

THE HISTORY OF PROPHETS
IN LIGHT OF THE QUR'AN

THE CHAIN OF PROPHETS



Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ



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Allah the Almighty declares:

“And We had already written in the Psalms after the previous Reminder [*Torah*] that the land will be inherited by My righteous servants.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 105)

“And We have not sent messengers before you except that they were men, from among the residents of cities, to whom We revealed. So have they not traveled the earth and observed what became of those before them? The home of the hereafter is best for those who fear Allah. Will you not reason?” (Yusuf, 12: 109)

“And how many generations before them have We destroyed? Do you see any of them or hear from them a sound?” (Maryam, 19: 98)

“And the heaven and earth did not weep for them, nor were they given any time!” (Al-Dukhan, 44: 29)

“But as for those who committed misdeeds but then repented and believed, indeed your Lord is thereafter Forgiving and Merciful.” (Al-Araf, 7: 153)

The Noble Prophet (saw) says:

“Religion is advice...” (Al-Bukhari, Iman, 42)

“You either encourage good and ban evil, or I promise by Allah who has my life in His Hand, you will soon see Allah’s punishment descend on you! After that, you will pray for it to be lifted but your prayers will no longer be accepted!” (Al-Tirmidhi, Fitan, 9)

From the *Mathnawi*:

“The Holy Qur’an is the prophets’ states of mind and actions come to life. If you recite the Qur’an with focus and apply it in your life, it will be as if you have met the prophets face-to-face! And as you keep reading the stories of prophets, you will see the cage of your skin becoming too tight for the bird that is your spirit!”

Mