefit.

Allah *Glorified is He* finally concludes the verse with His saying, 'Say, "Wait if you wish, We too are waiting."' This is to say that the polytheists and

all those who turn away from the divine guidance are waiting for failure while we are waiting for success and prosperity.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ إِنَّمَا
أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

**As for those who have divided their religion and broken up into factions, have nothing to do with them [Prophet]. Their case rests with God: in time He will tell them about their deeds [159]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 159)**

In truth, this verse gives the full and convenient explanation for a previously mentioned verse in this chapter. Allah *the Almighty* orders the followers of Prophet Muhammad to follow His Straight Path and not to follow other ways, lest they cause them to go astray (*al-An'am*: 153).

In fact, those who have broken the unity of their religion have already forgotten the fact that religion only comes to unite people and not to divide or break them up into factions. In doing so, religion tells us that all divine commands and prohibitions are viewed in the light of 'do' and 'do not do'; and so there will be no disagreement whatsoever regarding commands and prohibitions of shari'a. Yet, we have different opinions concerning what is permissible, that is, those acts which one will be rewarded for doing them; yet they will not be inflicted with any punishment if not performed. As a matter of fact, this category of 'what is permissible' is not included under 'do' and 'do not do'.

Therefore, those who break up the unity of their religion, contradict the divine way of guidance which was revealed down to unite mankind upon one thing and so that the course of life will run smoothly. In the same connection, it is of great importance to know that people's desires are not the same and thus if the course of life was to be run by virtues of every human being's personal desire, conflict among people will inevitably take place.

As for the word *shia`* (faction), it refers to that group of people that follow particular rulings. As such, the word *tashayyu`* indicates two possibilities; it

may sometimes be used to indicate something good or beneficial, while other times it may be used to refer to something bad or harmful.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'As for those who have divided their religion and broken up into factions, have nothing to do with them [Prophet]', it clearly indicates that those people who have already divided their religion and broken up into factions are far away from the religion of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and that it is not true to attribute them to this pure religion of Islam. In fact, Islam has been sent down by Allah to regulate the course of life and make it run smoothly. The importance of Islam for Muslims is exactly like the importance of water to the preservation of life. In this regard, we know for certain that pure water has no colour, taste, or smell, yet if any of these characteristics changes, it will no longer be pure. The same applies to the pure religion of Islam which approves unity and rejects all kinds of division. Allah *the Almighty* finally concludes the verse with His saying, '...Their case rests with Allah; in time He will tell them about their deeds.' This means that it is up to Allah *the Almighty* to either defeat or punish them in this worldly life or even to postpone that to the Day of Resurrection.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ
بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

Whoever has done a good deed will have it ten times to his credit, but who- ever has done a bad deed will be repaid only with its equivalent – they will not be wronged [160] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 160)

We should differentiate between the following two words, namely; *hasan* (what is good) and *hasanah* (a good deed). In this regard, it is not true to say that *hasanah* is the feminine of *hasan*. Some people mistakenly believe that the letter *ta`* at the end of this word makes it a feminine form, while the correct opinion is that it indicates exaggeration; it is used with these adjectives attributed to the masculine names. For example, we say, 'So-and-so is an *'allamah* (a well-versed scholar)', 'So-and-so is a *rawiah* (very skilful in narrating incidents of the past), and 'So-and-so is a *'nassabah* (a very skilful genealogist)'.

A good deed or *hasanah* is the goodness that brings forth reward. In fact, the more the good deed is sincere to Allah, the more the reward is everlasting and more profound.

Regarding the verse under discussion, the word *amthal* (times) is the plural of *mathal* which is a masculine noun. Arabic grammar rules state that when the counted noun is masculine, it must have a (*ta'*) letter at the end, and when it is feminine, we should elide the *ta'*. This is because the original formation of numbers is based on the existence of the letter *ta'*, so if you use it with a feminine noun, you do the opposite by eliding its *ta'*. Yet, if you use numbers with their original formation which is the masculine, you use it naturally. For example, we say, '*thalathatu rijal*' (three men). If you want to talk about the feminine, you say, '*thalathu niswah*' (three women).

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Whoever has done a good deed will have it ten times to his credit....' This indicates clearly the Absolute Mercy and Grace of Allah *Glorified is He*. In this respect, the Qudsi Hadith narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, Allah *be pleased with them*, who narrated that the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them that Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Indeed, your Lord *the Almighty* is All-Merciful. He who intended to do good, but did not do it, one good was recorded for him, and he who intended to do good and did it, ten to seven hundred good deeds were recorded for him. And he who intended evil, but did not commit it, no entry was made against his name, but if he committed that, it was recorded or Allah would even wipe out (the evil committed by a man) and Allah does not put to destruction anyone except he who is doomed to destruction.'⁽¹⁾

We know for certain that Allah *Glorified is He* rewards a good deed with ten times the like of it and even multiplies up to seven hundred times. Every action under Islam requires sincerity and a good intention to be accepted. As such, it is as if Allah *the Almighty* has laid down such a system of reward whereby the reward of one good will be ten times the like of it and will even multiply, due to a good intention, to reach seven hundred times of it, so that people will do good. Thus, if one wants to get more

(1) Narrated by Muslim

reward from Allah, they need to be sincere and show a good intention. In another verse in the Quran, He tells that whoever offers Him *the Almighty* a good loan, He will amply repay it to them and He will provide for them a noble reward (*al-Baqara*: 245 and 57: 11).

In the verse under discussion, Allah *the Almighty* tells that the reward of a good deed shall be the ten times the like of it. Yet, this reward will certainly multiply to seven hundred times or even more if the good deed is offered with a good intention. This fact is also mentioned in *al-Baqara* wherein Allah *the Almighty* says that the parable of those who spend their property in the way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears, with a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases (*al-Baqara*: 261).

If the earth, which is created by Allah, gives you seven hundred grains when you put a seed into it, what do you expect the reward of Allah *the Almighty* shall be? Indeed, His Bounty is endless. That is why He says that He multiplies for whom He pleases (*al-Baqara*: 261).

The Almighty then concludes the verse with His saying, ‘...but whoever has done a bad deed will be repaid only with its equivalent - they will not be wronged.’

Since they are only requited once for the bad deed they did, they are never oppressed or wronged.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

قُلْ إِنِّي هَدَيْتَنِي رَبِّيَ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ دِينًا قِيمًا مِّلَّةَ
إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٦١﴾

Say, ‘My Lord has guided me to a straight path, an upright religion, the faith of Abraham, a man of pure faith. He was not a polytheist’ [161] (The Quran, *al-An’am*: 161)

Allah’s saying, ‘*dinan qiyaman*’ (upright religion) means that Islam regulates people’s affairs in this life. As for the word *qiyaman*, it is derived from the word *al-qimah* (value) or from the word *al-Qiyam* which means ‘taking care of something’. Arabs say, ‘So-and-so *qama ‘ala al-amr*’ to point

out that someone has taken care of something until it is corrected. The same applies to the religion of Islam that came to correct people's course of life through instructing them how to be of great moral conduct. In addition, it is responsible for such a correction of mankind.

In this vein, we should consider the fact that when Allah *the Almighty* sheds light on a very important topic, He refers us to a brief glimpse of the biography of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. In the verse under discussion, the polytheists of Mecca believed that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was a polytheist. As for the Jews, they believed that he was a Jew. The Christians, on their part, believed that he was a Christian. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* denies all these unfounded allegations and clearly declares that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was neither a 'Jew' nor a 'Christian', but was one who turned away from all that is false, having surrendered himself to Allah (*Al-Imran: 67*).

Judaism and Christianity came after him Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. As for the polytheists of Mecca, they were significantly affected by what Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* left behind. In this regard, the Quran tells us about the supplication of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when he left his son, Ismail (Ishmael), and his mother, Hajar, near the Sacred House in Mecca; Ibrahim (Abraham) said to Allah that he had settled some of his offspring in a valley in which there is no fertile land, close to His Sacred Mosque, so that they might devote themselves to prayer. Ibrahim (Abraham) then asked Allah to cause people's hearts to incline towards them and to provide them with fruits (*Ibrahim: 37*).

In truth, it is Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* who raised the foundations of the Sacred House in Mecca. In addition, it was due to him that all people give them respect, to the extent that their trade used to go east and west, with no one daring to attack it; and they earned a lot of money.

Thus, when Allah *the Almighty* says, 'It is an upright religion, the faith of Ibrahim (Abraham), a man of pure of faith. He was not a polytheist', He *the Almighty* refers to that religion which brings them all of the abundant provision they enjoy. As for the Arabic word *al-hanaf*, it is a curvature in the foot. The religion of Abraham never inclined away from what is true and

correct. Rather, it inclined away from deviation and was always upright. We know for certain that Allah's messengers were sent only at times when deviation was so great. This clearly means that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* turned away from their deviation and is upright.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

**Say, 'My prayers and sacrifice, my life and death,
are all for God, Lord of all the Worlds [162]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 162)**

The word 'prayers' in this verse refers to the act of worship which is the second pillar of Islam. Muslims are obliged to pray five times a day. No Muslim is excused for not performing it whatsoever. We previously explained that it is enough for a Muslim to declare the testimony of faith once in their life. As for the other pillars of Islam, a Muslim may be excused under certain circumstances for being unable to do them. For example, a Muslim may be unable to fast during the month of *Ramadan* and thus they are not obliged to fast. The same ruling applies to the fourth and the fifth pillars, i.e. *zakat* and pilgrimage; if one fails to meet certain requirements by means of which these two pillars are obligatory, they are excused for not being able to perform them. As for prayer, a Muslim is not allowed, under any circumstance, not to perform it.

In the same vein, it is of great importance to know that all the divine commands and orders were revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* through revelation except for prayer, which was revealed to him directly through Allah *the Almighty* with no medium. When He *the Almighty* says: 'my prayer', this means that He refers to the most essential pillar of Islam which no one is excused from performing it, to the extent that the sick, who cannot move, are obliged to offer it with their eyes or by thinking of it in their heart. As for the word *nusuk* (sacrifice), it refers to all acts of worship. In the chapter of *al-Hajj* Allah says that He appointed acts of devotion which every nation should observe (*al-Hajj*: 67).

The word *nusuk* therefore, refers to the different acts of worship; yet it is used mainly to refer to those several acts pertaining to pilgrimage such as the

circumambulation around the *Ka'ba*, running seven rounds between As-Safa and Al-Marwah, standing on the mountain of *'Arafa* and the throwing of pebbles. All these acts are called *manasik* (acts of worship). Etymologically, the word is derived from the verbal noun *an-nasikah*, which is an ingot of silver that is melted in such a way that renders it pure. That is why worship is called *nusuk*, that is, one must be so sincere to Allah *the Almighty* exactly as the ingot of silver is purified of all the minerals that are mixed with it by fire.

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Say, "My prayers and sacrifice, my life and death, are all for Allah, Lord of the Worlds."' This verse contains two acts which fall under man's free will and two others with which man's free will has nothing to do. One is free to either offer acts of worship or not, yet they are not free to define the time of their birth or death. It is taken for granted that life and death are defined by Allah *the Almighty* in accordance with His Divine Wisdom, and so are the act of prayer and the different acts of worship. In fact, one does not offer prayer except because they truly believe in Allah *the Almighty*; the One Who issued the command to pray. Therefore, one does not do anything of their own accord. Rather, they direct the capabilities that Allah has created in them towards carrying out divine orders. All actions are to be attributed to Allah *the Almighty*.

But why does Allah *the Almighty* mention 'prayer' and *an-nusuk* in particular, in the light of the fact that both two actions are subject to man's free will? It is because man's free will is implanted by Allah *the Almighty* in man. In the same connection, He is the One Who has laid down His Divine Commands and Orders including the obligation of prayer. Other scholars yet believe that the saying of Allah, 'Say, "My prayers and sacrifice, my life and death, are all for Allah, Lord of the Worlds' means that one is supposed to offer them sincerely to Allah *the Almighty* and not to show off. For example, a Muslim may go to perform pilgrimage in Mecca so that people will pay their great respect; this is totally wrong. Muslims are obliged to offer their acts of worship sincerely to Allah *the Almighty*. In truth, if one performs the different acts of worship seeking out the pleasure of people, they should consider that people are unable to reward them the same way Allah does. That is why *the Almighty* says, 'Say, "My prayers and sacrifice, my life and death, are all for Allah, Lord of the Worlds.'

Life is Allah's gift to mankind and thus it must be made use of in such a way that pleases Him *the Almighty*. As a matter of fact, one's life and death must be sincerely and entirely for the sake of Allah *the Almighty*; a point which is emphasized in the next verse in which Allah *the Almighty* says:

لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

**He has no partner. This is what I am commanded,
and I am the first to devote myself to Him [163]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 163)**

In fact, this verse indicates that some people may offer their acts of worship while seeking out the pleasure of Allah *the Almighty* along with other people; they show off with their prayers; their lives are not sincerely sacrificed with for the sake of Allah and so are all their actions and movements. That is why we must constantly consider the undeniable fact that Allah *the Almighty* has no partner.

He *the Almighty* then says, 'This is what I am commanded, and I am the first to devote myself to Him.' This part of the verse implies a command from Allah to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this regard, we must know perfectly well that the followers of Messenger Muhammad are included in all the divine commands and orders issued to him. These divine commands are undoubtedly beneficial to mankind and thus *the Almighty* is entirely worthy to be loved. Every act of worship for Him brings us goodness and benefit, which are out of the divine bounty and grace. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself is unable to provide people with such goodness and benefit; rather, it is Allah *the Almighty* alone Who can do so. Being preoccupied all the time with the affairs of his followers, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us in the chapter of *Yunus* that Prophet Muhammad *peace and Blessings be upon him* has come to us from among ourselves; that our falling into distress is grievous to him; that he excessively solicitously respects us; and that he is compassionate to the believers (*at-Tawba*: 128).

He *peace and blessings be upon him* used to invoke Allah *the Almighty* to do good towards his followers saying, 'O Lord! My followers! My followers'

whereupon He *the Almighty* wanting to assuage His Messenger Muhammad, said to him, 'Verily, We will please you regarding your followers and will never displease you.'⁽¹⁾

The full narration of the Hadith reads, 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'As Allah *be pleased with them* narrated, 'The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* recited the Words of Allah *the Exalted* about Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* who said, "O my Lord! They have led astray many among mankind. But whosoever follows me, he verily, is of me" (*Ibrahim*: 36), and those of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* who said, "If You punish them, they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, verily, You, only You, are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise." (*al-Ma'ida*: 118) Then Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* raised up his hands and said, "O Allah! My followers, my followers," and wept; Allah *the Exalted* said, "O Jibril (Gabriel)! Go to Muhammad and ask him, "What makes you weep?" So, Jibril came to him and asked him and the Messenger of Allah informed him what he had said (though Allah knew it well). Upon this Allah said, "Jibril, go to Muhammad and say, "Verily, We will please you regarding your followers and will never displease you."''⁽²⁾

Allah *the Almighty* then sent down a verse in which He *Glorified is He* states clearly that He will grant him *peace and blessings be upon him* until he is well pleased (*ad-Duha*: 5). In this vein, 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Thus, I am not pleased so long as one of my followers is in the Fire.'⁽³⁾ He *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, '...and I am the first to devote myself to Him.'

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said that he was the first of his followers to devote himself to Allah *the Almighty* this is true, for he *peace and blessings be upon him* embraced Islam before any other person. Similarly, every messenger is the first Muslim from amongst his followers. Another group of scholars yet opine that this part of the verse should be simply explained to mean that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the most prominent one among all the messengers and prophets; a point

(1) Narrated by Muslim

(2) Narrated by Muslim

(3) Narrated by An-Naysaburi

which is proved by Allah *the Almighty* taking the pledge from all the previous messengers and prophets to believe in him. As such, it is proved that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the first Muslim among all of Allah's prophets and messengers just as he is the first Muslim among his followers. Let me offer the following example to illustrate the point; the faculty of law was established in the twentieth of the last century; from inception up till now, every grade has a student who gets the highest marks among their colleagues; this is the case until a student gets the highest marks ever and thus they are said to be the first of all students in the faculty of law since inception.

He *Glorified is He* then says:

قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْغَى رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ
وَازِرَةً وِزْرَ أُخْرَى ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُم مَّرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

Say, 'Should I seek a Lord other than God, when He is the Lord of all things?' Each soul is responsible for its own actions; no soul will bear the burden of another. You will all return to your Lord in the end, and He will tell you the truth about your differences [164]
(The Quran, *al-An'am*: 164)

The meaning of *ar-rabb* is that He is the One in charge of bringing all the creatures up. Mastery is His and everything in the existence is raised by Him *Glorified is He*. So, how can we take something that has been created and raised by Him to be a partner with Him?! Indeed, this is not a sound anyway. That is why He *the Almighty* puts the sentence in the form of interrogation, 'Should I seek a Lord other than Allah, when He is the Lord of all things?'

This interrogative question implies reproach for anyone who might take a partner with Allah in worship. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell us, 'Think of this question very carefully and objectively and you will find the correct answer'. He *the Almighty* would not have said this unless He is certain that the answer is 'No'. If there is a remote possibility that the answer might be in the negative, He *the Almighty* would not have asked the question. It is as if He *the Almighty* wants to say that those with sound minds will for sure agree with Me that it is not appropriate to take anyone else as a lord.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Say, “Should I seek a Lord other than Allah, when He is the Lord of all things?”’ The Arabic word *abghi* means to seek or to look for. As for the word *taksib*, it is taken from the root *kasaba* and *iktasaba*. We previously explained that the word *kasaba* is always used regarding goodness while *iktasaba* is always used regarding evil. However, there are some people who have become accustomed to doing evil deeds, to the extent that it does not burden them at all and thus they mistakenly view it as *kasab*. Yet, it is foolish to think that something is *kasab* when it is against you and not for you. As a matter of fact, when you carefully examine the true meaning conveyed by this word in this context, you will fully understand that it is not in your credit.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, ‘Each soul is responsible for its own actions; no soul will bear the burden of another.’ The Arabic word *wizr* (burden) is the appalling hardship and thus all its derivatives convey the meanings of hardship and difficulty. For example, the word *wazir* refers to someone who bears a burden. Allah *the Almighty* says in the Quran at the tongue of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* that he asked Allah *the Almighty* to appoint for him out of his kinsfolk, one who will help him to bear his burden. Musa (Moses) then defined that man whom he wanted to be his *wazir*; it was none but his brother Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* (*Ta Ha*: 29-31). It is as if Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* knew that conveying the message to the Jews was going to be a difficult process, so he asked Allah *the Almighty* to make his brother, Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* help him with this hardship.

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He had opened, his heart and lifted his burden that was so heavy on his back (*ash-Sharh*: 1-3). The very beginning of the process of divine revelation to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was very difficult for him, since it involved the interaction between two beings of a totally different nature; i.e. Jibril (Gabriel) and Prophet Muhammad, a human being. That is why his *peace and blessings be upon him* face, while receiving the divine revelation, used to turn red. In addition, he used to sweat heavily even in very cold weather. Sometimes, he used to ask those around him to cover him; other times if he was sitting with his knee touching the knee of the person next to him, his neighbour would feel heaviness.

However, when he *peace and blessings be upon him* became well accustomed to the divine revelation, he came to fully realise the sweetness of receiving the divine message, to the effect that he no longer thought of any hardship. Accordingly he, *peace and Blessings be upon him* longed for the sending down of revelation upon its cessation.

Allah *Glorified is He* finally concludes the verse with His saying, ‘...no soul will bear the burden of another.’ We will all return to our Lord in the end, and He will tell us the truth about our differences. It is clear now that the *wizr* indicates the meaning of ‘heavy burdens’. This part of the verse tells clearly that no one will be held accountable for the evil deeds committed by another person unless they are responsible for the deviation of that particular person that committed this act. We previously explained the difference between the people who themselves turn away from the divine guidance and the ones who cause others to deviate this particular way of divine guidance. It is for sure that the latter person will be held accountable for the evil deeds committed by those whom they led astray. Then, we will all return to our Lord so that He can make us truly understand over what we were differing.

Allah says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّن دُونِ آلِ آدَمَ خُلَافَةً عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّتَبْلُوكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

It is He who made you successors on the earth and raises some of you above others in rank, to test you through what He gives you.

[Prophet], your Lord is swift in punishment, yet He is most forgiving and merciful [165] (The Quran, *al-An'am*: 165)

In another verse of the Quran, namely in the chapter of *Fatir*, Allah *the Almighty* says that it is He who has made you successors upon the earth (*Fatir*: 39). The difference between these two verses is that the latter contains the preposition *in* or ‘upon’.

The word *khalifa* or ‘successor’ refers to someone who comes after or succeeds someone else. As a matter of fact, this process of succession may

pertain to time or place. As for the succession of time, it means that one lives during a period of time which comes after the elapse of a particular person's age or time. As for the succession of time, it means that someone takes the place of another person. If we carefully reflect upon man throughout their life, we will fully realise that they are strong in their youth; yet when they are old, all their strength is lost. Similarly, we find people succeeding each other in assuming different positions. This part of the verse may also indicate the meaning that Allah *the Almighty* wants us to be His successors on the earth. Everything in this universe is entirely subject to the Will of Allah *the Almighty*. Out of His Endless Bounty and Grace, Allah allowed certain things to be affected by other things. When you ignite a fire, for example, it is subject to you and does what you want; and when you till the earth and plant seeds in it, it responds positively to you. In the same connection, when you drink, your thirst is quenched, and when you eat, you feel nourished. How does all of this happen?

Certainly, it happens because Allah *the Almighty* has subjugated everything in the universe for you, and He has made causes and causative factors. As such, man's creation is to fulfil the Will of Allah *the Almighty*; a topic that must not be taken for granted. If you want to test the veracity of this topic, you should then look at any person, even a disbeliever, who wants to stand up from their place; you will find that their body parts respond to them positively and do what they want to do, yet the question is, 'What particular body part has been commanded to do this'? All what they know is that they want to stand up and it happens. So that one does not think that s/he has done all this due to their own ability, Allah *the Almighty* has made some matters, such as death and giving birth to children, prevalent and worldwide. In truth, all people are delivered to life and they all will certainly die. Likewise, all people can cry and laugh. People are the same as to these matters. That is why Allah says that it is He alone who causes [you] to laugh and to weep (*an-Najm*: 43).

The aforementioned verse in the chapter of *an-Najm* indicates that Allah *the Almighty* has mentioned this concrete fact that He is the One Who causes people to laugh and weep because these two particular acts are common among all people. One speaks and works whenever they want, yet when they want to laugh, it is Allah *the Almighty* the One Who causes them to do that.

That is why when you wish to flatter someone and laugh with them, you give them a dry laugh.

As such, Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell us that He has full control over His universe, that is, He grants them the free will to choose what they want in certain matters, and at the same time Allah *Glorified is He* compelled them as to other acts. At this point, it is of great importance to know that man's control over the parts of their body is granted to them by Allah, *the Most High*. Indeed, man does not have full control over these parts, but Allah *the Almighty* does. That is why we find Him *Glorified is He* sometimes sapping man's will over their parts. For example, Allah *the Almighty* may command the brain not to convey the nervous signals to a particular body part and thus they become paralysed. If man had had full control over their body parts, they would have commanded the brain to resist the divine command and thus to convey the signals to the body parts and therefore, they will not get paralysed.

As such, human beings are the successors of Allah *the Almighty* on the earth. Allah *Glorified is He* subjugated the entire universe to them in accordance with His Will. Yet, if He *the Almighty* causes some of the objects of the universe to disobey them, this proves that it is the Ultimate Power of Allah that subjugated all these items to man and not their will.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, '...and He raises some of you above others in rank...' This part of the verse indicates plainly that the act of succession entails that people should not be identical to each other in all aspects of life. Rather, He wants to make us perfectly complement each other as the different spheres of life. If all human beings were granted the same talents; the course of life would not move normally or smoothly. Thus, it becomes evident that talents must differ from one person to another because man's requirements of life are numerous. It goes without saying that it is not right for all humans to be doctors, nor is it right for all of them to be judges, or engineers or even farmers. Indeed, this points out the undeniable fact that Allah *the Almighty* has raised some of us above others in ranks.

Indeed, some people have been raised in rank by Allah *the Almighty* while others have been caused by Him *the Almighty* to be of lower ranks, so the

question is, 'Who are those whom Allah, raised in ranks and who are those whom He *the Almighty* caused to be of lower ranks'? Indeed, some people have been raised in ranks by the talents they are endowed with, yet in case they lose these talents, they will surely be of lower ranks. Allah *the Almighty* certainly wants human beings to support one another, a matter which will be achieved, not out of people's courtesy, but rather, out of their compulsion to do so. This plainly indicates the All-Great Wisdom of Allah *the Almighty* in running the affairs of the universe. If one reflects carefully on their environment, they will find that some of their colleagues had already left primary school; yet, when they were in the preparatory school, some of the students left it too, and so on until they reached the university stage wherein you will find the number of students is much fewer than its counterpart at the very beginning of the students' education.

As such, we find that some people do not complete their education because there are certain jobs which cannot be done except by the holders of the primary, or the preparatory or even the secondary certificates. In fact, if every student joined university, these jobs would not be done.⁽¹⁾ That is why Allah *the Almighty* makes supporting one another in this worldly life based on man's need to their fellow man or women and not on their free will.

Let us offer the following example to illustrate this point: if someone is afflicted with hunger, or if their dependents are hungry, they will accept any kind of lawful work. In addition, if they are utterly content with this work and they do not harbour any resentment or hatred towards anyone else, they will become proficient and pre-eminent in their work and Allah will supply them with lawful and good provision. Imam `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Man's status is fully realised in the light of what they are able to do well.' Therefore, if man perfects his work, he will be prosperous in this worldly life.

The All-Great and Profound Wisdom of Allah entails that people's talents must not be identical to each other; rather, He *the Almighty* has raised

(1) It is noteworthy to mention that Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi *may Allah rest his soul* does not promote illiteracy, but rather, he wants to reveal the divine wisdom as to why it is impossible for all people to be university students.

some people over others in ranks by these talents. Each one of us is raised in rank by what we are perfectly able to do well. Yet, in case we lose this ability, we would not be raised in ranks over others; this plainly indicates that we must be constantly supporting one another. As such, the entire universe will be closely connected to each other, out of people's need for each other and not out of grace.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...and He raises some of you above others in rank, to test you through what He gives you.' It is as if this raising in ranks is a test for human beings with regards to the talents granted to them by Allah, for His servants. He *the Almighty* knew perfectly well about what His servants would do in this worldly life, yet Allah gives them the opportunity to act in accordance with their free will, so that they would be held accountable for their own deeds on the Day of Judgement. *Liabluwakum* (to test you) means that Allah *Glorified is He* wants to test people so that they would admit their sins and acts of disobedience.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, '...to test you through what He gives you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in punishment, yet He is most forgiving and Merciful.' This part of the verse indicates clearly that Allah *the Almighty* is swift in punishment and retribution. Thus, wrong are those who think that divine punishment is late. People will certainly be rewarded for their good deeds and punished for their evil ones after death. It is taken for granted that one may die at any moment. When one dies, they will be unable to do further deeds. This is how Allah *the Almighty* is swift in punishment, but some disobedient people, relying on Allah's Forbearance, mistakenly think that He will postpone their punishment for them. At that point, one of the most pious Muslims' sayings may be quoted, 'Make your gratitude for the One Who never deprives you of His Blessings. Make your obedience to the One you are never independent of, and make your submission to the One Whose Dominion and Authority you will never exit from.'

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* has granted mankind countless blessings. For example, if one wants to stand up, they do not know what muscles they need to move to perform the act of standing. However, all what they know well is that whenever they want to stand, they will be naturally able to do so. This

clearly indicates the unchallengeable Will of Allah *the Almighty*. When Allah *Glorified is He* wills something, He says, 'Be!' and 'it is'.

So long as we are the inheritors and successors of Allah on the earth, then we must be complementary to each other, meaning that each one of us enjoys a talent others do not enjoy. As such, all the human beings will be compelled to cooperate with one another in such a way that enables each to mutually get the benefit of the other's talents. Undoubtedly, Allah *the Almighty* does not want us to share the fruits of these divine gifts out of grace. Rather, He wants us to need each other. Thus, we will need each other.

This way of appointing humans as Allah's successors on the earth indicates that some of us are raised in ranks more than others. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* wants to say that He has raised some people in ranks over others by the talents He granted to each of them. In such a way, people will be all equal.

Indeed, we are all dependent on Allah *the Almighty* and thus all of us are in dire need of Him because He has not taken a consort or a child. If we tried to calculate the various talents amongst humanity and their distribution amongst the entire creation, we would find that the sum of every individual is equal to the sum of every other individual. However, one may enjoy a talent, while others do not. In the same connection, someone may like to do an act, they find themselves unable to do it. Calculating all the varying degrees of proficiency in all talents reveals that people are all equal, and that there is no preference for someone over others except in Allah-consciousness.

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'It is He Who made you successors on the earth and raises some of you above others in rank, to test you through what He gives you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in punishment, yet He is Most Forgiving and Merciful.' This indicates that each one of us can claim that they have been raised in rank by Allah *the Almighty*, yet they should become humbled because there are others who are of higher ranks than them. In fact, this is how balance is achieved. As such, one should not be arrogant because they have been raised to some degree. In the same vein, one should not feel humiliation when Allah *the Almighty* causes others to be of higher ranks than them. This is because all the affairs of the universe are subject to the Will of Allah. Thus, the one who shows full submission to Allah's All-Profound Wisdom to the

distribution of talents to people will be enabled by Him *the Almighty* to get the maximum benefit of their talent to the effect that no one with the same talent will excel them.

But, will all mankind manage to show full submission to Allah in this regard? The answer is 'no', because some people may fall prey to malevolence, hatred and envy when they see someone who is wealthier than them. We say to such people, 'If you examine the matter very carefully, you may find that you are more powerful than them, and you may even be happier than them. If you draw a comparison between the talents Allah gave you and the talents Allah gave other people, you will find the total of every individual equals the total of every other individual'. Thus, the one who manages to overcome this defect in their soul will gain reward from Allah *the Almighty* to the effect that He will expiate some of their evil deeds and forgive them. As for that one who objects to Allah's distribution of talents to His creatures, they will be punished by Him *the Almighty*. He has made it clear, 'I will certainly try you and test you. So, whoever passes the test will have forgiveness and mercy, and whoever fails it will have punishment. Do not think that My punishment is distant, because death is the only thing that keeps one away from the punishment in the Hereafter; death has no known cause. It is possible for someone to die at any time, and then their punishment begins'. Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse with His saying, 'Indeed, your Lord is swift in punishment, yet He is Most Forgiving and Merciful.'

And with this, we have come to the end of the interpretation of the chapter of *al-An'am* which began with Allah's saying, 'All praise is due to Allah...' and ended with His saying, 'He is Most Forgiving and Merciful.'

All praise is due to Allah in this worldly life, in the Hereafter.

The Chapter of

al-A'raf

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

Before we begin our explanation for the chapter of *al-A'raf*, we must consider a very important subtle observation related to the Book of Allah *the Almighty* that is, all the verses of the Quran are closely connected to each other.

For example, the final word in the chapter of *al-An'am* reads “Most Merciful” or *rahimun*; we find that this word is written in such a way as to suggest it will relate to what comes after it. We find the words *ghafurun rahimun* written with the vowel marking the final syllables of each; this means that this last word of the chapter of *al-An'am* is directly connected in reading to the saying of Allah, ‘*bismillahi ar-rahman ar-rahim*’.

This indicates the fact that all the verses of the Quran are connected to each other in such a way that tells obviously that the Quran is one entity. If He *the Almighty* willed, He would make verses end with consonants and thus there will be no space for the verses to be connected to each other, or He might instruct us to stop forcibly on the endings of every verse, yet Allah *Glorified is He* wanted all the verses of the Quran to be connected to one another. Allah says:



Alif Lam Mim Sad [1] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 1)

In this verse, we should separate between the pronunciations of each letter, as follows: we read *alif*, then we pause and read *lam*; then we pause and read *mim*, then pause and read *sad*. These letters break the general rule of pronunciation of Arabic words for a wise reason, that is, they are discrete letters or ‘*huruf muqatta`ah*’ such as ‘*Alif, Lam, Mim*’, ‘*Ha. Mim*’, ‘*Ta Ha*’, ‘*Ya Sin*’, ‘*Sad*’, and ‘*Qaf*’; and they are all written without vowels, a matter which indicates that each of them actually has a separate meaning known to

Allah *the Almighty* alone. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is narrated to have said, 'Whoever recites a letter from the Book of Allah, he will be credited with a good deed, and a good deed gets a ten-fold reward. I do not say that *Alif-Lam-Mim* is one letter, but rather *Alif* is a letter, *Lam* is a letter and *Mim* is a letter.'⁽¹⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* thereby indicates that these letters each have their own significance; and this could only be the case if they indicate a clear meaning. These meanings may not yet be understood by all people, to the effect that those who recite them in their prayers might not even understand their meanings. Everyone who reads the Quran earns reward for the recitation of every letter; if someone were to read, 'I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan', and then read a letter or more from the Quran, they would earn a good deed with every letter. When reading the openings of the chapters of the Quran, we find that some of them start with discrete letters like the chapter of *al-Baqara* in which Allah says, '*Alif Lam Mim.*' (*al-Baqara*: 1)

And here at the beginning of the chapter of *al-A'raf*, we read, '*Alif Lam Mim Sad.*' (*al-A'raf*: 1) They are disjointed letters which are read without any end vowels so that each letter is separate from the other. Another thing which can be noted about them is that they are not recited with their designated sounds, but rather, with their names. What are designated sounds? And what are names? When you say 'write', you do not say, 'W-R-I-T-E', but rather, you pronounce the designated sound of /w/; the letter is called 'W', but its designated sound is /w/. Every letter has a designated sound and a name. An illiterate person pronounces the designated sounds, even if they do not know their names; as for the literate person, he alone understands that when he says 'write', it is composed of the letters 'W-R-I-T-E'; yet the illiterate person is unaware of this distinction.

If Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, received this, and said '*Alif Lam Mim*', and since he was illiterate and had never learnt, then, who told him to pronounce the names of the letters instead of their designated sounds? He must have been taught them and had them transmitted to him.

(1) Narrated by At-Tirmidhi

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'So when We have recited it [through Gabriel], then follow its recitation.' (*al-Qiyama*: 18)

You find 'Alif Lam Mim' at the start of the chapter of *al-Baqara* and the chapter of *Al-'Imran*, but you read the first verse of the chapter of *al-Fil*, 'Have you not considered, [O Muhammad], how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1)

The words 'have you not' in Arabic are '*alam* which is spelt with the letters *alif*, *lam*, and *mim*. What is the difference between the letters *alif*, *lam*, and *mim* at the start of the chapters of *al-Baqara*, *Al-'Imran* and others, and the very same letters in the chapter of *al-Fil* and others such as the chapter of *ash-Sharh*? At the start of *al-Baqara* and *Al-'Imran*, you read them as names, whilst at the start of the chapter of *al-Fil* you read them as designated sounds; and the thing which makes you differentiate between them is that you have heard them recited at the start of *al-Baqara* and *Al-'Imran* in this way, and you heard them recited at the start of the chapter of *al-Fil* in the other way. So, the recitation of the Quran is a matter of transmission, and no one is entitled to recite the Quran without first hearing it from a tutor so that they know how to recite it.

We read '*Alif Lam Mim Sad*' at the start of the chapter of *al-A'raf*, and these are disjointed letters; and we know that there is a total of twenty-eight disjointed letters in the alphabet, of which we find half at the beginning of certain chapters of the Quran. There might only be a single letter at the start of the chapter, as is the case with, 'Qaf. By the honoured Quran! But they wonder that there has come to them a warner from among themselves, and the disbelievers say, "This is an amazing thing."' (*Qaf*: 1-2) And in His words: 'Sad. Consider this Quran, endowed with all that one ought to remember!' (*Sad*: 1), or, 'Nun. Consider the pen, and all that they inscribe.' (*al-Qalam*: 1)

On other occasions, there are two disjointed letters, as in His words, '*Ha. Mim.*' (*al-Ahqaf*: 1)

There are three disjointed letters, as in: '*Alif. Lam. Mim.*' (*al-Baqara*: 1), and there are four disjointed letters, as in, '*Alif Lam Mim Sad.*' (*al-A'raf*: 1) There are even five disjointed letters, as in His words, '*Kaf. Ha. Ya. 'Ayn. Sad.*' (*al-Kahf*: 1)

If you look at these fourteen letters, you find that they represent half the letters of the Arabic alphabet, and this half contains half of the phonetic rules: some of them are voiced, or unvoiced, or light, or heavy; and of each kind you find half, which indicates that they have been placed according to a precise arrangement. And even though the phonetic descriptions of the letters – such as heavy, emphatic, light, voiced and unvoiced – were not developed until after the Quran had been revealed, the One who said these letters knew what His creatures would discover concerning these disjointed letters, and He had a wise reason for this. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was unlettered and never had a tutor; so how could he utter the names of the letters when only the learned know the names of the letters? He must therefore have received them through revelation. And we know that the Quran was revealed as a challenge to the Arabs to be a miracle for mankind. And challenges are only issued to those who are skilled in that particular discipline. The Arabs were eminently famous for their rhetoric, oration, poetry, verse, and parables. They were a people of speech, eloquence, and rhetoric, so the Quran came to them in the form of that in which they excelled. When Allah challenged the Arabs by sending them a Book which they could not imitate, the raw material was one, namely language, and composed of the very same letters of language in which the Arabs excelled, and of the very same wording they used. However, they were unable to imitate it because it came from Allah *the All-Powerful*, whilst the speech and rhetoric of the Arabs were the product of man.

This way, we know the secret of the cryptic disjointed letters which came to confirm that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received the Quran through revelation because he was unlettered. He was taught by the One Who taught man by the pen and that which he did not know. The human mind can delve into these verses and these letters and bring out many meanings, and we find that many of those who meditate and reflect on Allah's words have found many wonders in the realm of the majesty and beauty of the Quran; you can find a Sufi saying that '*Alif Lam Mim Sad*' came for a particular wise reason here: the first letter you pronounce of '*Alif*' is 'A' which comes from the palate, and the 'L' of '*Lam*' is pronounced by the tongue and the 'M' of '*Mim*' is pronounced by the lips; in this way, the points of articulation of the letters move from the palate to the tongue to the lips.

The Sufi said this indicates that this chapter speaks about the affairs of life beginning with the creation of Adam, referring to the beginning of the creation of man, and proceeding to the medial matter of life, and then moving to the end which is death, the Reckoning, and the life of the Hereafter; and the letter 'Sad' is here because this chapter contains the stories (*qasas*) of most of the prophets.

This is the thought process which the Sufi went through concerning this verse; do we have the right to object to it? Of course we do not; we do not object to it, but we say to him: Is this the entirety of God's knowledge concerning it? No, because we must become acquainted with the array of connotations it contains in the realm of our limited capabilities of our human nature; but if we read it in the light of Allah's intention, we will never be able to grasp and encompass all the scope of dimension of Allah's intentions because our understanding falls short of this.

As humans, we use letters which have no meaning to indicate things which serve our lives; for example, we find that people in the armed forces set 'code words' for every garrison so that no one can enter them unless they know the code word, and the one who knows the code word can enter. Every code word has a meaning for the one who sets it, for one's life may be squandered away if he approaches a military garrison without knowing such a code.

'*Alif Lam Mim Sad.*' (*al-A'raf*: 1). After these disjointed letters, we find discourse about the Book, and Allah says:

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ
لِتُنذِرَ بِهِ. وَذِكْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

**This Book has been sent down to you [Prophet] – let
there be no anxiety in your heart because of it – so that
you may use it to give warning and to remind the
believers [2] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 2)**

When you hear the word *anzala* (sent down from on high), know that it means something has come from above, meaning that the Sacred Law is from up high. Some of the scholars asked, 'Was there any anxiety in the heart of Prophet Muhammad'? We should be aware that when a commandment comes from Allah in which He says, 'let there be no anxiety in your heart because of

it...' (*al-A'raf*: 2), the prohibition is not for Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him*, but it is rather directed to the anxiety or discomfort that might befall Prophet Muhammad: it is as though He was saying, 'O anxiety! Do not befall or dwell the heart of Muhammad'!

Some of the scholars, however, said that Allah said '...let there be no anxiety in your heart because of it...' (*al-A'raf*: 2) as He knew that due to the limitations of human nature, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* might become discomfited and feel grief for being called him a sorcerer, a liar and a madman. 'If an adversary ascribes some notorious qualities to you which you know better than him, they are groundless; so, he is the liar; for you have not lied, nor worked with sorcery, but rather, you wish to guide people'. Allah's words, '...let there be no anxiety in your heart because of it...' (*al-A'raf*: 2) came for one of two reasons: either they were a commandment to anxiety not to befall the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or the commandment was addressed to Prophet Muhammad to reassure him and give him inner peace. In other words, 'Do not be disheartened, for it has been sent down upon you from Allah; would Allah send down the Quran to you to be a way of guidance for His creatures as pathfinder and then give you up to these fools? No, this could never be; so be completely assured and at peace'.

'...let there be no anxiety in your heart because of it—so that you may use it to give warning and to remind the believers.' (*al-A'raf*: 2) Warnings are only for the disobedient because they imply a severe utterance for the ominous doom that awaits the addressee. And it is also a reminder to the believers, just as He said before in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, '...guidance for all the God-conscious.' (*al-Baqara*: 2)

Here we notice that the message requires a sender of Higher Power (Allah), a medium as a messenger (Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*) and recipients, (community or *ummah*); the recipient either follows or declines the guidance. The verse came to say, 'This Book has been sent down to you from up high...' (*al-A'raf*: 2), i.e. from Allah Who is the Sender 'to you' because you are the Messenger; the recipients are the *ummah*: you will either warn them if they are astray, or else remind, guide and aid them or give them glad tidings if they are believers.

Allah then says:

﴿۲﴾ أَتَّبِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord; do not follow other masters beside Him. How seldom you take heed! [3] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 3)

Allah's servants will be discriminately clustered before a messenger who brought them the message and the Book, into two groups; those who accept guidance and those who need to be warned. Allah *Glorified is He* therefore says to them, 'Follow what has been sent down unto you by your Sustainer...' (*al-A'raf*: 3).

And He warns them against idolatry and neglecting to seek guidance by associating partners with Allah, saying, '...and follow no masters other than Him.' How seldom do you remember.' (*al-A'raf*: 3)

When Allah brings forth a verse of this kind and says, 'and (it is) a reminder' or 'and remind them', this alerts us to the fact that the natural disposition of man is to have faith and none of the divine messages came to create new faith, but rather, they came to remind man of the solemn covenant which was pledged to Allah the time of Adam *peace be upon him* 'And when thy Sustainer took the seeds of the children of Adam from their loins, He made them bear witness against themselves; "Am I not your Sustainer?", to which they answered, "Yes, indeed, we do bear witness thereto." Of this We remind you, lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, "Verily, we were unaware of this."' (*al-A'raf*: 172)

This acknowledgement was made. So, when Allah *the Exalted* says, '...How seldom do you keep remember' (*al-A'raf*: 3), our attention is drawn to that which fathers forgot to pass on to their children; fathers teach their children how to attain the needs of their lives, but they should also teach them the values of this life which they themselves were taught. Allah said to Adam and Eve, '...Nonetheless, there shall most certainly come unto you guidance from Me; and he who follows My guidance....' (*Ta Ha*: 123) Thus, we know that 'guidance' came down to Adam, and it was incumbent upon Adam to teach this to his children, and for the children to teach it to the grandchildren; and this 'guidance' should have continued to be passed on to the next

generations just as all the other matters of life were passed along. And Allah *Glorified is He* tells us the way this following is supposed to occur: 'Follow what has been sent down unto you by your Sustainer....' (*al-A'raf*: 3)

The methodology transferred to us by the True Lord *Glorified is He* is the way which rectifies life; and there is no harm done for any of you in following that which was sent down from the Sustaining, All-Powerful, Creator and it could not be that He would sustain our bodies with food, drink and air, then not sustain our values with morality; '...and follow no masters other than Him....' (*al-A'raf*: 3) Allah *the Exalted* made it clear: follow that which is sent down upon you from up high, it is not right to seek guidance from those who are lower than Him, as the world is doing now by adopting laws enacted by other than Allah, and which are subject to man's desires. One loves capitalism and so imposes it with the sword; another loves socialism and so imposes it with the sword; each one imposes the laws which pleases him with the sword. They are all conflicting, man-made reasoning and all contrary to Allah's methodology.

'...And follow no masters other than Him.' How seldom do you remember?' (*al-A'raf*: 3) Keep in mind, O believer, that your honour in following Allah's methodology is manifested in the fact that you are not submitting to one who is equal to you; and this is the distinguishing feature of religion which allows man to live in the world with his dignity preserved; and if something comes to him which is beyond his means, he meets it with all the means at his disposal having faith that the Lord of All Means will give him aid; and indeed Allah does give him succour, so he prostrates to Him in gratitude. Conversely, when the atheist is afflicted with a certain matter which is beyond his means, he feels desperately disheartened to the extent that he might commit suicide.

After this, Allah explains that the succession of messengers has been proceeding since the time of Adam *peace be upon him* and every time heedlessness overcame mankind Allah sent them a messenger to alert them, and awaken the values and the religious immunity that exists in the self so that if the self-relents to deviation, it will remind itself and say, 'Why did you do that?' This is the self-reproaching soul; and if the self-reproaching soul falls silent and the person begins to take a liking to sin, and his soul begins to

command him to do evil all the time, the society around him will put him right. This is the benefit of mutually enjoining what is right and having patience: each one advises one matter and is advised in another matter; when one is weak before a certain passion, another person who is not weak regarding this passion will advise him, and he will exchange advice with others. This is the meaning of mutually enjoining counsel, for counsel does not come from a single group of professional advisors who counsel the people, but rather, every person gives counsel in those matters in which they are competent, and receive counsel from others in those matters in which they are indolent. If society becomes corrupted, The True Lord intervenes by sending a new messenger, a new miracle and a new way of guidance; yet Allah made the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entrusted with the merit of counselling, and no messenger will follow him because we are the best *ummah* which has been brought forth to mankind, and this supremacy is manifested in that we enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, so mutual counsel will continue to exist until the Last Hour dawns, 'You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for the good of mankind; you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong....' (*Al-Imran*: 110)

And this special distinction will never end; so if you see something wrong you must, out of your instinctive goodness, condemn it and say 'No'. And if Allah made Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the Seal of the Prophets, this is a testimony to his followers that it has become secure, and that the intrinsic immunity within it will never be barred or cut off, and likewise it will never lose its social resistance, so no messenger will follow the greatest of mankind, our Prophet Muhammad. Allah then says:

وَكَمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا فَجَاءَهَا بَأْسُنَا بَيِّنًا أَوْ هُمْ فَآلِفُونَ ﴿٤﴾

**How many towns We have destroyed! Our
punishment came to them by night or while they
slept in the afternoon [4] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 4)**

When the interrogative phrase 'how many' is mentioned, it implies that the number of items in question is too large to be counted; yet when the number of the items we inquire about is small, we do not ask about it, but

rather, it is definite. The word *qarya* or 'town' is a name for a place which is specially equipped for people to live in. Were the towns destroyed, or the inhabitants of the towns? Allah clarifies that sometimes this word is used to mean both the place and the inhabitants, whilst at other times the word 'town' can mean the inhabitants of the town such as the words of Allah in the chapter of *Yusuf*, 'And ask you in the town in which we were at the time, and of the people of the caravan with whom we travelled hither....' (*Yusuf*: 82)

One does not ask a place or buildings, but rather, he asks the inhabitants of the town, yet Allah did not say 'Ask the inhabitants of the town' because the thing being inquired about was something which was so true that even the place testified to it along with the inhabitants of the place. On other occasions, Allah clarifies that He destroyed the town with both its buildings and its inhabitants. 'And how many a town have We destroyed, with Our punishment coming upon it....' (*al-A'raf*: 4)

Which of them befell first: the destruction or the punishment? The thing which befell first was the punishment which thus destroyed since the manifestations of cosmological matters in events do not come about spontaneously, but rather, their occurrences are predestined from pre-eternity. It is as though Allah is saying to us: 'And how many a town have We decreed to destroy, whereupon Our punishment came upon it to bring into realisation that which We decreed in pre-eternity', that is, for the events to come into being according to how they were willed by Allah even though there was free will for those about whom Allah is speaking.

We know that a town is a place, and in this case, it has no free will. And if those about whom Allah is speaking possessed free will, He knew from pre-eternity that their actions would be typically compatible to what He decreed, and He stated this in the Quran which is recited so that the events would unfold exactly as Allah predestined their sequence. 'And how many a town have We destroyed, with Our punishment coming upon it by night, or while they were resting at noontide.' (*al-A'raf*: 4)

The word *ba's* or 'punishment' means a power which cannot be fought off or overcome; and *bayatan* means 'by night', and '...or while they were resting at noontide' (*al-A'raf*: 4) means while they were napping. Why did the

punishment befall them by night or while napping? We find in the records about those who were destroyed like in the case of the people of Lot *peace be upon him*, the destruction befell them by night, and destruction befell the people of Shu'ayb (Jethro) while they napped. Night and naptime are times of relaxation and rest, and the events therefore surprised them so that they were unable to prepare themselves.

‘But then, once it alights upon them, hapless will be the awakening of those who were warned to no avail.’ (*as-Saffat*: 177) Destruction came to them whilst they were sleeping, and they had no power with which to face the punishment ‘...with Our punishment coming upon it by night, or while they were resting at noontide.’ (*al-A'raf*: 4) When Allah *the Exalted* said, ‘...by night, or while they were resting at noontide.’ (*al-A'raf*: 4), it might be that this town had suburbs, and the time for napping for some people differed from the time of those who lived in the suburbs so that they took it at night. The noontide rest is the time in which they would sleep at midday to take repose and rest; but how did they react when the time came for the punishment to befall and destroy them? Allah says:

فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوَاهُمْ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بِأَسْنَاءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٥﴾

**their only cry when Our punishment came to them was,
‘How wrong we were!’ [5] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 5)**

This statement clarifies the matter; from His word *da'wa* or ‘plea’, we can understand that it was a matter of pleading. If we say that so-and-so made an accusation (*da'wa*) against so-and-so, he must bring evidence to prove his claim, otherwise it will not be upheld. The word *da'wa* can also mean a supplication or prayer (*du'a*) as in: ‘...And their call (*da'wa*) will close with the words, “All praise is due to God, the Sustainer of all the worlds.”’ (*Yumus*: 10) Here, Allah says, ‘No plea had they, when Our punishment came upon them, save that they said, “Verily, we were wrongdoers.”’ (*al-A'raf*: 5)

Our Lord explains this matter in several chapters, which is that it was a confession from them that they transgressed and persisted in wrong doing; Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And they will add, “Had we but listened to those warnings or at least used our own reason, we would not be among those who are destined for

the blazing flame.” And they will acknowledge their sins, but far will be forgiveness for those who are destined for the blazing flame.’ (*al-Mulk*: 10-11)

Allah then says:

فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٦﴾

**We shall certainly question those to whom
messengers were sent — and We shall question the
messengers themselves [6] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 6)**

Allah will ask the messengers after gathering them about how far their people credited them; and the question is rhetorical, it is only for acknowledgement. The matter of such questions is mentioned in the Quran in different ways which seem at first sight to be contradictory, when actually, they refer to different things, and this has made the enemies of Islam claim that the Quran is contradictory.

Allah says, ‘Then, when the trumpet of resurrection is blown, no ties of kinship will on that Day prevail among them, and neither will they ask about one another’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 101) as well as ‘...and when no friend will ask about his friend...’ (*al-Ma'arij*: 10) as well as, ‘...but such as are lost in sin may not be asked about their sins.’ (*al-Qasas*: 78)

Then He says, ‘For on that Day neither man nor invisible being will be asked about his sins.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 39)

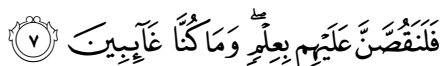
And then here, He says, ‘Thus, on Judgment Day We shall most certainly call to account all those unto whom a divine message was sent, and We shall most certainly call to account the message-bearers themselves.’ (*al-A'raf*: 6) This has made some of the orientalist attempt to show that the Quran – we seek refuge with Allah – contains contradictions. We say to each of them, ‘You are just decontextualizing the Quran without considering the faculty of expression in language. If you were to consider the fact that the Quran was received by a people who were eloquent Arabic speakers, nonetheless remained disbelievers so that it cannot be argued that they were being indulgent out of bias: had they found this ‘contradiction’, would not they have been able to reject the call of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘Could the Quran be a miracle when it is self-contradictory?’ But the disbelievers did not dare to claim

that which shows that their faculties received the embedded meaning of the Quran in the way intended by the Sender of the Quran. In our customary norms, the question is posed for two purposes: sometimes the student asks his teacher to learn, and other times the teacher asks the student to confirm.

So, questions are asked for two reasons: either you ask to learn, or you ask to get corroboration so that the argument will become firmer for the one whom you ask. If Allah will ask someone, this means that He will ask for the purpose of acknowledgement, a rhetorical question, in order that the argument will be clearer to him, and after this, He says, 'And they will add, "Had we but listened to those warnings, or at least used our own reason, we would not be among those who are destined for the blazing flame.' but far will be forgiveness for those who are destined for the blazing flame.' (*al-Mulk*: 10-11)

This is both a confession and an acknowledgement on their part; and these two are the best of all proofs because the statement of the interrogator is only a testimony, whilst the speech of the confessor is both a confession and an acknowledgement. So, when the question is affirmed, this means it is a question of confirmation from Allah so that they testify against themselves and this is the clearest of proofs for the argument that cuts off any possibility for denial. Either the person will acknowledge, or otherwise if he does not, his organs will testify against him because they will no longer be subject to his will, and the person will no longer have any control over them, as Allah says, 'And they will ask their skins, "Why did you bear witness against us?"—and they will reply, "Allah, who gives speech to all things, has given speech to us..."' (*Fussilat*: 21).

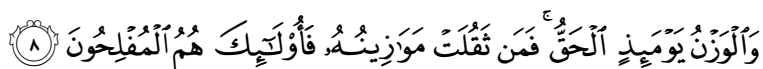
Here Allah says, 'Thus, on Judgment Day We shall most certainly call to account all those unto whom a divine message was sent, and We shall most certainly call to account the message-bearers themselves.' (*al-A'raf*: 6) And Allah says about this question of acknowledgement, 'On the day when God shall assemble all the apostles and shall ask, "What response did you receive..."' (*al-Ma'ida*: 109) And when Allah asks the message-bearers, when they fulfilled their missions, this will be a rebuke for the recipients. Allah then says:



**And, with full knowledge, for We were never far
from them, We shall tell them what they did [7]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 7)**

That is, Allah *the Exalted* will inform them at the moment of reckoning of all that they have done because He was never away from watching any of the actions of His creatures; therefore He says, '...for never have We been absent.' (*al-A'raf*: 7) We know that creation consists of many different people going through many different repeating occurrences in different places. There are many people, and each person has his own events, and each has his own place. So, when Allah says to them all, '...for never have We been absent' (*al-A'raf*: 7), this means that He is with them all. Since He is not absent from any act, or from the doer of any act, nor from the place of any act and they are all counted, this proves His spatiotemporal encompassment of His creations.

But, how could He be both here and there? I say that you must take this in the light of '...There is nothing like unto Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11); and these kinds of concepts concerning unseen matters cannot be framed by these images. We discussed this before when we spoke about the 'coming' of Allah: He has absolute omnipotent power, and there is nothing like unto Him, and He was never absent from any event or place. Allah then says:



**On that Day the weighing of deeds will be true and just:
those whose good deeds are heavy on the scales will be
the ones to prosper [8] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 8)**

In these verses, we find a discourse about the weighing of deeds which is all an emphasis of their accountability for their false argument; for Allah does not wrong anyone. The weighing of deeds constitutes a nullification of the argument of those who fear hell but did not fulfil Allah's rights in this worldly life. All of this is to emphasise the argument and highlight the justice, and to refute all false and groundless arguments. In this concern, Allah says, 'But We shall set up just balance-scales on Resurrection Day...' (*al-Anbiya*: 47).

These scales are the epitome of justice, and not only fair scales; rather, the precision of the scales on the Last Day will reach the point where they will be justice themselves. Allah says, 'And true will be the weighing on that Day...' (*al-A'raf*: 8). Indeed, the weighing of that day will be true and precise, and let us bear in mind that Allah said before, 'Whoever shall come before God with a good deed will gain ten times the like thereof; but whoever shall come with an evil deed will be requited with no more than the like thereof; and none shall be wronged.' (*al-An'am*: 160)

The true scale is that upon which the justice of the whole universe is based, and everything within it is weighed. And He is the One Who sets all the measures according to the wisdom, exactitude, and precision by which every being performs the role for which it was made; He says, 'And the skies, He has raised high, and has devised for all things a measure.' (*ar-Rahman*: 7)

We have never seen the sky cast and throw down upon us any unexpected events, for the universe has a precise order. The weighing on the Day of Resurrection will be the absolute justice. On that day, all the scales of the worldly life will be set aside; in so much as these scales suffered from an imperfection, whether in the weighing machine or the weight itself, or were affected by the events of the universe and the reactions which took place in it. Conversely the Scale of Heaven cannot be impaired, as it is not affected by anything except the value of the man's deeds.

When Allah says, 'And true will be the weighing on that Day...' (*al-A'raf*: 8), the scales of the worldly life can be imperfect, the ownership framework can be impaired likewise; for Allah granted the means of appropriate ownership to every person: this one owns this, another owns that and a third own this; and after that, every person uses what he owns either fairly or unfairly according to their free choice. But on the Last Day, there will be no ownership for anyone, '...With whom will sovereignty rest on that Day? With God, the One Who holds absolute sway over all that exists!' (*Ghafir*: 16)

At this point, everything will belong to Allah alone; and if Allah granted ownership to His servants in this worldly life, this ownership will end on the Last Day: '...and those whose weight of good deeds is heavy in the balance – it is they, who shall attain to a happy state.' (*al-A'raf*: 8) He says, 'And then, he

whose weight of good deeds is heavy in the balance shall find himself in a happy state; whereas he whose weight is light in the balance shall be engulfed by an abyss. And what could make thee conceive what that abyss will be? A fire hotly burning!' (*al-Qari'a*: 6-11)

So, the scale is heavily tipped in favour of good deeds and lightly tipped against bad deeds. We can observe that the logical breakdown of a balance necessitates three things; either the scale pan will be heavier, lighter or equal; but this is not the case here. Allah then speaks of those whose weight is light in the balance saying:

وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٩﴾

**and those whose good deeds are light will be the ones
who have lost their souls through their wrongful
rejection of Our messages[9] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 9)**

The previously quoted chapter mentioned both states, and this chapter also mentions both states; and it is strange that this discourse which concerns the heaviness or the lightness of the scale and does not mention the third case in which the two scales are equally balanced, comes at the beginning of the chapter of *al-A'raf*, yet later in this chapter He says, '...and on the Heights, are men who know them all by their marks...' (*al-A'raf*: 46). These are the ones whose good and bad deeds are equally matched, and our Lord has made for them a place which resembles the *'urf* (mane) of a horse which is the highest part of the horse so that the horse's hair sometimes goes to the left, and sometimes to the right, and neither side takes precedence over the other. Allah has made for the denizens of *al-a'raf* (the Heights) a place in which they will hear the denizens of Hell calling to the denizens of Paradise, and likewise, the denizens of Paradise calling to the denizens of Hell; and the denizens of the Heights will sit, neither in Paradise nor in Hell since their good deeds are equal to their bad ones. In this way, the logical breakdown of the possibilities of the weighing is covered by the words of Allah, 'And on the Heights, are men who know them all by their marks...' (*al-A'raf*: 46).

So, neither has their good deeds tipped the scale heavily enough for them to enter paradise, nor have their ill deeds tipped the scale lightly enough for

them to enter hell, so their scales are evenly balanced. Some of the scholars assume, regarding the balance, that there will actually be a real balance, whilst others assume that the balance symbolises the absolute justice which is ordained by the Most Just. Even more curious is that Allah had said there are balances; does this mean that everyone has his own balance, or that every kind of action of moral responsibility has its own balance, one for doctrine, another for sacred rulings, and so on? And will Allah call us to account one by one, or will there be many simultaneous reckonings, as is borne out by the fact that when they asked `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* ‘Will Allah call to account all His creatures at the same time?’, he said, ‘What is strange about this? Does He not provide for them all at the same time?’ So, the matter of the balance is very easy and trifling for Allah as nothing overpowers Him.

‘Whereas those whose weight is light in the balance – it is they who will have squandered their own selves by their wilful rejection of Our messages.’ (*al-A'raf*: 9) Indeed, they will have squandered their own selves; for each one of them used to indulge in lusts and commit sins to give himself enjoyment, and then on the Last Day he will come forth and find that he has squandered everything. It is as the popular aphorism, ‘He has squandered away the wheat and the chaff’. Why? The answer comes from Allah, ‘...by their wilful rejection of Our messages.’ (*al-A'raf*: 9)

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنَّاكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعِيشَةً قَلِيلًا مَا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

**We established you [people] on the earth and
provided you with a means of livelihood there —
small thanks you give! [10] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 10)**

The one who is given a place is the one who settles in it without being disturbed therein; if you tell someone that you have given them a place somewhere, this means you have set them up so that no one else can remove them. Allah granted us a bountiful place on earth and placed for us within it the means to preserve life, the luxuries of life, the adornments of life, and the comforts of life. The land gifted us in abundance when we farmed it, and the sun

was never absent from us with its light, rays and warmth. Everything in the world fulfils its purpose, and we were not placed within the earth by our own power, but by Allah's power; and we must bear this in mind. None of us has any power over the sun, moon, wind or the earth; but the One Who created them and subjugated them is your Lord and their Lord. You have been given a place, and everything responds positively to you because Allah has subjugated it.

'Yes, indeed, O men, We have given you a bountiful place on earth, and appointed thereon means of livelihood for you; yet how seldom are you grateful.' (*al-A'raf*: 10) The word *ma'ayish* (means of life) is the plural of *ma'isha* which means 'life'; the word *'ish* means the constituents of life; this is why in the villages they call bread *'ish* because they have a high level of precision as they are aware that it is an essential constituent of life.

Allah's saying, '...how seldom are you grateful' (*al-A'raf*: 10) indicates that there are some who are grateful; there are people who give thanks for Allah's blessings in a general way for all blessings, or give Him special thanks for each blessing, and there are those who give Him special thanks not only for each blessing, but for each component of a single blessing; so when they begin eating they say, 'In the Name of Allah', and when they finish eating they say, 'Praise be to Allah', whilst another says 'In the Name of Allah' before every morsel, and then 'Praise be to Allah' after chewing and swallowing it because it did not stick in his throat. And when we drink, we should drink in three sips, saying 'In the Name of Allah' before each one and 'Praise be to Allah after each one'; and the one who does this will not commit a sin as long as this water remains in his body because it is all 'In the Name of Allah', so it will protect him from error; for if you considered a single blessing, you would find that it contains many other blessings within itself.

When you are ungrateful, you only limit your chances for reception of more blessings from Allah; if you were to give thanks for blessings, more blessings would come heap in abundance before you, '...If you are grateful to Me, I shall most certainly give you more and more...' (*Ibrahim*: 7); and it is foolish not to give thanks.

Allah then says:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنَاكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ
فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ لَمْ يَكُن مِّنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿١١﴾

**We created you, We gave you shape, and then We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ and they did. But not Iblis: he was not one of those who bowed down [11]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 11)**

The matter of creation has already been mentioned in the chapter of *al-Baqara*; the creation of Adam, and Satan. This matter is repeated over seven chapters, and is present in seven places: in the chapters of *al-Baqara*, *al-A'raf*, *al-Hajj*, *al-Isra`*, *al-Kahf*, *Ta Ha*, and *Sad*. Yet, in each place there are different scenarios of the story. This is because Allah must repeat this blessing for it to stick in the minds of His servants, and had He only mentioned it once it might have been forgotten; and for this reason, Allah repeats the reminder of it more than once. If Allah wants to evoke His blessings and draw attention to them in certain things, He repeats them, just as He repeated the evocation of His blessings in a single chapter many times, when He says, ‘Which, then, of your Sustainer’s powers can you disavow?’

He mentions these blessings from their beginning saying, ‘He has created man out of sounding clay, like pottery, whereas the invisible beings He has created out of a confusing flame of fire. Which, then, of your Sustainer’s powers can you disavow? He is the Sustainer of the two farthest points of sunrise, and The Sustainer of the two farthest points of sunset. Which, then, of your Sustainer’s powers can you disavow? He has given freedom to the two great bodies of water, so that they might meet, yet between them is a barrier which they may not transgress. Which, then, of your Sustainer’s powers can you disavow? Out of these two bodies of water come forth pearls and coral. Which, then, of your Sustainer’s powers can you disavow? And His are the lofty ships that sail like floating mountains through the seas. Which, then, of your Sustainer’s powers can you disavow? All that lives on earth or in the heavens is bound to pass away: but forever will abide thy Sustainer’s Self, full of Majesty and Glory. Which, then, of your Sustainer’s powers can you disavow?’ (*ar-Rahman*: 14-28)

And after every blessing, He says, 'which, then, of your Sustainer's powers can you disavow?' By this, Allah intends to increase and reiterate its repetition to the ears in order that it would settle in the hearts even if the ears were deaf; so sometimes He even uses it for things which do not appear on the surface to be blessings, such as when He says, 'A flash of fire will be let loose upon you, and smoke, and you will be left without succour! Which, then, of your Sustainer's powers can you disavow?' (*ar-Rahman*: 35-36) Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned all of this because when things appear to us in their real light, whilst we are in this world of moral responsibility, this would be a mercy and a blessing from Him because this calls us to shield ourselves from forbidden acts and keep well clear of infringements.

Allah is beyond compare; when a child enters school, we say to him, 'If you do not work hard, you will fail'. By saying this, you are showing him mercy by giving him advice; you have not left him without showing him the consequences of things. Furthermore, when you see evil surrounding the disbelievers this pleases you; for if the disbelievers were equal to the believers, faith would have no advantage or distinction. The torment of hell is a calamity for the disbeliever, and a blessing for his opposite, the believer.

The detailed story⁽¹⁾ of the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* was related seven times in the Quran because it is the story of the beginning of creation, and it answers the question whose answer man is searching for because of how he found himself in a universe which was prepared for him in the best way. The universe did not come into being after man, but rather, man came into the universe, and the question of how he was created remained, a question which is as important as the existence of man in the universe. When you examine the genera of the universe, you see that every genus has function, and its function is related to you. Minerals have a function, and so are plants and animals; and all of them ultimately serve you, because minerals benefit plants, which draw nourishment from them so that they in turn can give nourishment to animals which benefit you and give you nourishment; so all the genera ultimately serve you. As for you, O man, what is your main function in this universe? For this reason, it was essential for man to come to know his own function, and Allah wanted to teach

(1) The story of Adam's creation and the temptation of Satan to him

man what his function is because He is the Maker, and when man searches for his Maker, Allah's power is revealed to him in everything that He made. It was also essential for man to receive information from the Creator: He sent down to us a methodology of guidance from Heaven accompanied by a miracle performed by a messenger, to whom Allah entrusted with the communication to people. The messenger informs us, and then we deduce the veracity of what he tells us by the miracles he performs. So, it was obligatory for us to believe the messenger because he came with a sign and a miracle from Allah.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received the message at the age of forty bearing the miraculous methodology of guidance. He informed us that he was a messenger from Allah. It was essential for us to search for confirmation that he was truly sent by Allah *Glorified is He* by considering his claim judiciously: this messenger came forth forty years after his birth with a miracle in the form of that field in which his people excelled, not the form of that in which he personally excelled. He did not invent the miracle, rather, it was bestowed by Allah because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought forth this miracle forty years after his birth, and it is absurd that ingenuity could suddenly spring forth forty years after birth because we know that ingenuity shows itself between the late teens and early twenties of a person's life. We take notice and find that he is speaking with inimitable eloquent speech. It is also absurd that he could have brought information about the universe whilst he was an unlettered man whose father had died whilst he was still in his mother's womb, and then his mother died when he was six and then his grandfather also died. He saw people succumbing to death all around him, so who was it who told him that he himself would survive and live long enough to reach the age of forty, whereupon he would reveal his miracle to us?

That is why we find that the Quran uses this fact as a proof, saying: 'And whenever Our messages are conveyed unto them in all their clarity, those who do not believe that they are destined to meet Us are wont to say, "Bring us a discourse other than this, or alter this one." Say, "It is not conceivable that I should alter it of my own volition; I only follow what is revealed to me. Behold, I would dread, were I to rebel against my Sustainer, the suffering on that awesome Day (of Judgment)."' (*Yunus*: 15)

In this way, the strong argument becomes clear that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was entrusted with conveying that which was revealed to him; and this is confirmed a second time when Allah *the Exalted* says, ‘Say, “If Allah had willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you, for I had remained among you a lifetime before it. Then will you not reason?”’ (Yunus: 16)

Here we find that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received the commandment from Allah *Glorified is He* to say to them, ‘In my whole life, have you ever known me to orate poetry or aphorisms, or have I ever given you a parable?’ So, if we reasoned the matter, and reflect and ponder on his plea, we will believe that he is the messenger of Allah and that a miracle was sent down to him from Allah.

‘Yes, indeed, we have created you, and then formed you; and then we said unto the angels, “Prostrate yourselves before Adam.”—Where upon they all prostrated themselves, except Iblis (Satan); he was not among those who prostrated themselves.’ (*al-A'raf*: 11) In this way, we see that the matter of creation and our being brought into being is something which the human should have considered for him to know his function in the universe. When man looks into it to know his exact function, he must leave aside all guesswork and speculation because this matter is not something in which we can use existing premises to guide us to knowledge of the manner in which we were created, nor to the knowledge of anything at all concerning the purpose of our creation. The manner of creation was something unseen, and there is nothing before us now which we can use to deduce how it was. Allah decreed the matter of creation, whether the creation of the heavens and the earth and all within them, or the creation of man; He decreed both matters, and there is no source of knowledge of anything about them except from Allah. He closed the door to independent reasoning in this matter, and the door to guesswork, and He called all those who conduct human research into this matter misguided and misleading. To pass final judgement on this matter, settle it and give minds respite from having to research into it, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor of the creation of their own selves; and neither do I have any need to take as My helpers those beings that lead men astray.’ (*al-Kahf*: 51)

It is as though the one who attempts to say how the heavens and the earth and how man was created, is leading others astray because Allah did not make him a witness of this; and the one who says this is not a helper or an assistant for Allah.

Allah *the Exalted* tells us the story of the creation of the heavens and the earth and the creation of man; and this verse refers to the creation of man. Those who conduct induction research and look to the past will certainly find that the matter is logical because the population of the world is growing and its proliferation can be detected. This growth is not only in the case of man, but also in the case of the other genera that serve man. We find that they are also subject to the phenomenon of growth, plant, and animal alike. If we look at the population statistics a century ago, we find that it is less than the current population; and every time we count and we look back to the past, the number becomes smaller and smaller until we arrive at just two because creation only comes from two; and Allah solved this puzzle for us by saying, ‘...who has created you out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate...’ (*an-Nisa*: 1). This statement is correct, and it is confirmed and made certain by statistics because the population of the world increases as time progresses.

And ‘...out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women...’ (*an-Nisa*: 1). This statement is true; and Allah *Glorified is He* also says, ‘And in everything have We created opposites...’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49).

Allah told us the story of the creation of Adam; as for how Eve was created, did He take a piece of Adam and create Eve from it? This might be correct; or is the meaning that she was created from the same genus, and in the same way? This could also be correct; and He sufficed with mentioning the creation of Adam without needing to mention the creation of Eve, and He gave us the model in one of them, and then said, ‘and out of it created its mate.’

The words *minha* (out of it) in this verse might not necessarily indicate partition, but might be akin to His words, ‘...an Apostle from among yourselves...’ (*at-Tawba*: 128). This does not mean that He took a piece of the Arabs and decreed it to be ‘Muhammad’; rather, He made Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon* from the same race when He created him and brought him

into existence. And when He said to the angels, ‘...Behold, I am about to establish upon earth one who shall inherit it...’ (*al-Baqara*: 30) which was the first statement which He then followed by saying, ‘and when I have formed him fully and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down before him in prostration!’ (*al-Hijr*: 29)

This means that before the breathing of the spirit, man would be fully formed. So, to whom did this forming occur, and who was the one who was formed? It was Adam who was formed. And it is stated that he was made from sounding clay, and a dark slime transmuted, and from earth, and from mud. These are various stages; so if Allah said that he created Adam ‘From earth, we say, ‘Indeed he was’; and if He says ‘From water’, we say ‘Indeed he was’; and if He says, ‘From mud’, this is also true; for when water mixes with earth it becomes mud; and if He says ‘out of dark slime transmuted’, this is also possible since slime is mud which has become putrid so its odour has changed; and it then hardens and turns into clay. So, these are the various stages of creation; Allah then says, ‘and (I) breathed into him of My spirit.’ This completed the phases of creation, so He said, ‘fall down before him in prostration!’

Some scholars say that the meaning of this prostration was submission and veneration, and not the same prostration that we know. Other scholars say that the meaning of the prostration was the same as that which we know, and that Adam was like the prayer-direction, like the Ka’ba which we face when we pray. But we have an observation here which is, ‘We only prostrate to Allah because our Lord said, “Prostrate”’. The prostration here was obedience to the commandment of Adam’s Creator. So, the intention was not to worship Adam, but it was obedience to Allah’s first commandment. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to command them to prostrate before Adam *peace be upon him* because He had subjugated the entire universe to serve Adam; and some of the angels are entrusted with carrying out orders, and some of them are entrusted with protection, whilst other angels remain always with Allah. The prostration of the angels was not a way of showing submission to Adam *peace be upon him*, but was rather, obedience to Allah’s Command, and for this reason the angels whose responsibilities involved the earth and the service of man prostrated. The angels who are close to Allah did not know anything about Adam *peace be upon him*. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* said to Iblis

(Satan), ‘...Are you too proud to bow down before another created being, or are you of those who think only high of themselves?’ (*Sad*: 75)

The word ‘high’ here denotes the angels who did not witness the command to prostrate before Adam *peace be upon him* for the high and mighty angels are not assigned to any tasks related to Adam, and the prostration command was issued only to those who were assigned to such tasks related to Adam and his progeny. Those are the guardian angels whom Allah *Glorified is He* assigned to protect us and watch over us by His command, ‘For each one are successive [angels] before and behind him who protect him by the decree of Allah.’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 11)

There are angels who watch over us, those who are ever-present and those who sit and observe; and every natural phenomenon in the universe has an angel assigned to it. When True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us about creation, He informs us, ‘We created you, We gave you shape and then We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ and they did. But not Satan: he was not one of those who bowed down.’ (*al-A’raf*: 11) This is the order that Allah chose for informing us about our creation, and not the chronological order of events. It is either that or, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* comprised the creation of all mankind in the creation of Adam; and modern science gives us indications of this when we observe a seed and discover that it contains all the constituents of the fruit. Likewise, within a single sperm we can find all the constituents of man. This is why, when they study about genetics, they say that the life of each of us comes through genome sequencing from those who came before. So, you came from the organism of your father when he was alive; if he were dead, the chain of existence would not have been passed on. Your father came from the organism of your grandfather when he too was alive. Hence, a living part has been passed from Adam to each one of us human beings, and this part has never died throughout that long genome sequence. So, we were all contained within the parts of Adam, and our Lord *Glorified is He* even tells us how He ‘took out’ the offspring from the loins of the children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves.

‘And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to

them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." [This] - Lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware." (al-A'raf: 172) The True Lord *Glorified is He* spoke the truth, for He is the All-Powerful Creator who is able to bring us all from the loins of the children of Adam. In this way, the creation came first and the forming came first, and all of this is in the natural sequence. There are things which Allah reveals but does not expound; that is, He displays them only. So, when He addresses Adam and addresses his children, it is as though He is addressing all of us. 'We created you, We gave you shape, and then We said to the angels, "Bow down before Adam," and they did. But not Satan: he was not one of those who bowed down.' (al-A'raf: 11) We have already explained who the angels are and the purpose of their prostration, '...and they did. But not Satan: he was not one of those who bowed down.' (al-A'raf: 11)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* excludes Satan from having been one of those who prostrated which indicates that he was one of those who had been commanded to prostrate; yet, is Satan an angel? No, because when you find two texts in the Quran about a common subject: one which has an associative connotation and one which has a decisive connotation, we should follow the one which has a decisive meaning.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And [mention] when we said to the angels, "Prostrate to Adam," and they prostrated, except for Satan. He was of the jinn and departed from the command of his Lord.' (al-Kahf: 50) This clearly tells that Satan is not of the angel kind and affirms that he is a jinn; and like men, the jinn were created with free will, and it is possible for them to disobey or obey.

So, when Allah tells us that Satan disobeyed his Lord's command, this mean that 'disobedience' is an option for him; as for the angels, they do not disobey what Allah commands them, and they do as they are told. Someone might wonder why the discourse about Satan came amidst the discourse about the angels; so let me explain this point further. Suppose a person possessing free will, whether man or jinn, adhered to Allah's path per Allah's command, and he obeyed Allah as he should—is his rank not like that of an angel, or indeed even higher than an angel because he possesses free will? This is why

they would call Satan ‘the peacock of the angels;’ that is, the one who dwelt in splendour amidst the angels because he used to adhere to Allah’s path, and he gave up his own free will, and chose that which Allah willed and obeyed it. He reached the status where he did not disobey Allah’s Command, and did as he was told; he stood out above the angels because they were compelled to obey, whilst he had an option to obey or to disobey; yet, he still remained obedient. So, he used to have a special status amongst the angels and reached such a level of distinction that he attended the assembly of the angels; while he was with the angels, the first news of Adam came, and our Lord *Glorified is He* said to the angels: ‘... Bow down before Adam ...’ (*al-A'raf*: 11) It was more fitting for him to obey the command instantly, but he rejected it haughtily. Since he was lower than the angels, and the commandment came to those who were higher than him—the angels—was it not fitting that he, being lower than them, should have obeyed the command? But because he was of the jinn, the trait of free will overcame him.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ
خَلَقَنِي مِنْ نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾

God said, ‘What prevented you from bowing down as I commanded you?’ and he said, ‘I am better than him: You created me from fire and him from clay’ [12] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 12)

He then exclaimed, as the Quran tells us, ‘Should I prostrate to one you created from clay?’ (*al-Isra'*: 61) So, his position was one of arrogance and haughtiness. This was obvious when Allah says: “[Allah] said, "O Satan, what prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with my hands? Were you arrogant [then], or were you [already] among the haughty?" (*Sad*: 75)

Taking a closer look at this discourse; the expression ‘kept you’ means something like ‘barred you’. In another instance, the Quran records this question in two different forms in the very same verse. The first form comes with the Arabic negation element *la* (not) (*Sad*: 75); the second form comes without the negation element—this is the only difference between the two forms in

Arabic. The first form is very obvious and clear; it means, ‘What has kept you from prostrating?’ But when Allah delivers it in the negative form—‘What has kept you from not prostrating?’ (*Sad*: 75) —it calls for pondering. Why did some scholars say that the negative element *la* is redundant, while others who were more ethical⁽¹⁾ said that it is a conjunction? But neither of these opinions is beneficial or appropriate since those who proposed, did not take into account the different meanings of the verb *mana‘a* ‘to prevent from’ or ‘refrain from’. You say ‘I kept someone from doing something’; it is as if he was about to do it, but you stopped him from going ahead with it. So the first form (without the negation) suggests that he was prepared to prostrate, but then a power stronger than him came and kept or barred him, stood between him and prostrating – but it did not happen exactly this way. The verb *mana‘a* also means to refrain; he refrained from the act; therefore, no one barred him from the act, but rather, he was convinced. There is a difference between being barred (*mamnu*) and refraining (*mumtani‘*); hence, the verse in question comes to confirm that he refrained of his own accord, and no one else barred him, but rather, he was convinced of it. So, the verse came to emphasise the active nature of the deed, namely his refraining from prostration; and this is the reason for the repetition in the Quran, which is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah said, “What prevented you from bowing down as I commanded you?”’ (*al-A‘raf*: 12) He commanded the angels, and Satan was included with them either due to his superiority because he outdid the angels by obeying Allah out of his free will, so his rank was high, or he was included with them due to his inferiority as the angels are higher in rank than him in terms of their creation and natural disposition. Whether this inclusion was due to his superiority or inferiority, he had to obey Allah and bow down. Whether he was superior or inferior, Satan was obliged to prostrate, but he refused. Allah has said: “and he said, “I am better than him: You created me from fire and him from clay.” (*al-A‘raf*: 12)

Allah *Glorified is He* did not ask Satan for a comparison between himself and Adam, He asked him – though He knew from His eternal knowledge that Satan had refrained because he was convinced, not because he was barred.

(1) Proscribing ‘redundancy’ to the Quran is not ethical among the scholars.

That is why Satan said, 'I am better than him.' It is as though he had turned the matter over in his head to find a pretext for not prostrating; per his own code of standards, it was not customary for the higher to prostrate before the lower. Since Satan saw himself as being better than Adam and thought himself to be of higher rank, it was not right for him to prostrate to Adam. But why did he think he was higher than him? Because as he said, '... You created me from fire and him from clay,' (*al-A'raf*: 12) it is as if fire has a higher nature. About this point, he was completely wrong because kinds differ due to the difference of their roles and no kind is better than the other: fire has its purpose, and clay has its purpose; fire cannot function as clay; plants cannot grow in fire.

Superiority exists for both elements since each is fulfilling its purpose. So, never say that one person is better than the other; rather say: 'The deeds of this one are better than the deeds of that one.' Everything in existence, when put in its intended place, is good. That is why we should not say that an iron bar is better than a hook because the function of the hook requires that it be bent, and it is this 'bent' feature that makes it fulfil its purpose. As for the question of superiority, it can only come when we compare things which have the same function. But Satan said: '... I am better than he ...' (*al-A'raf*: 12) He said this in obstinacy, pride and disbelief when he rejected his Lord's command and wanted to alter Allah's will; it is as though he was seeking to correct the True Lord *Glorified is He* in His command and throw it back at the Commander. The True Lord's requital of Satan was nothing other than to say to him:

قَالَ فَأَهِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُونُ لَكَ أَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيهَا فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

God said, 'Get down from here! This is no place for your arrogance. Get out! You are contemptible!' [13]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 13)

To go down means to move from a high place to a lower one, and this is what led the scholars to say that the *Jannah* (paradise) which Allah describes as being 'high', is in the sky. But this is not accurate because going down does not necessarily mean a physical descent since it could be a descent in rank; and there is a difference between the spatial descent and the descent in

rank. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says to Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* 'It was said, "O Noah, disembark in security from us and blessings upon you and upon nations [descending] from those with you. But other nations [of them] we will grant enjoyment; then there will touch them from us a painful punishment."' (Hud: 48)

That is, to descend (*ihbit*, literally 'get down') from the ship. So, the meaning of the word *hubut* (going down) does not necessarily mean moving from a high place to a lower one, since it can refer to a lower rank: 'Allah said, "Get down from here!" ...' (*al-A'raf*: 13) So, the descent here is in rank because Satan was no longer fit to attend the assembly of angels. He was only with them because he made himself adhere to obedience, whilst still possessing a free will to either obey or disobey. Thus, when 'obedience' was no longer a trait in him, he ceased being worthy of holding that rank since it is only held by those who never disobey Allah when He commands them, and those who do as they are told.

Allah's saying, 'Get down from here! This is no place for your arrogance ...' (*al-A'raf*: 13) means that arrogance is not the type of attitude to be tolerated in such place. Your refraining from obeying the command of the Deity who issued it to you—His worshipper—is a kind of arrogance in the face of the Commander; and the angels are a group who never disobey Allah when He commands them—they do as they are told. Therefore, since you view this position with arrogance and haughtiness, you are not fit to occupy it. This means that it was actually his 'deeds' that made him fit for such high rank. When he ceased to partake of those deeds and abandoned them, he became fit only for a lower rank. Hence, the deeds which qualified him to the high rank were not something inherent in him; that devalues his statement that he was created from fire, whilst Adam from clay, since the scale by which things are weighed is a scale that hinges on deeds. Allah's wisdom decreed that the jinn are of such a form that they can do things which man is not capable of, such as high speed, penetrating barriers and being able to override certain means of causality. The jinn can penetrate walls or bodies, as the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Indeed, Satan runs through man just as blood runs.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab*, Muslim in *As-Salam*, Abu Dawud in *As-Sunna*, Ibn Majah in *As-Sawm*) and Ahmad (iii. 106, 285, 337)

In this aspect, Satan is like a microbe because the nature of fire, the material from which he was created, allows it to pass through barriers. The jinn are of such subtlety and transparency that they can pass through anything. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to clarify to the Jinn: Do not think that your race is what has given you this distinction; rather, it is the will of He who assigns race which is indicated by the fact that He made your rank lower than that of mankind. Allah made a man such as prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* a master over the jinn; Allah subdued them and placed them at his service. In the court of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* He made the one who had knowledge of the Scripture employ a power which was way mightier than the power of one of the 'powerful and crafty' jinn, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'A powerful one from among the jinn said, "I will bring it to you before you rise from your place, and indeed, I am for this [task] strong and trustworthy."' (*an-Naml*: 39) This indicates that the world of the jinn also contains the intelligent and the stupid; yet, the one who had knowledge of scripture outdid even the powerful and crafty jinn who had said that he could bring the throne even before Sulaiman rose from his seat, 'I will bring it to you before you rise from your place.' (*an-Naml*: 39) So, the crafty and powerful jinn wagered to bring the throne before Sulaiman (Solomon) was done with his daily council and before he would rise from his seat. Yet, what did the one who had knowledge of the scripture, who was just a man, reply? He wagered to bring the throne in the twinkling of an eye! 'I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you.' (*an-Naml*: 40) It is as though he would bring forth the throne of Bilqis (Queen of Sheba) before Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* could even turn his eye to look at something whereupon Allah tells us how Sulaiman (Solomon) saw the throne truly before him, 'and when [Solomon] saw it placed before him' (*an-Naml*: 40), as if it took no time at all, but rather happened immediately. So, the True Lord clarifies for all the different creatures which are created from the different elements: 'Do not be misled into thinking that your distinction comes from the element you were created from, because by My omnipotent power I can make the lower of you control the higher, if this is the will of the One Who created all the elements and races.'

'Allah said, "Get down from here! This is no place for your arrogance. Get out! You are contemptible!"' (*al-A'raf*: 13) The words 'get down from here'

indicate that the descent was more of a moral nature; that is, he was not worthy of the rank or position. This is what the words indicate, and consequently, the exit from the actual place followed.

Contemptibility means disgrace and belittlement; he had met the command with arrogance so he had to be punished with contemptibility. In this way, he was punished with the opposite of what he intended; and to punish someone with the opposite of what they intend is a form of chastisement, rectification and rearing. Like when the Law of Allah decrees that whoever kills a person, inheritance from him is forbidden since killing him could have been the means to reach the person's inheritance. So, Allah decreed that the killer is to be excluded from the inheritance of the person he kills; thus, rendering murder an impediment to inheritance.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ أَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

but Iblis said, 'Give me respite until the Day people are raised from the dead' [14] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 14)

The meaning of '... Give me respite ...' (*al-A'raf*: 14) is 'give me time'; that is, do not cause me to die immediately or even soon; this is proved by the fact that Allah says:

قَالَ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنظَرِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

**And Allah replied, You have respite [15]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 15)**

To ask for respite is to ask to be given more time rather than dying abruptly. Satan asked for this in order to inflict his revenge on Adam and his progeny because he was the cause of his humiliation, degradation, expulsion, and descent. Therefore, he insisted on trying his utmost to tempt the progeny of Adam, so they too can become disobedient. It is as if by making this request, Satan wanted to be saved from death and remain alive until the Day of Resurrection in which all who have died will be raised to life. It is as if he

wanted to escape Allah's verdict that every human is bound to taste death. Allah says, 'Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection.' (*Al-Imran*: 185)

So, the True Lord *Glorified is He*, is telling him that the postponement of his death shall be until a day known to Allah and not known to him, Satan. Had the time of death been known to people, a lot of us would have sinned for as long as we lived and then we would do good deeds just before our time is up. But by making the time of death unknown, Allah wants us to sense its imminence the whole time. In another verse, Allah decrees that Satan's time will extend until the Day of the 'Appointed Time.' (*al-Hijr*: 38) This appointed time is the first trumpet blast. Allah says, 'And the Horn will be blown, and whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth will fall dead except whom Allah wills. Then it will be blown again, and at once they will be standing, looking on.' (*az-Zumar*: 68)

It is as though Satan wanted to escape death up until the second trumpet blast, but our Lord clarified that he would remain only until a time known to none but Allah—and this known time must be before the first trumpet blast.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ فِيمَا أُغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١٦﴾

**And then Iblis said, 'Because You have put me in the wrong,
I will lie in wait for them all on Your straight path [16]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 16)**

The word *ighwa* (misguide) means to tempt to sin; from the same root comes the word *ghayy* which means 'disillusion'; the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses it in other verses, 'But there came after them successors who neglected prayer and pursued desires; so they are going to meet evil .' (*Maryam*: 59) When we read '... Because You caused me to be misguided...' (*al-A'raf*: 16), it is another way of saying 'because You misguided me, O Allah, I shall do such-and-such,' which means that he ascribed the misguidance to Allah. But does our Lord misguide or guide? Allah guides us through a dual process; through giving us directions and through empowering us; we have already

spoken about this dual process. Allah *Glorified is He* has created Satan and given him free will; he was not subdued and compelled like the angels. Further, because he was created with free will, he was given a chance to obey or disobey. It is as though Satan, by saying that, was expressing a wish that he had been created in a state of compulsion, saying that Allah was the One Who gave him the 'will' to disobey; he did not consider the fact that 'free will' is not only an opportunity to be misguided, but also an opportunity to be guided. So, it was you, Satan, who chose to be misguided. Hence, by saying, '...', because You caused me to be misguided ...' (*al-A'raf*: 16) Satan only meant to blame Allah for his own disobedience. We say to him: no, our Lord did not misguide you because the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* does not misguide, rather, He guides. Had Allah created him in a state of compulsion and subdual, he would not have been given the choice to 'do' or 'not do' a command. But Allah created him with the capacity to 'do' or 'not to do' and he chose to do nothing but disobeying: 'And then Satan said, "Because you caused me to be misguided, I will sit in ambush for them all on your straight path.'" (*al-A'raf*: 16) This expression refers to the progeny of Adam and to 'sit in ambush' *qu'ud* literally 'to sit' is a kind of active movement of the body because the one who takes an action either does so standing, sitting or reclining. The most comfortable position is to recline because in such state, the body is relieved from the gravity pull. When a person sits, gravity acts just a little on him; when he stands, he carries the weight of his body on his feet, which is why we say to someone who has been standing for a long time, 'Sit down and rest;' if he sits and gets tired, we say to him, 'Lie down a little and rest.'

Why did Satan then choose to sit in ambush? So that he would be settled; he might get tired if he stood, and sitting will keep him alert and invigorated. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush.' (*at-Tawba*: 5) He did not command them to, 'Stand in wait' since it would exhaust them if they had to stand the whole time; but standing in wait means that when the time comes for action, they would have to get up. Sitting is closer to standing, and reclining is closer to slumber; Satan chose the state that would conserve his

energy and at the same time ensure his alertness: ‘... I will sit in ambush for them all on Your straight path.’ (*al-A'raf*: 16)

Since Satan would tempt and lead others astray, he would choose to tempt those who are on the path of guidance. As for those who are tempted by their own choices and go astray driven by their own inclinations, Satan is not concerned with them and does not have any business with them. This is something which happens to people when they strive and try hard to be obedient: if a young man is obedient and committed, Satan tries to tempt him to keep him from prayer and obedience. This is because Satan steals our faith; he is like a thief, and a thief does not lurk around a ruined house, he lurks around a house which is filled with goodies.

We notice this matter in all people when they come to pray; one of them says, ‘When I pray, the ‘slinking whisperer’ ⁽¹⁾ comes to me and makes me feel doubtful about my prayer.’ We say to him, ‘Yes this is correct, and when he comes to you, consider this to be a healthy sign of faith because this means that Satan recognises that your deeds are accepted by Allah so he tries to spoil your obedience. But when you do something wrong that spoils your act of obedience, like praying without performing ablution, the slinking whisperer does not come to you. Since Satan wants to spoil your obedience, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is Hearing and Knowing.’ (*al-A'raf*: 200)

Why? Because Allah created you and created him; you cannot elude him because he runs through you like blood in your veins and whispers to you notions and feelings which you cannot control. He comes to you and reminds you of important issues whilst you are praying so that you remember things you had forgotten and get swamped with the most complicated issues while in prayer. All of this is because he vowed to sit in ambush for us along the straight path of Allah. ‘[Satan] said, "Because you have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on your straight path.”’ (*al-A'raf*: 16)

He did not say that he would sit in ambush on the crooked path; Satan does not sit in places where alcohol is served, for instance; he sits by the

(1) One of the adjectives used in describing Satan in the final chapter of the Quran; *an-Nas*: 4

doors of mosques or inside the mosques to spoil people's good deeds. So, what can we do in this case? The True Lord *Glorified is He* guides us to seek refuge with Him.

The meaning of 'seek refuge with' is to flee from Satan to Allah because Allah, who granted him this special aptitude of running through our blood and infiltrating our thoughts, can block him from using it on us. When you say, 'I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan,' and you flee to Allah *Glorified is He*; He will surely save you from him. If you are reciting the Quran and a notion comes to you from Satan, say, 'I seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan'; when you say this, it is as though you alert him to the fact that you are aware of whence this insinuation came, two or three times, so Satan will say to himself: 'This believer is vigilant and attentive; I cannot tempt him, so I will look for someone else.'

An example is on this is: A man⁽¹⁾ once went to Imam Abu Hanifa, who was known for his sound legal opinions, and asked him, 'I buried some of my money and I forgot where I buried it; can you tell me where it is, Sheikh?' Even though this is not a legal opinion in jurisprudence, Abu Hanifa said, 'Son, I have no knowledge of this, but I can teach you a trick to try: when night falls, stand before your Lord and pray through the night, and Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* might send you one of his hosts to tell you where your money is.' When Abu Hanifa was about to pray the following dawn, the man came up smiling and laughing and said, 'O Imam, I found the money!' Abu Hanifa smiled and said, 'By Allah, I knew that Satan would not leave you to spend the night with your Lord, and that he would come and tell you where the money was (to distract you); so come and do your prayer properly in gratification to Allah; come and pray!'

So, Satan knows how to sit in ambush and how to vow. In another verse, he vows by Allah's might to beguile us all into grievous error: '[Satan] said, "By Your might, I will surely mislead them all.'" (*Sad*: 82) He managed to come up with the oath which would aid him throughout his mission. He knew

(1) This is the story of the man who asked Imam Abu Hanifa about the money he lost, and the latter advised him to pray.

that with Allah's autonomy from His creatures and His lack of need for them, He is the All-Conquering who cannot be overcome. Hence, if Allah willed it, Satan would not be able to tempt us, but Allah's will is to make all men free to choose; whoever wants to believe is free to believe; whoever wants to reject belief is free to reject it. 'And say, "The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills - let him believe; and whoever wills - let him disbelieve."' (*al-Kahf*: 29)

So, Satan made an oath, and this was how he gained access to man. He swore by the very might of Allah. But then he finished it off saying that the only exception, the only ones off limits, will be the true and sincere servants of Allah: 'Except, among them, Your chosen servants.' (*Sad*: 83)

That is, if Allah wants someone to be guided, Satan cannot beguile him. Satan's quest is not to defy our Lord or resist Him; his quest is to defy the creatures of Allah. He does not wish to get into a battle with our Lord; his battle is against Allah's creatures, and it is a battle in which he has no real argument or power. The one who overcomes you in a battle coerces you to do something, using the power he has against you, or he convinces you to do it without coercion. So, does Satan possess the ability to do either? No, which is why he will come forward in the Hereafter and declare outright that he [Satan] had no power at all over us; he just invited us and we responded: 'But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; but blame yourselves.' (*Ibrahim*: 22)

Power comes in two forms: coercing or convincing; Satan can only come to man through either of these channels.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us that Satan said:

﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ لَأَنبِيَنَّهُمْ مِن بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

I will come at them – from their front and their back, from their right and their left – and You will find that most of them are ungrateful' [17] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 17)

The phrase 'from their front' —*bayna aydihim*— literally means 'between their hands'; 'and their back' —*min khalfihim*, literally 'from behind'; 'from their right', literally from the right side; and 'from their left', literally from the

left side. The place which is ahead of us and towards where we are going is the abode of the Hereafter; when Satan comes from our front, he causes us to doubt the truth about the Hereafter and Resurrection. He tries to make us unresponsive to Allah's way of guidance so that we become one of those who do not believe in meeting Allah and question the afterlife in which those who did good will be rewarded and those who did evil will be punished. All of that indeed happened; we saw those who (according to the Quran) wondered in disbelief about the possibility of being resurrected from mere dust and bones and doubted the same about their ancestors and forefathers: 'When we have died and become dust and bones, are we indeed to be resurrected [16] and our forefathers [as well]?' (*as-Saffat*: 16-17) For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* presents the matter of Resurrection in a way that leaves no argument for Satan. Allah clarifies that He was capable of creating us in the first place, so He will be capable of bringing us back again because, indeed, bringing us back is easier than creating us from nothing since our resurrection will be like restoring something that was already there. When Allah *Glorified is He* explains to the people that bringing them back will be easier than creating them in the first place, He uses an indisputable argument which they cannot refute; but for the omnipotent power of Allah *Glorified is He* all actions are alike and nothing is easier or more difficult than the other. He informs us of the complete encompassment of His knowledge; He tells us that He knows very well what the earth takes away from our bodies and He keeps a comprehensive record thereof. Allah says, 'We know what the earth diminishes of them, and with us is a retaining record.' (*Qaf*: 4) So, for each and every creature, Allah has a record where all their constituents and parts are written.

Satan also approaches from behind; and that which is behind each of us of is our progeny, for whom we fear lest they fall into ruin. So, Satan entices them to steal, pilfer, or take bribes to provide for his children's future, and therein corruption ensues. Like the type of corruption which we see when a person gets promoted to an important position at an old age, and he commits evil towards Allah thinking that he will leave something good behind for his dependants, but if he really feared for them, he would have entrusted them to the hand of their Lord, rather than entrusting them to those twisted ways. Allah tells those who fear for the future of their helpless children (if they were to die) to show the

same concern for orphans, to be mindful of Allah and to speak out for justice. He says, 'And let those [executors and guardians] fear [injustice] as if they [themselves] had left weak offspring behind and feared for them. So let them fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice.' (*an-Nisa*: 9)

Why does Satan not come to man from above and below? It is because above is the direction to which man turns to seek aid and assistance from his Lord, and below is the special direction of worship: the servants is closest to his Lord when he prostrates. So, man is protected from Satan's enticing within these two directions because Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that Satan has no power over His servants.

Allah records Satan to have said: 'I will come at them- from their front and their back, from their right and their left- and You will find that most of them are ungrateful.' (*al-A'raf*: 17) Satan comes from the right side to restrain people and make them abstain from doing acts of righteousness and obedience; the right is the symbol of good deeds because the record of good deeds will be given in the right hand, whilst the record of bad deeds will be given in the left hand. He also comes to them from their left to tempt them with the cravings of disobedience. We see how the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses the words 'from their right' and 'from their left', and does not say 'on'; this is because 'on' indicates the notion of being 'above', and Satan is never above anything. He does not have the power to prevent by compulsion or convince by argument. But since most people forget to thank the One Who blesses them, Satan is adept at tempting them, which is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* ends the verse saying: 'and you will find that most of them are ungrateful' (*al-A'raf*: 17).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ أَخْرِجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُومًا مَدْحُورًا لَمَنْ يَتَّبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

God said, 'Get out! You are disgraced and banished! I swear I shall fill Hell with you and all who follow you! [18]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 18)

Satan was so arrogant and he thought himself so shrewd, that he explained to us his plot and strategy, thereby proving to us that Allah's judgement over

him has indeed come to pass in that He has made Satan's strategies and plotting truly weak. Allah says: 'Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of Taghut. So fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak.' (*an-Nisa'*: 76)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* alerts us about Satan's plotting and arrogance, and the sincere person is the one who is cautious and immunises himself against Satan's insinuations. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says what means: 'Get out! You are disgraced and banished!' (*al-A'raf*: 18) In an earlier verse in this same chapter, Allah says to him: '...Get down from here! This is no place for your arrogance. Get out! You are contemptible!' (*al-A'raf*: 13)

So, there was a descent and an exit accompanied with humiliation and loss of rank; there was also an affirmation that when he exited, he was in a state of degradation, humiliation, disownment and damnation. The True Lord *Glorified is He* continues the verse: '... I swear I shall fill Hell with you and all who follow you!' (*al-A'raf*: 18) This informs all those who follow Satan that they will be the dwellers of hellfire. Allah did not only prepare hellfire to accommodate the disbelievers, He also made it on the grounds that all of mankind could possibly have disbelieved in Him, just as He made paradise on the grounds that all of mankind could possibly believe in Him. Allah is never short of space, and if all of mankind believes, paradise can receive them all; and if they all disbelieve, hellfire can receive them all. He also tells us that the dwellers of paradise will be the inheritors who will dwell in it perpetually. Allah says, 'Those are the inheritors' (*al-Mu'minun*: 10-11); whereas, those who ascribe other partners to Him will be the fuel of hellfire, wherein they will dwell perpetually. 'Indeed, you [disbelievers] and what you worship other than Allah are the firewood of Hell. You will be coming to [enter] it.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 98)

This concludes the matter of Satan who refused to obey the command of the Highest Commander to prostrate before Adam *peace be upon him*.

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

وَيَتَّكِدُمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا
وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

But you and your wife, Adam, live in the Garden. Both of you eat whatever you like, but do not go near this tree or you will become wrongdoers' [19] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 19)

The Quran comes back to the story of Adam after telling us about the story of Satan. Allah says, 'But you and your wife, Adam, live in the Paradise' (*al-A'raf*: 19)

Many scholars have passed on the interpretation that the garden (*jannah*) mentioned here, is the same paradise of the eternal Hereafter; while others have objected to this, saying: 'How could Satan be admitted to paradise? And how could he be expelled from it? Do we not know that those who enter Paradise never come out of it?' The scholars who said that the garden here is the paradise of the Hereafter did not take into consideration the meaning of the word *jannah*.⁽¹⁾ When the word *jannah* is used, it automatically acquires the 'mostly used' meaning; so, it acquires a single meaning from the various meanings it has, and this is exclusively the meaning used by practise. Hence, when you hear it your mind immediately turns to this 'mostly used' meaning. As a believer, when you hear the word *jannah* your mind immediately goes to the paradise of the Hereafter because this is the word used for it. But when a word comes in the Quran, the speaker of which is Allah, we must first study the word and its different linguistic uses. The Quran was revealed in articulate Arabic language, where many words could have several meanings. When we talk within the Islamic context, we take the word from its linguistic usage and confine it in its terminological usage. An example of this is the word *hajj* or 'pilgrimage'. When you hear the word *hajj*, you say that it means to go to the Sacred House of Allah to perform rituals and worship in specific months, even though linguistically the word *hajj* means 'to embark on' or 'to head towards'; so when you head towards a destination, you use the verb *hajja* to express it. When Islam came, it took this word from the language and used it to mean *Hajj*, the major pilgrimage, which is to go to the Sacred House of

(1) Proof-reader's Note: This is the Sheikh's interpretation and opinion.

Allah to perform particular rituals. Likewise, the word *salat*, the ‘canonical prayer’, linguistically means ‘supplication’, and Allah says ‘pray for them’ meaning supplicate for them. When Islam came, it took this word from the language and gave it a new Islamic usage so that whenever it is said, you think of the Islamic meaning; they are a series of specific words and acts, starting with the declaration ‘Allah is great’ and ending with the *salam* (greeting of peace), including all the other terms and conditions.

But does taking the word from the language and giving it a specific Islamic connotation mean that we thereby abandon the original meaning? No, because if you want to use it in its original sense you can do so, but within a context that indicates exactly which meaning you are talking about. This is what made the scholars assert that when the word *jannah* is used, the mind immediately goes to the eternal garden of paradise. We say that the linguistic meaning of the word *jannah* is ‘garden’; that is, a place in which there are lush and varied trees; their lushness and height covers those who reside in it and protects them from all that is around, and the fruits and luxuries in it suffice the residents so that they will not have the need to leave it for any reason. The Quran does not use the word *jannah* to mean the paradise of the Afterlife only. Allah asks us, ‘Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines underneath which rivers flow in which he has from every fruit?’ (*al-Baqara*: 266)

In another chapter, He tells us the parable of the two men who had two gardens of vine surrounded with date-palms, with a field of grain in between: ‘And present to them an example of two men: We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and we bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops.’ (*al-Kahf*: 32)

In yet another chapter, He tells us about the people of Sheba [*Saba'*] who had two vast expanses of gardens, ‘there was for [the tribe of] *Saba'* in their dwelling place a sign: two [fields of] gardens on the right and on the left. [They were told], "Eat from the provisions of your Lord and be grateful to Him. A good land [have you], and a forgiving Lord.’ (*Saba'*: 15)

So, we must try our best to understand Allah’s intentions when He gives us knowledge from Himself and leads us to the meaning He intends. We know

that in the first information to come to us from Allah *Glorified is He*; He says about Adam, 'and [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority."'” (*al-Baqara*: 30)

Thus, Adam was created for the earth; do not wrong Adam by saying that he was created for paradise, and that we would have been living there had he not disobeyed and thereby descended down to earth—that is why we must reject this argument and remember that the first thing Allah *Glorified is He* told us about Adam is that He made him His vicegerent on earth. What we should ask ourselves is that since Allah created Adam to be His vicegerent on earth, then what is this garden mentioned here?

Allah *Glorified is He* created Adam *peace be upon him* to be His vicegerent on earth, and Adam was obliged to take responsibilities from Allah based on 'Do' and 'Do not'; so when we do not obey, corruption ensues in the society. As for those things from which no corruption ensues, Allah leaves them permissible which means that everything that was left without a 'Do' or a 'Do not' will not corrupt the society. Hence, the 'Dos and Dont's' are the criteria which ensure the society's soundness.

But did Allah create man without any trials that would compromise the way of Allah? No! Since Satan took his stand against Adam and vowed to lead him astray; he will entice us in our 'Dos and Dont's'. So, when the command comes for us to pray, Satan will beguile us until we stop praying. When the command comes for us not to drink alcohol, Satan will entice us to drink it, and so forth. The essential point is to 'shift' the Dos into Dont's so that all our actions become muddled.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants His method to govern the motion of life to insure that the vicegerency of earth fulfils its purpose in a way which gives man happiness and delight in the Hereafter. For this reason, it is inevitable that the True Lord *Glorified is He* would prepare His vicegerent on earth to adhere to His method so that he would not take it in a theoretical manner. That is why, the True Lord *Glorified is He* willed that Adam would not embark on his role as a vicegerent without first preparing him for the mission of the Dos and Dont's, warning him of the consequences of transforming the Do's into Dont's or the Dont's into Do's. Allah chose for Adam a training

ground in which all the constituents and comforts of life existed so that he would not be exerted by anything during the orientation period. He also clarified to Adam all about the garden, with the beautiful orchard in which all the elements and luxuries of life existed; He commanded him to eat from everything within that garden with the exception of one particular tree.

‘Eat’ was the command, and ‘Do not approach’ was the prohibition; Allah has clarified for Adam that the one who would compromise his implementation of the method of Allah would be his avowed archenemy, namely Satan, who refused to prostrate before Adam and was expelled and cursed because of that. Thus, he vowed by the might of Allah to beguile Adam and his progeny into grievous error: ‘[Satan] said, "By Your might, I will surely mislead them all.”’ (*Sad*: 82)

Hence, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* made the garden a place bearing all the constituents of life for Adam, and He bestowed upon him the exact portions which would sustain him without any waste, toil or illness... and so on. So, Allah gave Adam the exact amount which would suffice him without any waste, and Allah is capable of anything. Allah cares for the embryo in its mother’s womb till it grows; the embryo receives nourishment, and no waste comes from it. ⁽¹⁾ This is because the nourishment which Allah gives to it is exactly equal to what it needs for growing. Since our Lord is the One Who supplied the heavenly garden with its nourishment, He was capable of supplying it impeccably.

So, the garden in which Adam *peace be upon him* first existed was not the Paradise of the Afterlife⁽²⁾ because the paradise of the Afterlife only comes after responsibility, and there is no responsibility in it; those who dwell in Paradise never come out of it. Adam, as we said, was created for the earth, so the presence of the garden here means that it was the place of preparation for the mission of vicegerency, with a commandment to be obeyed in ‘eat’, and a prohibition to be obeyed in ‘do not go near.’ He did not say to them ‘do not eat’, but rather ‘do not go near,’ because it is likely that going near would lead

(1) The foetus does produce waste which is processed by the mother.

(2) Proofreader’s Note: This is the Sheikh’s interpretation and opinion.

to temptation, and he only ate from it because he came and approached it; had he listened and not gone near the tree, he would not have eaten from it.

Thus, Allah gave Adam two commands to train him while in that garden; the first being 'Do' and the second being 'Do not.' We also see that the thing which Allah prohibited is small compared to that which He allowed and permitted which is an act of mercy from Allah towards his servants. The believer does what Allah commands him to do, and he does not go near what Allah forbids because if he comes near, he might be inclined towards it. This is why He said 'do not go near...' Had they not gone near the tree, they would not have been tempted by it. For this reason, we find the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* forbids many of the things that could damage our pristine creed using the same command 'do not go near...' or using another similar command, 'shun' [avoid]. Allah says, 'So avoid the uncleanness of idols and avoid false statement.' (*al-Hajj*: 30)

He did not say, 'Do not worship the idols,' He said, 'shun.' The commandment to shun also applies to drinking alcohol, but some superficial people say, 'There is no prohibition of alcohol since Allah tells us only to shun it.' We say to such people that shunning is an even stronger command than forbidding or prohibiting. Prohibiting it would simply mean not to drink it, whilst shunning it means not to even go near it, neither to sit in a place where it is found, nor to manufacture or carry it.

But '...do not go near this tree or you will become wrongdoers!' (*al-A'raf*: 19) Wrongdoing (*zhulm*) means to exceed the limit or to give a person that which is not rightfully his. It is as if Allah is saying to them, 'I have not granted the two of you the right to approach this tree, so if either of you approaches it, you will be breaching what I have ordained for you.' '... Or you will become wrongdoers!' (*al-A'raf*: 19) That is, lest you enter the ranks of those who wrong themselves because Allah does not wrong anyone. You wrong yourself because you avail yourself to a fleeting pleasure which ends quickly, and afterwards you will receive a punishment in the form of a painful and severe torment which will last a long time. In doing so, you wrong your own self, by not looking after yourself as you should have.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَوَسَّوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْءَ تَيْهَمَا وَقَالَ مَا
 نَهَكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَا مَلَكَيْنِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

Satan whispered to them so as to expose their nakedness, which had been hidden from them: he said, ‘Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you becoming angels or immortals’ [20] (The Quran, *al-A’raf*: 20)

The word *waswasa* (whispered) indicates that the temptation was done in a soft voice; we know that the one who says something right does not care who hears it, whilst the one who says something wrong lowers his voice lest someone finds out. The concept here is that every evil is whispered; the one who speaks it knows that it is wrong, is ashamed of it, and does not want the society to know about it.

The word *waswasa* originally means a seductive voice because *waswasa* literally means the ‘clink’ of gold and jewellery. So, what Satan whispered to Adam and his wife was a seductive message intended to distract them from the commandments of their All-Wise Lord.

Allah’s words, ‘Satan whispered to them...’ (*al-A’raf*: 20) give us proof that Eve *peace be upon her* was innocent of this act of seduction since the popular story goes that Eve was the one who urged Adam to eat from the tree. Many of us wrong Eve although the Quran affirms that the whispered insinuation was directed at both Adam and Eve *peace be upon them*: ‘Satan whispered to them so as to expose their nakedness, which had been hidden from them...’ (*al-A’raf*: 20).

Did Satan whisper to them with the intent of making them conscious of their nakedness, of which they had been unaware, or did he whisper to them so that they would disobey Allah? He whispered to them so that they would disobey Allah, and he knew that there would be a consequence for this disobedience. He knew well that when they eat from the thing which our Lord had forbidden, their nakedness (*saw‘at*) would be revealed to them. The word *saw‘a* literally means something unpleasant to look at, and we use it to mean the private parts. By innate nature, a human being, with an intact humanity

and disposition, would avert from looking at the private parts of another. As if in the beginning Adam and Eve could neither see each other's nakedness, nor see their own nakedness because the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '... so as to expose their nakedness, which had been hidden from them ...' (*al-A'raf*: 20).

There are four areas of private parts involved here; two for the man and two for the woman. It is as though each one of them did not see his own two areas nor those of the other because something existed which veiled their private parts from being seen. This notion makes complete sense—did not the Mother of Believers 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* say: 'I did not see (his), nor he saw mine ...' These words manifest the utmost decency, as she did not even utter the words. For, as long as a body part is considered to be private, it is supposed to be covered. This is why when the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'O people! You shall be gathered unto Allah barefoot, naked, and uncircumcised.' Then he recited the following verse: 'as We brought into being the first creation, so We shall bring it forth anew – a promise which We have willed upon Ourselves: for, behold, We are able to do (all things)!' (*al-Anbiya'*: 104)⁽¹⁾ When our 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* exclaimed about this, he said to her, 'The situation will be so perilous that no one will look at anyone else.' '... So as to expose their nakedness, which had been hidden from them ...' (*al-A'raf*: 20)

What had made them unaware of it? There must have been some kind of encasing (or sheath) on each of them; the scholars have spoken at great length about this sheath. Some say that our fingernails are the remnants of this sheath which existed on Adam and Eve *peace be upon them* and hid their nakedness. It is also said that when a person is overcome by a wave of laughter and he wants to check himself, he can just look at his fingernails, whereupon he will be able to hold this wave of laughter. They say it is because he will be reminded of this moment of regret at the unveiling of man's nakedness. Try it yourself, and you will see how your laughter will subside; and this is all the work of Allah.

Or the veil which concealed their nakedness could have been the Divine Light which surrounded them both; and when a brilliant light shines, it makes things seem hazy. It is true that we see when light falls on the objects around

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

us, but when the light is too bright, it conceals things from your vision; too much of anything gives the exact opposite effect. So, either the sheath was from the substance of the fingernails or it was the Divine Light which concealed their nakedness. Nakedness is called *saw'a* and *'awra* in Arabic because it offends (*tasu'*). But why does it offend? What makes our orifices different; the mouth is an orifice and the private part is an orifice too?

The orifice of the private part is offensive because of what comes out of it. When Adam and Eve were eating what their Lord's provision in the Garden, as we said, they had no need to excrete waste, because Allah provided them both with the exact amount they needed for mobility and living, so both orifices were alike. But when they deviated from Allah's Command about what to eat, and ate what He prohibited and chose their own food, waste had to be excreted from them with all its offensiveness. But was the semblance of their nakedness a sign that they had sidestepped from the method of Allah in moral and spiritual values or was it a sign that they just sidestepped in material issues?

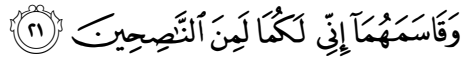
Indeed, it was the first because whenever something sidesteps from the method of Allah, indecency will certainly be exposed; if you see any indecency exposed in the society, know that a part of the method of Allah has been neglected. The Quran tells us what Satan said to them when he whispered: '... he said, "Your Lord only forbade you this tree to prevent you becoming angels or immortals."' (*al-A'raf*: 20)

Satan whispered and insinuated to them, what means: 'The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not want you to approach this tree because, whoever eats from it, will become an angel or an immortal.' Neither one of them pondered Satan's words enough to realize that his guile is weak, feeble and foolish; if he knew that whoever ate from the tree would become an angel or an immortal, why did he not pick from it that which would make him an angel or an immortal? There is wisdom in this which shows us that when anyone is tempted and cajoled by anyone, he must analyse the thing to which he is being tempted and determine what the consequences of his act will be.

Did Satan not say, '...Give me respite until the Day people are raised from the dead'? (*al-A'raf*: 14) Why then did he not save himself by eating

from this tree, which would have granted his wish? This proves that what Satan had said to them was a lie.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



And he swore to them, 'I am giving you sincere advice' [21] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 21)

The word *qasama* (swore) is in the Arabic verb form *fa'ala* which implies dual participation; that is, two parties are involved, and each is active in one respect and passive in another one. For example, the sentence 'Zayd shares (*sharaka*) with 'Umar' in something,' also means that 'Umar shares with Zayd. This is what is implied by using verb forms *fa'ala* and *taf'al*; each party is active in one way and passive in another; so, as far as the meaning goes, we find that they are both subject and object. So, the verb here *qasama* (swore) implies two actions; did Satan sit and swear an oath to Adam and his wife *peace be upon them* and they swore the oaths back to him? We say 'no,' because sometimes this verbal form does not imply a shared action or an action where two parties participate but in different ways. The latter case can be clearly seen in Allah's *Glorified is He* words, 'And We made an appointment with Musa (Moses) for thirty nights and perfected them by (the addition of) ten.' (*al-A'raf*: 142)

'We made an appointment' (*wa'adna*) is also on the *fa'ala* form; so who made the appointment? Allah is the One Who appointed the term for Moses (Musa) *peace be upon him* and Moses (Musa) became part of the appointment by accepting and going through it. So 'he swore (by Allah) to them' means that they accepted the oath and became part of it. 'And he swore (by Allah) to them, "Indeed, I am to you from among the sincere advisors"' (*al-A'raf*: 21)

'And he swore (by Allah) to them' means that he made an oath; this is why when our Lord chastised Adam *peace be upon him* He *Glorified is He* clarified to him: 'I told you that he is an enemy for you and your wife, and that he would endeavour to have you expelled from the Garden so that you would

have to toil and labour'; so Adam *peace be upon him* replied, 'O Lord, I did not think that any of Your creatures would swear an oath by You for something false' In no way, did it occur to him that any creature would swear an oath by Allah for something false, and this was the first deception in all creation. This is why we find that Qatada *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'The believer in Allah can be deceived.'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* married a woman and she went to him; out of jealousy, the wives of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* who feared that he would fall deeply in love with her, said to her: 'Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* loves these words, so when he comes to you say them to him, "I seek refuge in Allah from you."' When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to her, she said to him, 'I seek refuge in Allah from you,' so he said to her, 'You have sought refuge in One who can provide it,' then, he *peace and blessings be upon him* did not come close to her after that event. This explains how the believer in Allah can be deceived. The companion 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* used to free any slaves who prayed properly and on time and offered it with humility; so, when the slaves came to know this, they made a show of praying with humility in front of the place where he used to sit, and he *Allah be pleased with him* would free them. Someone said to him, 'The slaves are deceiving you,' but he replied, 'If someone deceives us in Allah, we let ourselves be deceived!'

The advice here is that we should not be tempted to disobey Allah's commandment, and Adam *peace be upon him* should not have been unaware of this; rather, he should have compared the two things: Satan's temptation to eat from the tree and the commandment of the True Lord *Glorified is He* who said to him and his wife, 'Do not approach it', but he did not compare them.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'So he made them fall, through deception. And when they tasted of the tree, their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to fasten together over themselves from the leaves of paradise. And their Lord called to them.

فَدَلَّاهُمَا يَغْوِرٌ ۖ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْءُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ
وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلْتُ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

he lured them with lies. Their nakedness became exposed to them when they had eaten from the tree: they began to put together leaves from the Garden to cover themselves. Their Lord called to them, ‘Did I not forbid you to approach that tree? Did I not warn you that Satan was your sworn enemy?’ [22]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 22)

‘So he made them fall, through deception’ (*al-A'raf*: 22); that is, Satan took them down from the high level of obedience to the low level of disobedience and sin by deluding and deceiving them with his oath. The word *dalla* -he made them fall- is derived from the word that means ‘to lower one’s feet in a well to see if there is water in it or not,’ or ‘to lower a pail on a rope in a well.’ This means that he did it step by step; and ‘through deception’ means with temptation, making them fall into disobedience as he appeared as a loyal adviser, while actually deceiving them.

There is an important hint here that refers to the struggle between truth and falsehood in the soul: ‘...And when they tasted of the tree ...’ (*al-A'raf*: 22) This indicates that by merely tasting, they remembered that it was from Satan’s insinuation which had made them go to the tree; all it took was a taste for both to realise the enormity of the error: ‘...And when they tasted of the tree, their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to fasten together over themselves from the leaves of Paradise ...’ (*al-A'raf*: 22)

The word *khasf* means to take something and stick it to something else in order to conceal it. In the past, when shoe soles would wear out and tears appeared in them, the cobbler would put a leather patch on it which was larger than the tear so that it would completely cover it.

This is what Adam and Eve *peace be upon them* did; they took leaves from the Garden and placed one leaf over another to cover their nakedness. In the statement ‘... and they began to fasten together over themselves ...’ (*al-A'raf*: 22), the word *tafiqa* means that they made from the leaves of the trees a cover for their nakedness. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says ‘and their

Lord called to them, "Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you that Satan is to you a clear enemy?" (al-A'raf: 22)

The responsibility here is implied within a single commandment, whilst permissible things were numerous. He *Glorified is He* only made them responsible for a single thing; that is, they were prohibited from approaching the tree, while many things were permissible. This is why it was not proper to fail in fulfilling their responsibility; and the responsibility was not given to them by an intermediary, but rather, it was given directly. This is why this point will benefit our understanding of such matter when part of this story is given in another chapter, where Allah *Glorified is He* says: "and Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred" (Ta Ha: 121); the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not mention the story of the disobedience here. He says to them that 'did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you that Satan is to you a clear enemy?' (al-A'raf: 22)

Allah *Glorified is He* does not make something sinful without declaring it to be so; and He *Glorified is He* has said before 'but do not approach this tree', and clarified that there was a force of temptation called Satan, whose enmity appeared from the time when he refused to prostrate to Adam; an act of disobedience for which the True Lord *Glorified is He* expelled him from Paradise. So, if Allah took them to task and punished them for this sin, He would have done it out of His Absolute Justice; they were the ones who wronged themselves. Their response had to have been, 'Yes our Lord, we were indeed forbidden, and You indeed did say that to us.' But the ruling, therefore, is presented with the strongest possible evidence for it because a ruling might be given as a statement, or it might be given as a question and a demand for an answer—and it is the strongest if it is given as a negative question.

'... That Satan is to you a clear enemy?' (al-A'raf: 22) We know that a foe is an enemy who wishes to hurt and harm, and the word 'clear' here means 'surrounding'. This shows the enmity of Satan and his surrounding presence because he (Satan) explained before that he would come to them—the children of Adam—from the front, the rear, their right side and their left side; or it may mean that he was clear in his enmity and severe in his hostility.

Then, the confession of sin comes from Adam and Eve *peace be upon them*:

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

**They replied, ‘Our Lord, we have wronged our souls: if
You do not forgive us and have mercy, we shall be lost’ [23]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 23)**

In the chapter *al-Baqara*, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Then Adam received from his Lord [some] words, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is He who is the Acceptor of repentance, the Merciful’ (*al-Baqara*: 37) It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* considers how His creatures will sometimes forget about His Way, so He ordains for them the means for repentance which includes three stages: its ordainment as a Divine Mercy; the sinner’s approach to it in confession and contrition; lastly, His acceptance of it out of His Mercy. The ordainment of repentance requires you to act—and when you turn to Allah in repentance, He turns to you in forgiveness.

Therefore, the ordainment for repentance was a mercy, not only for the sinner himself but for others as well; had Allah not ordained repentance, those who commit sins would find no possibility of forgiveness, so they would continue to sin; if they continued to sin, the entire society would suffer.

‘They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers."' (*al-A'raf*: 23) This was the situation of Adam and his wife *peace be upon them* after their sin which differed from the position of Satan after his sin. Satan wanted to justify his sin by saying, ‘Shall I prostrate myself before one whom Thou hast created out of clay?’ (17: 61) And what did Adam and Eve *peace be upon them* say? ‘They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if you do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers’ (*al-A'raf*: 23).

This is why the requital of Satan – who refused Allah’s commandments and His ruling – was to be expelled from His Mercy, while the reward for the one who committed sins and then confessed that he has sinned and wronged himself his repentance is to be accepted. So, it is not right for the one who commits acts of disobedience to say, ‘I have my reasons for doing so’, justifying the sins that he commits. Rather, he should not expel himself from Allah’s Mercy, but say, ‘What I do is forbidden, but I cannot prevent myself

from doing it.' In this way, he will not have rejected the ruling but rather accuse himself of inadequacy and confess his sin; thereby, he deserves the forgiveness and the acceptance of his repentance.

Here, we may ask: what is the difference between the sin of Satan and the sin of Adam *peace be upon him*? We say that Satan sinned and gave a reason for refusing the command, while Adam *peace be upon him* sinned and confessed his sin and asked for forgiveness.

When Adam and his wife Eve *peace be upon them* said, 'Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves,' together and in one breath and one mournful penitent cry, does this not indicate that they had been taught such words? Had they both sought Allah's Pardon separately, they would have done so with different words.

This proves that they had been taught those words, which is why our Lord *Glorified is He* says: "then Adam received from his Lord some words" (*al-Baqara*: 37) They called upon Allah and said, 'Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves,' (*al-A'raf*: 23) and 'selves' is the plural of 'self'; they did not say 'our two selves' (*nafsayna*) in the Arabic dual noun form, but rather, they said 'ourselves' (*anfusana*) in the plural form, meaning that their hearts were also purified and freed from the mark of the sin, and that this would be included and incorporated into the souls of their offspring.

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

قَالَ اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتْنَعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

He said, 'All of you get out! You are each other's enemies. On earth you will have a place to stay and livelihood – for a time' [24] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 24)

We notice here that Satan had already been commanded to go down to the earth; here there is another command to go down to the earth. By Allah, had the Paradise been their dwelling place, and had Adam *peace be upon him* been created for it and then disobeyed and then repented, they would never have left it. But, Allah *Glorified is He* commanded Adam to go down to the earth, where He had made him His vicegerent, in order to undertake the role of vicegerency in the light of the experience which he had undergone; he had to respect Allah's

Commandment in every responsibility, consider Allah's Prohibition in every responsibility and beware of the enmity of Satan, who was bound to whisper insinuations to him – and he had experienced this for himself, so he would be prepared when he descended, having no further excuse after that. '[Allah] said, "Descend, being to one another enemies"' (*al-A'raf*: 24)

This commandment is issued with the plural; He did not say, 'Down with the two of you,' in the dual Arabic form. In another verse, He said: 'We said: "Descend with you all..."' (*Ta Ha*: 123) with the imperative verb 'down with you' in the Arabic dual form, addressing two people. This is just so we know that this narration of this story in several places in the Quran is for the purpose of giving many lessons. The command here is given with His words 'Down with you,' using the plural in Arab because all three were involved in the descending: Adam, Eve *peace be upon them*, and Satan. The enmity was pre-existing, and we do not dispute it. The enmity existed between two parties: two people in one party—Adam and Eve *peace be upon them*—and one in the other party—Satan. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to show us the facts; and the One speaking is Allah, so every single letter He uses has its specific purpose, which is why we find that He *Glorified is He* orders us to reflect upon the Quran and Says: 'Then do they not reflect upon the Quran? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.'" (*an-Nisa'*: 82) That is, beware of only taking the external meaning of the text; rather, look for the internal meanings of the text; and do not only take the external meaning of the word, but look at what lies behind the words.

'[Allah] said, "Descend, being to one another enemy. And for you on the earth is a place of settlement and enjoyment for a time."' (*al-A'raf*: 24) The word 'enemy' implies the occurrence of a conflict and a battle which would take place amongst the children of Adam *peace be upon him* or the enmity that would exist between them and their enemies amongst the other inhabitants on earth, such as the jinn and others. But this will be for a limited period, which is why Allah says that 'a place of settlement and enjoyment for a time' (*al-A'raf*: 24) would be settled for the children of Adam. That is, you shall have stability and pleasure on earth for some time. The one who upholds the truth must view the struggle for the sake of the truth as being a pleasure of

this worldly life, not as though it is a battle with no reward; no, you struggle and take a great reward for this struggle, and that is a pleasure.

The Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

He said, 'There you will live; there you will die; from there you will be brought out' [25]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 25)

Allah says, '... and for you on the earth is a place of settlement and enjoyment for a time.' (*al-A'raf*: 24) So, Allah wanted to give us an image of the journey of life and depict for us our relationship with the earth about which He says that He *Glorified is He* will make upon the earth a successive authority. Allah says, 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.' (*al-Baqara*: 30)

He thereby linked us with the earth. We were brought into existence from clay, and given enjoyment thereupon with all kinds of distinctions, good things and fruits, and then we die and return to it, and finally we shall be raised from it afterwards. Each one of us is from the earth, living from it and dying upon it, returning to his origin and source, back to the mother earth that takes him in, embraces him, takes him in its care, and has mercy on him, especially in his weakest moment. When a person is in a good state and has a brother whose state is the opposite of that, the heart of the mother will always be with the weak, the sick, and the lowly.

The earth is what takes all mankind; it takes a man, causes all harm to disappear, and conceals his odour. As for his friends and family in this world, they were quick to cover him with soil to steer clear of the process of decomposition; and as soon as he died, the first thing to be forgotten is his name; so they say, 'Where is the body?' and not 'Where is so-and-so?' Once the body is wrapped in its shroud, it is placed in the bier to be concealed in soil and have the gravedigger stomp over him with his feet.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* directly addresses the children of Adam *peace be upon him* saying:

يٰۤاٰدَمُ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ لِبَاسًا يُّوْرِى سَوَءَ بَشَاتِكَ وَرِبَاسًا وَّ لِبَاسًا
الَّتَقْوٰى ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذٰلِكَ مِّنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Children of Adam, We have given you garments to cover your nakedness and as adornment for you; the garment of God- consciousness is the best of all garments – this is one of God’s signs, so that people may take heed [26] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 26)

The words ‘O children of Adam’ provoke you to remember your forefather’s past with his clear enemy, Satan. You are the children of Adam *peace be upon him* and Satan exists, so be aware of this. Allah *Glorified is He* sent down garments to hide your nakedness because the first act of disobedience was the uncovering of nakedness; ‘sending down’ implies something coming from above; this is so that we understand that every good thing on earth receives its provision from the sky. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who sent down clothing because He is the One Who sent down rain; then, it watered the roots of plants so that they grew after which we spun them and made them into clothes. It is as if searching for the root of any good thing, you will find that it came down from the sky. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions His Favour to His servants, ‘Then He made from it its mate, and He produced for you from the grazing livestock eight mates.’ (*az-Zumar*: 6)

Indeed, He did send down cattle too because the causality of plants is the first stage, and the causality of animals is the second stage; so He is the One Who made the plants grow from the earth so that animals could feed on them. He *Glorified is He* also says, ‘We have already sent Our Messengers with clear evidence and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice. And We sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people, and so that Allah may make evident those who support Him and His messengers unseen. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.’ (*al-Hadid*: 25)

Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* did send down iron too because we take it from the earth which Allah created which indicates that in all of these things, He sent down, Allah intended to protect all aspects of His Divine Guidance:

‘O children of Adam, We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts ...’ (*al-A’raf*: 26).

If We sent down a garment which covers physical and tangible nakedness, We also sent down a spiritual garment which covers the ‘nakedness’ of moral values. Just as you feel and perceive that material garments conceal and cover physical nakedness, you must also know that the garment which Allah sent down as moral values only covers and conceals your spiritual nakedness. The garments of material life not only conceal nakedness, but they also go beyond and provide one of life’s luxuries; that is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment. But the clothing of righteousness - that is best. That is from the signs of Allah that perhaps they will remember.’ (*al-A’raf*: 26) The word *rish* ‘thing of beauty’ literally means ‘feathers’, the garment of birds. In the past, they would take the feathers of birds and decorate clothes with them— they would also put feathers on crowns—people took this word and said that such person is ‘feathered’ (*murish*), meaning that he does not only possess the bare essentials of life, but also the luxuries of life. It is as if the noble verse is a declaration of the permissibility of luxurious things, as long as they consist of otherwise lawful things. It is said that whenever Allah *Glorified is He* calls our attention to the essential constituents of life, He also alerts us about the beautiful things in life; so, He says, ‘[He created] the horses, mules and donkeys for us to ride and [as] adornment. (*an-Nahl*: 8) We ride them to avoid extraneous toil, and we enjoy their comeliness for the sake of beauty.

Likewise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘Say, "Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?"’ (*al-A’raf*: 32) Indeed, He *Glorified is He* instructs us to beautify ourselves when we meet with Him in His House. Allah says, ‘O children of Adam, take your adornment at every *masjid*.’ (*al-A’raf*: 31) So, this is a command to beautify oneself. In the verse we are currently examining, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘But the clothing of righteousness - that is best.’ (*al-A’raf*: 26) Indeed, the garment of Allah-consciousness [*taqwa*-awareness of Allah] is better than all of that because material garments cover the private parts; the most they can do is covering and concealing the exposure of this

world; but the garment of Allah-consciousness (*taqwa*) saves us from exposure in the Hereafter.

The 'garment of *taqwa*' here may also mean those garments by which you protect yourselves (*tattaqun*) from the horrors of war which are better than garments of beauty and adornment because you save yourselves from being slain by means of them; or this garment – the garment of *taqwa* – is better than material garments and is one of Allah's signs; that is, His miraculous wonders and amazing things. A man is made of materials and has material needs and material nakedness; and there are also moral matters; without them, life cannot have any order. The True Lord *Glorified is He* gave us the essential material constituents of life, the material adornments of life and also gave us the means to live in times of peace and of war; the way of Allah-consciousness gives you all of such distinctions. So, take the signs from what you know and what you can feel and use them to guide you to what you cannot see or feel.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يٰۤاٰدَمُ لَا يَفۡتِنَنَّكَمُ الشَّيۡطٰنُ كَمَاۤ اَخۡرَجَ اٰبَوٰيكَمۡ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ
يَنۡزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوَءَ تَبِعٰهُمَاۗ اِنَّهٗ يُرۡىٰرَنۡكَمۡ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِمَّنْ
حِثُّ لَا تَرَوۡهُمۡۗ اِنَّا جَعَلۡنَا الشَّيۡطٰنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ لِّلَّذِيۡنَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ﴿٢٧﴾

Children of Adam, do not let Satan seduce you, as he did your parents, causing them to leave the Garden, stripping them of their garments to expose their nakedness to them: he and his forces can see you from where you cannot see them: We have made evil ones allies to those who do not believe[27] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 27)

Before, Allah *Glorified is He* has asked us not to be seduced by Satan. He clarified that He has arranged for us all the essential constituents of life, and we must remember the position of Satan concerning our father Adam *peace be upon him* and how Satan tempted him.

The original meaning of the word *fitna* (here meaning 'seduction') is 'test', and it is sometimes used to mean the evil tribulation which is more terrible than killing. But does man fall in the face of every tribulation? No,

because tribulation is a test; and a person can either pass or fail a test. If he passes, the tribulation is good for him, but if he fails, it is bad for him.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* told the story of the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* and informed us that He created him to be His vicegerent on earth, and that the time he spent in paradise was a preparation for the role of vicegerency because if he were to become Allah's Vicegerent on earth, Allah would have a way of guidance to govern him in all his actions; since He had a way of guidance to govern him in all his actions; out of His mercy for him, Allah did not send him straight to earth without first giving him practical preparation for it. So, He made the paradise as one of the stages which he passed through before becoming vicegerent on earth. Allah warned him against Satan who refused to prostrate before him, and He wanted him to experience moral responsibility. Every responsibility is included in 'do this' and 'do not do that'; that is why Allah wanted to give him, in paradise, a period of preparation, so that he would go down to earth to fulfil the mission of vicegerency after having practical experience of it. Allah clarified for him that he could eat from everything in t Paradise, but he should not approach the forbidden tree. 'Eat' was a commandment, and 'do not approach' was a prohibition—and every religious responsibility is covered by either 'do' or 'do not do.'

After that, He warned him against Satan who would place and make obstacles to impede his following Allah's way. When Adam and Eve *peace be upon them* approached the tree and ate from it, they disobeyed Allah's commandment 'do not approach', and Allah wanted to show them with a practical experience that disobeying Allah's commandment would cause something offensive to be exposed in life. Hence, Adam's and his wife's nakedness became apparent to them, and when their nakedness appeared to them, they realised that disobedience of Allah's commandments exposes the offensive things of the earth and the society. Then, Allah commanded them to go down to earth, fortified by this experience.

Once Adam and his wife *peace be upon them* came down to earth, Allah sent him the divine guidance after his experience. Allah wanted to show us that Adam had disobeyed the commandment of his Lord, 'do not approach', and then he received words from Him so that He accepted his repentance.

Allah *Glorified is He* also wanted to show us that Adam *peace be upon him* represents the fact that man does right things and wrong things, heedlessness can overcome him and that he might contravene Allah's way in something, but then he can wake from his heedlessness and repent. After Allah chose him to deliver His Message, and he became a Prophet, infallibility came to him so that he would never be heedless or forget to pass on the message. This is why we must be aware of Allah's words; He says, 'Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred.' (*Ta Ha*: 121) It is human nature to disobey and then repent, if he wants repentance; we must also be aware of Allah's words 'Then his Lord chose him' (*Ta Ha*: 122).

Thus, the election came after the disobedience because his disobedience was a natural thing—since he was a human being who did right things and did wrong things, and who forgot and was unaware. But after he came out of paradise, Allah elected him to be a prophet and a messenger; and since he became a prophet and a messenger, he became infallible: 'Then his Lord chose him and turned to him in forgiveness and guided [him].' (*Ta Ha*: 122) Therefore, it is not right for us to say, 'How could Adam *peace be upon him* have sinned when he was a prophet?' We should bear in mind that prophethood did not come to him until after he had sinned and repented. He represents a stage of humanity because he was the father of all humanity, and humanity is divided into two sections: people who are given Allah's message and prophets who proclaim Allah's Message. As a human being, he was vulnerable to sin; as a Prophet, his Lord elected him, accepted his repentance, and guided him. To those who say that Adam *peace be upon him* was created for paradise, we say that your understanding is not right because He says, 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.' (*al-Baqara*: 30)

The matter of paradise was one of the stages which came before the vicegerency on earth; it was a preparation for the mission he would undertake on earth. Otherwise, if Allah *Glorified is He* had created Adam *peace be upon him* for paradise, the sin had caused him to leave it, and then Allah accepted his repentance, He would have kept him in Paradise. This is why we emphasise that paradise was only one of the stages which came before the vicegerency on earth began. After that, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to impart to us the experience

of Adam *peace be upon him* so that we would take admonition from it and recognised Satan's enmity towards us as to avoid being seduced as Adam was.

'O children of Adam, let not Satan tempt you as he removed your parents from Paradise, stripping them of their clothing to show them their private parts...' (*al-A'raf*: 27) This prohibition is issued to the children of Adam *peace be upon him* not to Satan, and it is within man's ability to do it or not because Allah *Glorified is He* does not forbid man from doing something which is not within his ability, but rather, He forbids him from what is within his ability. Satan swore that he would seduce man, and he will do so because he had sworn it; he said, 'I will surely mislead them' (*Sad*: 82) that is, all the children of Adam. So, beware of being fooled by the seduction of Satan because his situation with your forefather, Adam *peace be upon him* was clear; and you should learn the lesson that your forefather experienced and not be seduced in the same way that led your forefathers to leave Paradise. Some people wonder why Allah did not say, 'Do not allow Satan to seduce you as he seduced your forefathers, but rather said, 'let not Satan tempt you as he removed your parents from Paradise.' (*al-A'raf*: 27) We say that this is an aspect of the loftiness and high rhetorical style of the Quranic discourse.

This is a warning about the seduction of Satan, lest he cause us to be driven from the paradise of responsibility just as he seduced our forefathers and caused them to be driven out of the paradise of preparation.⁽¹⁾ This style of rhetoric is called *ihtibak* (interweaving); that means a statement which consists of two halves, and you delete in a half what is already understood in the other half for sake of brevity. This rhetorical style imparts the intended meaning in the most concise way possible in order to attract the listener's attention to Allah's words so that he takes in the wisdom and the succinctness of the discourse and the lack of excess in the style.

'... Let not Satan tempt you as he removed your parents from Paradise...' (*al-A'raf*: 27) As we said, the root meaning of *fitna* (seduction) is 'test' in order to cleanse something of the impurities which are mixed with it. If gold contains impurities, and we know that gold is mixed with brass and other metals,

(1) Proofreader's Note: This is the Sheikh's interpretation and opinion.

when we want to make the gold pure, we smelt it (in Arabic, this is also called *fitna*) in fire, so that all that was stuck to it dissipates and comes off of it. The same is the case for *fitna*; when applied to people, it comes as a test so that he cleanses himself from the impurities which are intermixed with him and remembers what Satan did to Adam and Eve *peace be upon them*. So, if Satan comes to seduce you, beware of being seduced because this seduction will harm you just as it harmed your father Adam and your mother Eve *peace be upon them*. Satan is the jinn who rebelled against the way of Allah, and the jinn are composed of believers and disbelievers, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘And among us are the righteous, and among us are [others] not so ...’ (*al-Jinn*: 11).

Satan was not the only one of his race to rebel against the Way of Allah; the words of the True Lord *Glorified is He* tell that he has allies from his race. Allah warns Muslims, ‘Then will you take him and his descendants as allies other than Me while they are enemies to you?’ (*al-Kahf*: 50) Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘Indeed, he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you do not see them.’ (*al-A'raf*: 27)

‘His tribe’ means his forces and his progeny whom he sends out to the universe in order to implement his vow: ‘[*Satan*] said, "By Your might, I will surely mislead them all.”’ (*Sad*: 82) Hence, the seduction of Satan only came to take Allah’s creatures away from Allah’s Way; and when Satan disobeyed his Lord, this weighed heavily upon him; so, after being at the peak of obedience, he became a sinner against Allah’s Commandments with an act of disobedience that drove him to disbelief because he rejected the ruling of Allah. That aroused his anger and bitterness and made him intense and extreme in his enmity towards man because he knew that he was expelled and cursed because of Adam *peace be upon him* and his progeny.

Allah *Glorified is He* tells Adam, ‘... he [*Satan*] sees you, he and his tribe, from where you do not see them.’ (*al-A'raf*: 27) This indicates that Allah is talking about Satan’s progeny because if it included the demons from among mankind, He would not have said, ‘Indeed, he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you do not see them.’ (*al-A'raf*: 27) Accordingly, this verse specifically refers to Satan’s progeny; the True Lord *Glorified is He* teaches us to be aware that Satan will not be satisfied only with himself or his progeny, he will rather

make it alluring for some people to be human devils, just as there are devils amongst the jinn; about whom Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And thus We have made for every prophet an enemy - devils from mankind and jinn, inspiring to one another decorative speech in delusion ...' (*al-An'am*: 112).

The expression 'decorative speech' means enticing words which incite man to commit sins, react, and be influenced by them. Every sin is committed, from the outset, as a result of decorative speech; falsehood has its preachers, promoters, and proclaimers. They make some of his desires alluring to man diverting him from the way of Allah. We can observe that the enemies of Allah and of Allah's Way look out for man's religious festive seasons, and whenever such season comes along, the enemies of Allah fear that it may renew faith in the souls of people, so they try their very best to prevent people from benefiting from the season atmosphere. In doing so, they achieve their goal of enmity against Islam as Allah *Glorified is He* says, '... He and his forces watch you' (*al-A'raf*: 27)

Satan and his *qabil* (forces) can see you. The Arabic word *qabil* means a group of at least three people who may be of different races, or it can mean a group of people who are all descended from a single male or female ancestor. The scholars differ as to the meaning of the word in this noble verse; some of them maintain that it refers to Satan's forces and his progeny, meaning his forces from amongst mankind. They did not take into consideration that Allah *Glorified is He* says 'from where you do not see them' which shows that the meaning of *qabil* here must be 'descendants', since we can see human beings. In this way, His words are to encourage people to have the utmost caution and awareness because if you can see your enemy, you can ward off his harm, whilst if your enemy can see you, but you cannot see him, he is severe in his enmity and even more severe in his guile. The jinn can see us, whilst we cannot see them, and some scholars explain that this is as a result of being created from clay, which is corporeal, whilst they are created from fire which is incorporeal.

The incorporeal can affect the corporeal, which is proved by the fact that we feel the heat of fire, even if there is a wall in the middle, but the corporeal cannot affect the incorporeal or pass through it. Thus, the influence and transparency of the jinn is more than that of man; that is why they move in subtle ways and we cannot see them.

Hence, the meaning is that Satan cannot be seen – yet it is affirmed by authentic Prophetic traditions that Satan has been seen, though he is made of fire and the angels of light, and each of them are subtle and hidden beings. Further, angels have taken the form of men and came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as he told us: ‘This was Gabriel; he came to teach you your religion.’⁽¹⁾

Consequently, the companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw Gabriel *peace be upon him* not in his angelic form, but as something resembling a human form—he had taken a physical shape for their sake.

It was also narrated that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* saw Satan and said: ‘A strong demon from the jinn came to me yesterday suddenly in order to spoil my prayer, but Allah enabled me to overpower him, so I caught him and intended to tie him to one of the pillars of the Mosque so that all of you might see him.’⁽²⁾

This was out of the etiquettes of prophethood. Therefore, Satan takes forms, and you cannot see him as he really is; if he wants you to see him, he appears to you in a physical form. The scholars have discussed this matter in such way that it shows their eagerness to understand the Book of Allah and prove their willingness to bring out its meanings and secrets; some of them said, ‘When Allah says that Satan and his tribe see you from where you see them not, we must say that we will never see them.’

I say that if a man saw a jinn, he would not see it in its true form, but rather, in the physical form it took, and this form would resemble and correspond to the human form; for if a jinn took on a material form like that of a man or an animal or the like, it would be possible for man to see it, and at this point, we would lose our trust in the identity of those people we see and would wonder: is it the thing we know or is it Satan taking its form?

Certainty of one’s identity is essential for the motions of life and the motions of society; you only feel emotion towards your son because you know he is your

(1) *Narrated by Muslim*

(2) *Narrated by Muslim*

son and he is ascribed to you; you only trust your friend if you know he is your friend; further, you only take knowledge from a scholar whom you trust. Imagine that a demon took the form of a person you know; he would cause you to doubt his identity and prevent you from trusting the person whose form he took. Moreover, Satan's worst enemies are those who guide others to the Way of Allah; that is, the scholars. So what stops Satan from taking the form of a well-versed scholar and saying things that contradict the Way of Allah?

That means Satan cannot take forms – this is the view of some scholars. We say to them that they have understood that Satan's appearance in a certain form continues for some time; but no, he appears fleetingly. Knowing that if he took a human or any material form, he would be governed by it; in that case, anyone with a weapon might kill him, and given the fact that he fears us more than we fear him, Satan fears to take a continuous form, which is why he takes a form for an instant and then vanishes. If one scrutinises a jinn when it takes a physical form, he will find something amiss with it, such as it having the form of a man with the legs of a goat, but once you notice it, it is gone in a flash because it fears that you have recognised that the form which it takes governs it, and if you recognise, this you will be able to bring it down.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* continues: “Indeed, We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe.” (*al-A'raf*: 27) The devils were made by Allah, and He left them to those whom they seduce; if Allah had wanted to prevent the devils from seducing them, He would have done so. Thus, for everything or every event to take place, two things need to be fulfilled: the energy and the motive to perform it. If a person has the energy and the motive to act, then the final form of the action requires Allah's bestowal of energy. You say, ‘The weaver weaved a piece of fabric with high skill’, and we say: ‘The weaver did not weave, but rather, the machine weaved; and the machine did not weave, but rather, it was the manufacturer who designed it for such purpose; and the manufacturer only designed it thanks to the inventors who created the mechanism to operate it.’

Therefore, the worker utilised the energy created for the engineer to work and relied on the energy of the engineer who made it at the factory;

the engineer relied on the energy of invention and on the inventors who invented the mechanism, and the inventor created it using the mind and the materials that Allah created.

Hence, everything indeed goes back to Allah because He is the Creator of energy and the Creator of those who utilise energy; all that man does is directing this energy. So, if you say that the weaver weaved, you are right; if you say that the machine weaved, you are right; and if you say that the factory is the one that weaved, you are right as well. Thus, all the matter in reality goes back to Allah. You direct the energy created by Allah with the ability granted by Him when you do anything. When Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...Indeed, We have made the devils...’ (*al-A'raf*: 27), this means that Allah has left them to those whom they seduce; yet, if Allah wills, they will not seduce anyone. This is what Satan understood when he said: ‘By Your Might, I will surely mislead them all. Except, among them, Your chosen servants.’ (*Sad*: 82-83)

So, if Allah wishes to protect someone from error, Satan cannot beguile him; and the devils know that Allah has left them to their own free will which is called ‘leaving them to their own devices.’ This is why there is no disagreement amongst the scholars in this regard; their view is that energy is created by Allah, and every action is ascribed to Allah; some of them say that energy is directed by man so that the action is ascribed to man, whilst others are of the view that the Omnipotent Power of Allah means that He is the Doer of all things; some of them say that man is the one who commits sins; that is, he directs the energy to an action while being under his control, so Allah punishes him for directing the energy to a harmful action; and there is no disagreement between the scholars in this regard.

‘Indeed, We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe.’ (*al-A'raf*: 27) Therefore, Allah makes the devils allies to those who do not believe, but Satan cannot take the believer as an ally.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءَنَا وَاللَّهُ أَمَرَنَا بِهَا قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحِشَةِ أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Yet when [these people] do something disgraceful, they say, ‘We found our forefathers doing this,’ and, ‘God has commanded us to do this.’ Say [Prophet], ‘God does not command disgraceful deeds. How can you say about God things that you do not know [to be true]?’ [28] (The Quran, *al-A’raf*: 28)

The word *fahisha* (shameful deed) is derived from the verb *tafahhash* which means ‘to become viler;’ that is why some of the scholars say that these words refer to a specific kind of sin—adultery—because this is especially vile. The ensuing effects of every sin committed by a person come to an end as he ceases to commit such sin, but adultery leaves effects behind it—either the child is buried in the sand, the woman aborts it or she bears the child and then abandons it far away so that it lives as an outcast in society and finds no one to be responsible for it; in this way, the effects are more far-reaching than those of any other sin because it creates doubt in society; we can imagine a person who doubts as to whether the children who are ascribed to him and bear his name are really his; this is a severe calamity. Those who say that the meaning of ‘shameful deed’ (*fahisha*) is adultery adduce Allah’s *Glorified is He* words: ‘And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way’ (*al-Isra*: 32)

A ‘shameful deed’ is one for which *Shari’a* prescribes a punishment, or it signifies a major sin. We understand it to mean something especially vile, whatever it is. But which shameful deed is meant here? They are the shameful deeds of which He has already spoken, as He says: ‘Allah has not appointed [such innovations as] *bahira*⁽¹⁾ or *sa’iba*⁽²⁾ ...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 103). And also that which He mentions: ‘And likewise, to many of the polytheists their partners have made [to seem] pleasing the killing of their children....’ (*al-An’am*: 137)

(1) *Bahira* is a female camel whose milk was spared for the idols and no one was allowed to milk it. And 2 also.

(2) *Sa’iba* is a female camel let loose for free pasture for the idols, and nothing was allowed to be carried on it.

And also Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And the polytheists assign to Allah from that which He created of crops and livestock a share and say, "This is for Allah," by their claim, "and this is for our partners [associated with Him]."' (*al-An'am*: 136)

This refers to how they would go around the *Ka'ba* naked, the men by day and the women by night – why? Because they claimed to be pious, and they said, 'We want to go around the *Ka'ba* of our Lord as we were when our mothers bore us and detach ourselves from the fleeting joys of this world; we will not circumambulate the Temple of Allah wearing clothes which we have disobeyed Allah whilst wearing'

Their words, 'We found our forefathers doing it,' imply blind following which does not stand as a basis for a legal ruling although it is a way to impart practical knowledge; such is the case when we train out children to do what Allah requires of us as legally responsible people, so that they will be able and accustomed to doing what they are required to do when they reach the age of legal responsibility. The evidence to prove that blind following is not the basis of truth is that you find that opposing ways of life – socialism and communism, for example – are based on blind following; such ways of life have people blindly following them. If the blind following of a custom was the basis of truth, two contradictory instances of blind following would both be true; yet, two contradictory things cannot be true because opposites cannot meet. This is the rational proof that blind following is false. This is why we find that the rhetorical style of the Quran is very precise since the One Who is speaking is Allah. 'And when they commit an immorality, they say, "We found our fathers doing it, and Allah has ordered us to do it' (*al-A'raf*: 28)

As regards the notion of blind following, Allah *Glorified is He* does not give a response since it axiomatically does not lead to the truth; rather, He says: '...Say, "Indeed, Allah does not order immorality. Do you say about Allah that which you do not know?"' (*al-A'raf*: 28) This is the reply to their words 'Allah has ordered us to do it'; but where is the reply to their words 'We found our fathers doing it'? We say that this is something which requires no response being rejected by the sound mind, so Allah declines to respond to it because of its self-evident falsehood for the sound mind. In response to the suggestion that

Allah commanded this abomination, there comes the answer that Allah does not command abomination; and furthermore, how is it that Allah commands you to do such thing? Was it a direct command, meaning that He commanded each one of you to commit an abomination? Did you not pay attention to the words of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: ‘And it is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a partition or that He sends a messenger...’ (*ash-Shura*: 51). Or did this command of abomination come to you by way of a prophet? Yet, how could it be so, when you deny that messengers ever come? In this way, we see that their claim is rejected from two aspects: first, there is no way of knowing Allah’s Command unless He speaks to you directly or sends messengers to you because you are not worthy of being addressed by Him directly; second, you have denied that prophets and messengers ever came. Hence, Allah neither spoke to you directly, and nor by means of messengers; therefore, there is nothing left to be said to you but: ‘... Do you say about Allah that which you do not know?’ (*al-A’raf*: 28)

This question can only be answered in one of two ways; either they will say, ‘No,’ then they will be attesting to the fact that they are but liars; or they will say, ‘Yes’ – and if they say ‘Yes’, they will be attributing things to Allah of which they have no knowledge; so, they would be exposing themselves and admitting that Allah does not command deeds of abomination; rather, He always commands what is right. This is why He *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ عِندَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ
وَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ تَعُودُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

Say, ‘My Lord commands righteousness. Direct your worship straight to Him wherever you pray; call on Him; devote your religion entirely to Him. Just as He first created you, so you will come back [to life] again’ [29] (The Quran, *al-A’raf*: 29)

The word ‘right’ (*qist*) means ‘just’ from the verb *qasata* which means ‘to be just’; the word *qasit* is the active participle of the verb, but it means ‘to deviate from the truth’, and the *qasitun* are those who deviate and divert away

from the truth and do wrong. The word '*adl* (justice) means 'balance'; if you incline towards the truth, this is justice which is beloved to Allah; and if you incline towards falsehood, this is something abominable. 'Say: "My Lord has ordered justice ..."' (*al-A'raf*: 29); this is a declarative sentence.

'... And that you maintain yourselves [in worship of Him] at every place [or time] of prostration ...' (*al-A'raf*: 29); this is an imperative verb. It might come to one's mind that this is a command being added to a statement, but we should notice that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has added it to 'Say', so it is as though the meaning is: 'Say: "...My Lord has ordered justice..."' (*al-A'raf*: 29), and say: '...And that you maintain yourselves [in worship of Him] at every place [or time] of prostration...' (*al-A'raf*: 29).

The 'face,' as literally stated in the verse is the distinguishing mark of a person because if someone hides his face, you will not recognise him unless he has distinctive clothes which no one wears but him. The face is the noblest part of the body, which is why in prostration, one puts his face on the ground which is the utmost expression of submission to Allah's command; for prostration, as performed willingly by a man, is to place his forehead on the ground, and we can say that everything which submits to Allah's Command 'prostrates.'

'Do you not see that to Allah prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the moving creatures...' (*al-Hajj*: 18). Trees prostrate themselves though they are plants, and beasts prostrate themselves though they are animals, and the sun, the moon, the stars, and mountains also prostrate themselves though they are inanimate objects. But when the discourse turns to man, He *Glorified is He* divides them, saying: '...And many of the people. But upon many the punishment has been justified...' (*al-Hajj*: 18). This is because man has the special distinction of free will, which the rest of creation lacks. That which does not have a face can also prostrate, in which case it means submission alone; as for man, his prostration is on his face so that he knows that he has been made a vicegerent, that all other creatures have been subdued for his service, they are all obedient and they all exalt the praises of our Lord. So, if the master, whom all these other genera of animals, plants and minerals serve, places his face on the ground, he is in submission from

the moment he prostrates '... And that you maintain yourselves [in worship of Him] at every place [or time] of prostration ...' (*al-A'raf*: 29).

To 'set something upright,' which is the literal translation of the verse, means to place it where it was made to go, where it was created and supposed to be, and if you put it anywhere else you thereby divert it, deflect it, send it off course and make it crooked. So, setting one's face upright means to prostrate because the One who subdued this world for you and governed you with His way of moral guidance is the One for Whom you must place your face on the ground; if you do not do this, you thereby choose to make your face crooked.; know that this submission, humility and prostration to Allah will not only give you mastery over the other creatures which give you the good of this world, but placing your forehead and face on the ground also gives you blessings in your work and goodness in the Hereafter. The sagacious person is the one who knows that he has been granted mastery over the other creatures, so he worships Allah as best as he can, thereby taking the good of this world and the Hereafter, wherein no delight will miss him, nor will he miss out on any delight. As for this world, you come to it as a part of a chain of succession; you know that a delight might pass you by or you might pass it by; and when you remember Allah and submit yourself to Him, you attain the blessings of this motion of succession. '... And that you maintain yourselves [in worship of Him] at every place [or time] of prostration ...' (*al-A'raf*: 29).

The *masjid*, place of worship, is a place where prostration (*sujud*) is made; and the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'I have been given superiority over the other prophets in six aspects: I have been given words which are concise but comprehensive in meaning; I have been helped by terror (in the hearts of enemies); spoils have been made lawful to me; the earth has been made clean and a place of worship for me; I have been sent to all mankind, and the line of prophets is closed with me.'⁽¹⁾

So, every place on earth is a place of worship, and when you enter a temple to pray in it, this is a place of worship; the whole earth is a place of worship for you and you can prostrate and pray there. You can also go about your work there; for in a factory you go about your production, and then,

(1) Narrated by Muslim

when the time for prayer comes, you pray; you can pray in the field as well. But the technical meaning of the word (*masjid*) is ‘mosque’, namely a place which has been consecrated to be a place of prayer and dedicated exclusively for this purpose so that nothing else takes place in it. Therefore, if you take the word *masjid* to mean a place of worship which includes the entire world, the verse ‘And that you maintain yourselves [in worship of Him]’ applies to every place on earth; if you take *masjid* to mean ‘mosque’, the meaning is to perform the prayer in a specific place directed towards the *Ka’ba*, which is the case no matter where you pray. We call mosques ‘Allah’s houses by man’s choice’; one of us builds a mosque here or there, and they all face the House of Allah, the *Ka’ba*, by His own choice. This is why the *Ka’ba* is the prayer-direction for all of Allah’s houses.

In essence, we should look towards the *Ka’ba* in our prayers and set our faces in that direction. Allah chose the *Ka’ba* to be the House of His worshippers. Thus, at the time of due prayers, you should perform them in places that have been set for prostration or worship. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Set your faces upright at every place of worship’ (*al-A’raf*: 29). The scholars of Islamic jurisprudence differed regarding the necessity of this ruling, whether offering the obligatory prayers in a mosque was a mere recommendation or a commandment. Most of the scholars said that praying in a designated mosque is recommended; however, a minority concluded that it was obligatory. We agree with the scholars that saw no evidence commanding Muslims to perform the due prayers in a designated mosque.

Those who say that praying in a mosque was an obligation based their evidence on the words of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘By the One in whose hand rests my soul, I had intended of ordering firewood to be brought forth and the call to prayer to be sounded. I would have then ordered a man to lead the people in prayer and went to those men (who did not attend the congregational prayers) to burn their houses down.’⁽¹⁾

We ask, ‘Did Prophet Muhammad actually carry this warning out?’ We know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not enforce

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

these stern words and did not burn any houses down. He only used this firm statement to encourage us to pray in mosques when the call to prayer is sounded.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, 'And call unto Him, being sincere in your faith in Him.' (*al-A'raf*: 29) A call of supplication (*du'a*) is a request directed from an incapable person asking a capable superior to fulfil a desire or need. When you call unto your Lord, have sincere faith in Him without thinking of the worldly material means. Thinking of material means diminishes the sincerity of your supplication. Sincerity (*ikhlas*) is cleansing any impurities in the mind, as impurities of doctrine and effort will spoil precision and authenticity. Never assume that your heart is preserved from these disorders, for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Verily, my heart is sometimes distracted, and I seek forgiveness from Allah *Glorified is He* one hundred times every day.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, sincerity is an action of the heart. When you call upon Allah in supplication, He always sees in your mind's eye your dire need for His assistance. Therefore, avoid any hope or expectations from the material means of this world, and direct all your supplications to the Creator of these means. If you show this dire need to your Lord, He will respond to your prayers because you have consumed all the worldly means. Some people call upon Allah *Glorified is He* from a state of comfort. A person might possess his daily provision and still ask Allah, 'Provide for me!' He might have a good home and still say, 'I want a house that I own!' Some of us pray for things that require worldly effort, and we should exert this effort duly. However, most of our prayers are not made out of dire need. A person calling upon Allah's help from a state of humility and necessity will never be unanswered by Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *Glorified is He* ends the noble verse by saying, 'As it was He who brought you into being in the first instance, so also [unto Him] you will return.' (*al-A'raf*: 29)

(1) Narrated by Muslim in *Ad-Dhikr wa Ad-Du'a*, in the section (*Istihbab Al-Istighfar*), and by Abu Dawud in (*As-Salat*), An-Nisa'i in (*'Amal Al-Yawm*), and Ahmad (iv. 211) The meaning of his heart being 'covered' is said to be the moments when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was distracted from remembering Allah *Glorified is He* due to his concern for his followers so that he sought forgiveness for them. Al-Munawi said, 'It was a covering of light, not a covering of distractions, veils, or heedlessness.'

Allah's verses speak to humankind compassionately. He *Glorified is He* reminds them to perform certain acts of worship in a specific manner. He was certainly able to compel man to worship Him in the way He wanted, but He ordained that humankind are masters of their actions and granted them freewill. Allah also compelled the other creatures to serve humankind subordnately. Although Allah *Glorified is He* affirmed for Himself the attribute of Omnipotence, where nothing is outside His Power, His devout servants, who have the free will and ability to disobey His orders, still obey His commandments. Thus, faith becomes evident in one's love for Allah *Glorified is He* and the observation of His commandments. If a human is distracted by the worldly means and the whole universe serving his benefit, or by his health, strength, and enjoyable wealth, Allah *Glorified is He* reminds him to be aware that he will not escape my power. Allah has given him free will in this world, but he will return to Him in the Hereafter, when there will be no material means, and he will find nothing but the Creator of means. This is what we see in Allah's words, 'With whom will sovereignty rest on that (Judgement) Day? With Allah *Glorified is He* the One Who holds absolute control over all that exists!' (*Ghafir*: 16)

It is as if sovereignty in this worldly life is partly under the control of humankind because of their direct contact with the means. Human beings share control of the resources and employ other human beings in this world. However, in the Hereafter, there will be no owner or king except Allah *Glorified is He*; so, do not be deluded by the material means of this world, that they have been accessible for you and you are currently able to control them. In the end, you shall return to Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَرِيقًا هَدَىٰ وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلَالَةُ إِنَّهُمْ اتَّخَذُوا الشَّيَاطِينَ
أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Some He has guided and some are doomed to stray: they have taken evil ones rather than God as their masters, thinking that they are rightly guided [30] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 30)

Remember what we have said earlier that Allah *Glorified is He* guided everyone, in that He passed His orders to humankind through the succession

of messengers. When He *Glorified is He* says, 'Some [of you] He will have graced with His guidance, whereas for some a straying from the right path will have become unavoidable,' (*al-A'raf*: 30), this does not mean the initial guidance to the right path, but rather, the guidance of His assistance. We made a distinction between the guidance of direction and the guidance of assistance.

Allah's words, 'Some [of you] He will have graced with His guidance,' (*al-A'raf*: 30) means the guidance of assistance because these people approached Allah *Glorified is He* with humility and faith, so He made the burden of obedience easier for them to bear. He also made sins hateful to them and assisted them in their mission. As for those who disobeyed Allah *Glorified is He* and did not answer the guidance of direction, would Allah *Glorified is He* assist them? On the contrary, Allah will leave them in their delusion and misguidance. If He wanted them to be guided, no one would be able to prevent this, and Allah *Glorified is He* is above treating any of His creatures unfairly. However, misguidance is unavoidable for them because of their mischief and poor conduct. 'For, behold, they will have taken [their own] evil impulses for their masters in preference to Allah *Glorified is He* thinking all the while that they have found the right path!' (*al-A'raf*: 30) If someone commits a sin while acknowledging his error, his action is considered a mere misdeed. On the other hand, if he says that his poor conduct is actually the right path, he is flaunting his disobedience and disbelief and is rejecting the ruling of Allah *Glorified is He*. It is better for those who commit sins to say, 'Allah's ruling is right, but we could not control ourselves.' On the other hand, if a sinner rejects Allah's ruling and claims that his choice is the right path, he will have committed a grave mistake because he has now moved, may Allah forbid, from the level of a sinner to the level of a disbeliever.

'Thinking all the while that they have found the right path,' (*al-A'raf*: 30) this is because they committed acts that Allah *Glorified is He* forbade, not because they were unable to control themselves, but because they considered their misdeeds the right thing to do. We find this occurrence in many sins, such as usury, where we find people who say that it is lawful. We ask them to say, 'It is unlawful, but we cannot control ourselves.' At that, they are sinners, but not disbelievers. They can then seek forgiveness and repentance from Allah.

However, if they reject Allah's rulings and say, 'It is lawful,' they have gone beyond the limits of sin and fallen in the perils of disbelief. Save yourself from that fate, knowing that all the children of Adam *peace be upon him* are sinners and that Allah *Glorified is He* only ordained repentance for His servants because He had foreseen their mistakes. He thus mercifully ordained repentance and accepts it. So, why would a servant leave a domain from which they can escape to another domain which traps them eternally? Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

يَبْنَیْ ءَادَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

**Children of Adam, dress well whenever you are at worship,
and eat and drink [as We have permitted] but do not be
extravagant: God does not like extravagant people [31]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 31)**

When you hear the word 'adornment', you think of adding a fine-looking appearance to something that is not essentially beautiful. Allah's words, 'Beautify yourselves with adornment at every place of worship,' (*al-A'raf*: 31) mean that the Muslim should go to the mosque in his best attire. Also, these verses might be a response to a specific situation, as the habit of some pagans was the circumambulation of the *Ka'ba* without clothing. In this case, the meaning of 'adornment' here would be to conceal one's nakedness. The word can also indicate 'embellishment that is above the necessary clothing' or it might mean pleasant, graceful, and clean clothing. We know that the mosque is the place where Allah's servants gather. They are diverse in their occupations and livelihoods, and every occupation has its own attire and uniform. The professional person who sits in an office and holds meetings with people has a particular dress code, while the one who works in a blacksmith's shop has a special outfit that suits his work. However, when we go to the mosque, gathering with each other to meet with Allah *Glorified is He* is work attire appropriate? We should wear clothes that do not disturb other mosque attendants. If the outfits we use in a factory or other workplaces do not suit the mosque's cleanliness, we are encouraged to keep some clean clothes that allow us to honour this meeting with Allah *Glorified is He*, 'And eat and drink [freely], but do not waste: verily, He does not love the wasteful!' (*al-A'raf*: 31)

Eating and drinking are permissible matters because they are essential needs of life. So, enjoy eating and drinking as much as you need to live without being wasteful. Allah *Glorified is He* has made most ingestible goods lawful for us, and has only forbidden the intake of a few substances. Therefore, do not transgress beyond the majority of goods that are lawful by choosing to consume that which Allah has forbidden. Transgression is a sin against the soul. For instance, if you find nothing to eat but unlawfully dead animal flesh, you are permitted to eat it as long as you do not do so excessively. It is not right for us to consider the unlawful substances as lawful because Allah *Glorified is He* has given us sufficient lawful foods. However, if we do not find that which suffices our basic needs, Allah *Glorified is He* makes it lawful for us to take enough to keep ourselves alive.

The wasteful people are those who overstep the limits because they excessively spend their resources on unlawful items. This unlawful expenditure is described as dissipation (*israf*). On the other hand, if a person spends their resources on what Allah has made lawful, it is not a form of excessive expenditure or dissipation. The tradition has it, 'If I spend the weight of Mount Uhud in gold on something lawful, I would not consider it a waste. Yet, if I spend a single dime on something unlawful, I would consider it a waste.' For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered us to use every blessing in its appropriate way, on the condition that we do not use it recklessly and ungratefully. 'Uthman ibn Madh'un⁽¹⁾ Allah be pleased with him went to Prophet Muhammad and disclosed his intention of becoming an abstinent monk wandering throughout the world. 'Uthman said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'O Messenger of Allah, I want to be castrated.' He wanted that to eradicate his sexual desire. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'O 'Uthman, the castration of my followers is fasting (from food).'

This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also said the following about those who cannot afford to marry, 'O young people, those of you who can afford matrimony should get married, it is the best way of

(1) The story of 'Uthman ibn Madh'un asking Prophet Muhammad the permission to castrate himself.

keeping one's gaze lowered and guarding one's chastity. Those who cannot get married should fast, for it shall be a protection for them.' ⁽¹⁾

It is also narrated ⁽²⁾ that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gathered the people and talked to them about the Hereafter's trouble. Ten of Prophet Muhammad's Companions, namely Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Ali, Ibn Mas'ud, Abu Dharr, Salim (the freed slave of Abu Hudhayfa), Al-Miqdad, Salman, 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al 'As and Ma'qal ibn Maqran *Allah be pleased with all of them* gathered in the house of 'Uthman ibn Madh'un. They agreed that they would fast every day, pray through all their nights, not to sleep on beds, not to eat meat, not to approach women and to keep themselves completely chaste. ⁽³⁾ The Prophetic instruction concerning this was that he praised Allah *Glorified is He* and then said, 'What is wrong with these people who have said such-and-such? As for me, I pray and sleep, fast and eat and I marry women. Anyone who seeks other than my way is not of me.' ⁽⁴⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* continues:

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ ۗ كَذَلِكَ نَفْصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Say [Prophet], 'Who has forbidden the adornment and the nourishment God has provided for His servants?' Say, 'They are [allowed] for those who believe during the life of this world: they will be theirs alone on the Day of Resurrection.' This is how We make Our revelation clear for those who understand [32]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 32)

Since He brought beauty forth for His servants, He wanted it for them. What is good for females, the prophetic sayings have prescribed for females; what is good for males, the prophetic tradition has prescribed for males. The

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

(2) This is the story of the ten Companions who gathered at the house of 'Uthman ibn Madh'un and worshiped extensively.

(3) *Fath Al-Bari*

(4) Narrated by Muslim

bounties and means of sustenance are lawful for all the believers, men, and women alike. Notice the precision of the discourse here when Allah says, 'they are for those who believe.' Then, Allah *Glorified is He* continues, 'exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection' (*al-A'raf*: 32). It is as though we are faced with two distinct situations, one in this world and another on the Day of Resurrection. This means that the beauty of this world is not exclusive for believers, but for both believers and disbelievers to share. It has been bestowed as a bounty by the Lord, Allah *Glorified is He*. The disbeliever might even gain more of it in this world than the believer. Yet, in the Hereafter, bounties will be for the believers alone, and the disbelievers will not receive any of His bounties.

Allah *Glorified is He* grants awareness and faith to the believer through the vicissitudes that encompass his life. This means that a man might have successive experiences between sickness and health, wealth and poverty or strength and weakness. This is the state of man in this world, for it is an abode of vicissitudes. Thus, man might be afflicted in it with things he dislikes and there is no exclusive worldly delight. The hardships will only offend you if your stock of faith is diminished, as your faith makes you aware of His wisdom in imposing such hardships.

'Say, "They are [lawful] in the life of this world unto all who have attained to faith – to be theirs alone on Resurrection Day"...' (*al-A'raf*: 32). The word *khalisa*, 'to be theirs alone,' it can be read in Arabic in the *mansoob* state (*khalisatan*). It will be considered as a circumstantial expression (*haal*) describing the beauty as exclusive to the believers; it can also be read in the *marfu'* state (*khalisatun*). In this case, it is considered a predicate added to a previous predicate. The meanings of the word indicate that these beauties and bounties do not belong to the believers alone in this world because the disbelievers share them with them, and also indicate that these bounties are not free of the vicissitudes of fate. Yet, in the Hereafter, these bounties shall be for the believers alone, as the disbelievers will not share in them. In addition, no vicissitudes will affect these blessings anymore.

Allah *Glorified is He* ends the verse by saying, 'Thus clearly do We spell out these messages unto people of [innate] knowledge!' (*al-A'raf*: 32) 'We spell out these messages' means 'We do not condense the messages in these

verses, but rather elaborate them so that every believer can comprehend the messages without failure; We include in these verses all the concepts that are required in the matters of this life in a detailed and an unambiguous manner.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ
وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُزَلِّ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا نَعْمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

Say [Prophet], ‘My Lord only forbids disgraceful deeds – whether they be open or hidden – and sin and unjustified aggression, and that you, without His sanction, associate things with Him, and that you say things about Him without knowledge’ [33] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 33)

Allah *Glorified is He* begins the verse with the word ‘only’, which implies a restricted list of rules. Thus, the verse means that Allah made everything lawful, except these sins: obscene acts done publicly or in secrecy, offenses, unjustified aggression, polytheism (adjoining partners to Allah in worship) and speaking about Allah *Glorified is He* without knowledge. So, we are not allowed to include other actions outside this list and make them unlawful too. Allah’s words, ‘Say, ‘Who is there to forbid the beauty which Allah has brought forth,’ are in the form of a question demanding an answer from the disbelievers. They will never find any superior reference in forbidding the beauty which Allah *Glorified is He* brought forth to us because Allah *Glorified is He* clarified and explained what He had actually forbidden. The following verses tell us clearly, ‘Say, ‘Verily, my Lord has only forbidden shameful deeds, be they open or secret, and [every kind of] sinning or unjustified aggression, and the ascribing of divinity to any partners beside Him – that He has never bestowed any warrant upon – and speaking about Allah with which you have no knowledge.’ (*al-A'raf*: 33)

Let us reflect on the five forbidden deeds which the verse mentions. Several essential elements must be preserved for humankind to have a healthy life on earth and remain dominant on it. The first factor is that society must be sure of the purity of its kinship (offspring and lineage). This is essential for a healthy society because if a man trusts that his wife’s children are truly his

own, he will graciously devote his life to provide and care for them. On the other hand, if he doubts this matter, he will neglect his children and brush them aside. These children could be neglected by the rest of society as well. Thus, the security of kinship is important for a sound society. An important reason why some children are homeless despite their parents being alive is the father doubting his paternity of the child. Thus, he has lost the parental instinct to care for their livelihood and well-being.

Purity of kinship results in a secure society, with diligent parents and well-raised children. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* forbade obscene deeds (*fawahish*). The word *fuhsh* is any action that is exceedingly repulsive. The scholars deduced that this word ultimately refers to adultery. This is because the effects of adultery do not stop at the sin and its momentary pleasure, but continue to affect the offspring indefinitely. Any transgression that affects one's offspring affects the whole society, as it leads to a society that is neglectful and devoid of care.

After that, the verse forbade 'sinning' (*ithm*). Does sinning here mean every enormous sin or only those sins for which the Sacred Law sanctions a punishment? The scholars have deduced that *ithm* here means alcohol and gambling because Allah *Glorified is He* said in another verse, 'But the evil [*ithm*] which they [alcohol and gambling] cause is greater than the benefit which they bring.' (*al-Baqara*: 219)

By this, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to preserve the essential component that controls the motion of man's life which is the mind and its lucidness. Alcohol clouds the mind, and man is required to protect his soberness in order to improve the affairs of his life without transgressing against other people. A mind that is veiled by alcohol is corrupt and its control of life is spoiled. Some people choose to drink alcohol and say, 'We want to forget our worries,' It is not the will of Allah, the Lawgiver, that everyone forgets his worries. If everyone forgets their worries, no one will be cautious or plan things in a way which ensures their safety from harm. The Lawgiver asks you to confront the worries you suffer with all your strength so that you can remove them. However, if you veil the mind, you are only fleeing from your problems. Therefore, you must confront the problems of life with your mind and thought.

If the problems you are facing are a result of your negligence and poor caution, then you are to blame. On the other hand, if the problem is a result of a fateful necessity that is out of your hands, know that Allah *Glorified is He* the One Who ordained that incident, had a wise reason for doing so. The purpose of such a trial might be that Allah *Glorified is He* and is protecting you from people who may envy your possessions. Everyone who is blessed is envied. The blessing maybe incomplete, as a complete blessing is only bound to diminish.

Thus, thinking about the elimination of preventable harm can only be done with a sober mind. On the other hand, you can only deal with afflictions that are out of your control through faith. Faith requires you to refer everything to the wisdom of the All-Wise. You need your mind, so do not veil it by drinking alcohol because the mind manages the motions of life.

We know that ‘unjustified aggression’ (*baghi*) means to overstep an appropriate action with injustice, pride, or greed. Injustice means taking the right of another human being and preventing him from taking the fruits of his labour. This injustice makes people unwilling to work. It is why Allah *Glorified is He* forbids anyone from transgressing against anyone else’s dignity, life or wealth. We must protect our dignities from shameful obscenities because shameful deeds can produce abandoned children. Even if it does not produce offspring, it still ruins one’s dignified status. No one must transgress against another person’s kinship by obscene acts or transgress against their lives by destruction and murder.

Allah *Glorified is He* also designated that people’s wealth be protected by forbidding any transgression on other people’s fruits and effort. Thus, no one is allowed to seize the income of another person’s labour or compete with him with enmity and injustice.

There are many forms of unjustified transgression (*baghi*). One of these forms is the unjust and forcible seizure of power. There may be people who forcibly seize power justifiably. For example, if you are on a ship that is struck by fierce stormy winds, and you are the person most adept at steering it, will you leave the commander to steer the ship if it could sink along with everyone in it? Will you, instead, choose to seize his place and take the wheel and manoeuvre everyone to safety? Seizing control justifiably in order to save

people's lives is a justified appropriation which is different from unjustified envious appropriation. We can give an example to illustrate the difference between such similar actions. It is clear when we protect the wealth of an innocent or inexperienced simple-minded individual to invest it for him; in doing that, we take the care of this right from its owner. It seems that we have transgressed against the rightful owner, but upon examination, our intention was the protection of his personal livelihood as well as the common good. This is justified aggression. It is still called an 'aggression' (*baghi*) because it takes the form of seizing a person's right in an apparently unjust way. In Arabic rhetoric, this is called *mushakala* which refers to the identification of a concept by the name of another concept because of their similarity. We find another example of *mushakala* in Allah's words, 'And the requital of an evil is a similar evil.' (*ash-Shura*: 40) Is it evil to respond to an evil? It is only an evil in the eyes of the wrongdoer. For example, when a thief steals money and you punish him and take the money back, you are actually offending him. This is why the Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Hence, if you have to respond to an attack [in argument], respond only with the same extent of the attack levelled against you; but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for [you, since Allah *Glorified is He* is with] those who are patient in adversity.' (*an-Nahl*: 126) If someone transgresses unjustly against us, we must remind him that there is a stronger authority than him. He should expect to be subjected to a transgression by someone with more power and authority.

After those sins, Allah *Glorified is He* alerts us of another unforgivable sin, 'And the ascribing of divinity to any partners beside Him – that He has never bestowed any warrant upon.' (*al-A'raf*: 33)

It is impossible that Allah *Glorified is He* would send down any partner to Him for us to worship. Furthermore, He would not send a proof, warrant or an argument that He had any partner because Allah *Glorified is He* utterly transcends such a thing! One of the tenets of faith is that Allah negated this polytheism, both with intellectual and textual proofs.

Another verse brings together all these sins in a concise way which mentions their opposites as well. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Behold that Allah ordains justice, the doing of good and generosity towards [one's] fellow-men,

and He forbids *fahsha'* (all that is obscene) and *munkar* (all that runs counter to reason), as well as *baghi* (transgression).' (*an-Nahl*: 90) He has mentioned that He forbade obscene acts in this verse to affirm the importance of the purity of kinship; He also mentioned the unlawfulness of that which runs counter to reason and transgression.

In the verse we are examining of the chapter of *al-A'raf*, Allah added *ithm* (sinning) to the list of forbidden acts. On the other hand, the verse of the chapter of *an-Nahl* orders us to practise justice and goodness and forbids *fahsha'* (all that is shameful), *munkar* (all that runs counter to reason) and *baghi* (transgression). It is as if the concepts of *ithm* (sinning) in the verse from the chapter of *al-A'raf* are included in the word *munkar* (all that runs counter to reason).

All the actions that run counter to reason are not only forbidden by the Sacred Law, but are also rejected by the natural disposition of human beings. Even people who have poor dispositions could view these acts as wrong, when they perceive how it can cause him harm if others inflict it upon him. Therefore, they say, 'We seek Allah's refuge from these sins,' yet, when they commit the same sin against other people, they do not consider it to be wrong.

For example, we find that a man might allow himself to look at the wives of others and could take pleasure from this. However, if someone else looks at his wife or daughter, he sees this action as the vilest of wrongful deeds. For this reason, you must define what is wrong in a way that encompasses all people. You should not only look at your rights alone, but perceive the rights and responsibilities of others as well. Beware of saying in protest, 'Why did Allah prohibit my eyes from enjoying an attractive body in front of me?' Just as He *Glorified is He* forbade you from looking at that beauty, He forbade everyone else from looking at your own kinswomen, so this is in your interest.

After decreeing good and beautiful things lawful, and declaring shameful deeds, evil, transgression, and sinning unlawful.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

There is a time set for every people: they cannot hasten it, nor, when it comes, will they be able to delay it for a single moment [34] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 34)

We are faced here with a Quranic text that is affirmed by the events we see in real life. Those who spill blood or harm other people by violating their dignity and taking their wealth will not be able to do this forever. Rather, Allah *Glorified is He* gives them time to commit their transgressions and then, in due time, will punish them for their misdeeds. Only *the Almighty*, who determines all things, can take full reprisal. If their human rivals wanted to take revenge from them, they would not be able to inflict a minute fraction of the vengeance which Allah's ability can impose.

Allah *Glorified is He* imposes this vengeance on the oppressors in order to preserve the security of society. So if you see corruption or oppression, do not despair because Allah *Glorified is He* has made it clear that for all people a time has been set for retribution. In our short lives, we have seen that due end happening to more than one tyrant nation. Thus, this verse applies to every tyrant, 'and for all people a term has been set: and when (The end of] their term approaches, they can neither delay it by a single moment, nor can they hasten it.' (*al-A'raf*: 34)

If falsehood and oppression do not affect the people and make them cry out, they will not seek out the truth or aspire to it. Pain is a means of health because it alerts you to the presence of an ailment. The result is that oppressors, tyrants, and despots can only continue for a limited time. So, do not despair, but seek out the truth and look to the side of Allah *Glorified is He* seeking shelter in His name. We find that most people who are afflicted by adverse events find no relief except through their faith in Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, they flee in pilgrimage to His House, filling his mosques in prayer, remembrance and the recitation of His Quran. We see these things and say, 'Whatever the corrupt tyrant does, Allah *Glorified is He* will use him to serve His religion. There are people who would have never turned to Allah's way except when the vicissitudes of time afflicted them. Then, they started seeking salvation from their Lord.

In our lives, we have known people, who did not worship Allah, pray to Him or fast in *Ramadan*. They did not remember their Lord for a long time. Then, only when they were harmed by a tyrant, they sought refuge in their Lord and asked for His protection and care. This is why we say to the tyrant, 'By Allah, if you knew what you had done for Allah's religion without earning any reward for it, you would feel regret. You have forced many people to seek Allah's religion after they had stopped practicing it. If you had known that your tyranny, injustice, and despotism would help Allah's religion, you would never have committed your atrocities. Every community has a set time, and if you are a tyrant leading a tyrannical regime, your end will come.' Look at history and you will find that some states, in their prime and their strength, ascended to rule over whole nations. Then, after a certain period of time, they began to fail and were overrun by weakness and incompetence because their set time had come. Allah *Glorified is He* blinds their sights by allowing them to take erroneous measures which they wrongfully assume will assure their continued ascendancy. Then, Allah allows the weak to overcome them and extract the power from their hands.

When the set time comes, no one can delay it because time neither lies in the hand of Allah who sustains the universe, and nor can anyone drive it faster. We can observe the use of the word 'moment' (*sa'a*) here. The word *sa'a* is the Arabic contemporary word we use to indicate a duration of 'one hour'. A day is divided into twenty-four hours, and the hour is further divided into minutes and seconds. Furthermore, man can divide seconds into smaller durations. The word *sa'a* is also used to mean the Day of Resurrection (the Last Hour).

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَبْنَىٰٓ ءَادَمَ اِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ ءَايَاتِيۤ لَا فَمِنْ
 اَتَقٰى وَاَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾

Children of Adam, when messengers come to you from among yourselves, reciting My revelations to you, for those who are conscious of God and live righteously, there will be no fear, nor will they grieve [35] (The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 35)

Allah *Glorified is He* informs His orders to the children of Adam after telling them that He made good and beautiful bounties lawful and only prohibited

five misdeeds. Thus, Allah created a system that preserves the security of their societies. Allah *Glorified is He* also assured them that He will extract vengeance from unjust people by placing an end and a set time for injustice. Allah *Glorified is He* ordered the children of Adam to apply these principles to all the affairs of their lives, 'O children of Adam! Whenever there come unto you apostles of your own, conveying My messages unto you,' (*al-A'raf*: 35) you must receive the Messengers of Allah *Glorified is He* with eager minds. Concern yourselves and try to find that which protects and benefits you. A messenger is someone who announces to each one of us the good and enjoyable things of life which Allah *Glorified is He* has made lawful. Messengers also tell us what Allah *Glorified is He* has made unlawful to protect the security of our societies. Thus, society should be eager to keep the messenger's company and hear his message. Allah's bounties instructed the messenger to continue their calls eagerly in a gentle way, even when their societies pay them no heed. They continued to show the signs and clear messages so that every person could understand what helped him with their life's affairs and what guided him to the straight path.

If you are afflicted in your health, you will be eager to call a doctor and search for the medicine. So, it is only logical that when a messenger conveys Allah's way to us, we should seek his message with attention and not confront him with animosity.

Usually, the ones who were pleased to see a messenger from Allah were the people of sound natural disposition. When the messenger from Allah simply declared that he was bearing a divine message, they believed him without difficulty. These people of sound natural disposition judged the messenger's words by their knowledge of his past with them. They already knew that he had a sincere soul and has never been sinful. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Indeed, there has come unto you [O humankind] an Apostle from among yourselves: heavily weighs upon him (the thought) that you might suffer [in the life to come]; full of concern for you [is he, and] full of compassion and mercy towards the believers.' (*at-Tawba*: 128)

The messenger who came to you was not a person you were unaware of. In fact, you had a clear and plain record of his past. This is why we find that

the first people to believe in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not wait until he recited the Quran to them; they believed him because of what they had already known about him, having lived with him and known every detail of his character.

For example, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told his wife, Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* about the message he had received. He divulged his fear to her that what had come to him was the touch of a jinn or a demon. She immediately said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘You maintain your family ties. You support the needy and strive to uphold the truth. You give to those who have not.’ All of these precursors indicate that you, Muhammad, are in Allah’s protection and care, because you were upright in your character before the Revelation came to you. Does it make sense that someone who never lied about people would lie about Allah *Glorified is He*? Then, Khadija went at once to ask Waraqa ibn Nawfal because he had knowledge of scripture.

Likewise, we find that as soon as Prophet Muhammad said, ‘I am the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He*’ his friend Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘I believe you.’ If this proves anything, it proves the truthfulness of his natural disposition. This is one of the things we can learn from the words, ‘an Apostle from among yourselves’, or ‘from your human race’. We can easily take Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a role model.

If a messenger had come to us from amongst the angels and said, ‘This is the way of Allah *Glorified is He* and you should follow my example,’ we could have very easily and convincingly replied, ‘And can we do as you do, when you are an angel created in a mould of goodness?’ Thus, a messenger was sent to us from our own human race with free choice, capable of doing good or evil. Therefore, he is an appropriate role model for us to follow. This is why it was foolish for the disbelievers to say, as the Quran narrates, ‘Yet whenever Allah’s guidance came to them [through a prophet], nothing has ever kept people from believing [in him] save this their objection, “Would Allah *Glorified is He* have sent a [mere] mortal man as His apostle?”’ (*al-Isra’*: 94)

This is the result of their mere foolishness, shortsightedness and fury. Allah *Glorified is He* sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

as a human messenger from our kind. Instead, they desired an angel. How could an angel messenger be a role model for them when his nature would have been different to that of man? This is why the Allah *Glorified is He* gives this logical rebuttal, 'Say, "If angels were walking about on earth as their natural abode, We would indeed have sent down unto them an angel out of heaven as Our apostle."' (*al-Isra'*: 95)

A messenger is meant as a role model for you; Allah *Glorified is He* did not demand that you complete a task that conflicts with your natural existence. The task is not severely difficult and taxing. He sent someone similar to you whose past you knew, and did not bring him from another race.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'O children of Adam! Whenever there come unto you apostles of your own, conveying My messages unto you.' (*al-A'raf*: 35) Consider His words, 'conveying My messages unto you.' (*al-A'raf*: 35) Allah *Glorified is He* uses the word, 'conveying,' (*yaqussuun*) because the word *qasas* (stories) is composed of the root letters 'q-s-s', and the root verb made from these letters is *qassa* which means 'to follow the tracks'. If a man's camel or sheep were stolen, he would follow the tracks of their footprints. Thus, the words, 'Conveying My messages unto you,' (*al-A'raf*: 35) means that they were firmly adherent to what had been revealed to them. They never strayed from it, just as you should never stray from the footprint tracks you follow in the ground. 'Then all who are piously conscious of Me (*itaqa*) and live righteously (*aslaha*), no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.' (*al-A'raf*: 35) Piety (*taqwa*) means to place a barrier (*wiqaya*) between yourself and that which harms you. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Be piously conscious of the Fire,' so that we protect ourselves from the flames of hellfire by doing righteous deeds.

When it is said, 'Be piously conscious of Allah,' this means that we should be conscious of Allah's Attributes of might. We cannot withstand the might of our Lord, and you must obey His commandments and stay away from His prohibitions. Conscious piety here means that we must not deny and rebuff the commands of the messengers because they only came to save humankind. When society fails in ailments, they must look for the healing messenger that guides them to Allah's way. That is why it is not right to rebuff a message which comes with proofs and miracles, 'Then all who are piously conscious of

Me (*itaaqa*) and live righteously (*aslaha*), no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.' (*al-A'raf*: 35)

The Arabic word *aslaha* (live righteously) literally means 'to improve life.' It refers to the action of rectifying mistakes and fixing blunders. It is the process where we preserve the superior values and promote them. For example, there might be a well with drinking water. If the well is performing its function, we should not block it or throw garbage into it; in this way we can preserve the soundness of what is sound. We should also strive to make the well even better. For instance, we can construct a wall around it or design a pump that extracts its water and transports it to the houses. In this way, we would have helped promote the soundness of what is sound.

However, a major problem in this world is that some people may claim to upgrade existing constructs, when in reality, they are breaking their integrity. Regarding that, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Say, "Shall we tell you who are the most futile of those who lose their lives? [It is] they whose labour has gone astray in (The pursuit of no more than] this world's life, and [mistakenly] think that they are doing good deeds.'" (*al-Kahf*: 103-104)

Therefore, when you approach any action, you must know the premises of your work. What will you take from it? Either leave what is sound in this world as it is or make it better. If you do this, you will have no need to fear, nor will you grieve for anything that has passed. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'So that you may not despair over whatever [good] has escaped you nor exult [unduly] over whatever [good] has come to you.' (*al-Hadid*: 23)

What is the opposite of those who shall not fear or feel grieved? Allah *Glorified is He* describes the opposing group,

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

**But those who reject Our revelations and arrogantly scorn
them are the people of the Fire and there they will remain [36]
(The Quran, *al-A'raf*: 36)**

Why is the fate of those who deny and scorn Allah's signs to abide in hellfire forever? It is because even if the material means of life were easy for

them, they did not consider that they needed a share in the Hereafter. They did not look to the final end of this world and did not have faith in Allah's words, 'To him who desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall grant an increase in his harvest; whereas to him who desires [but] a harvest in this world, We [may] give something thereof – but he will have no share in [The blessings of] the life to come.' (*ash-Shura*: 20)

Even if one of them was able to take ample income and fruits from this world, why did he forget that it was only temporary? Why did they not consider the time they would spend in the Hereafter? You must be aware that in this world you are only a guardian, appointed by Allah, of earth's provisions. As long as we are all the sons of a single human race created upon the earth, with the mastery over other creatures placed in our hands, we must all be headed to a single destination. All of the aims in which we differ cannot be considered our final abodes, and the true final end of this world is the meeting with Allah *Glorified is He*. We can only reach that meeting through death, which transports us to a second life.

Those who scorn Allah's signs out of pride thereby enter into a losing bargain, because this worldly life is finite, and the next life has no end. Furthermore, the enjoyment an individual takes from this life is proportionate to his abilities and possibilities. On the other hand, the Hereafter is certain, and the delight of the believer therein is proportionate to the omnipotent power of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says about the disbelievers, 'These are destined for the Fire, therein to abide.' (*al-A'raf*: 36) The Arabic words *ashab-un-nar* (destined for the fire) literally mean 'companions of the fire'. The sinner will be accompanied by the hellfire just as one of us is escorted by a friend. The hellfire will be contented to accommodate those sinners and will ask, 'Is there yet more [sinners] [for me]?' (*Qaf*: 30).

Allah *Glorified is He* then says.

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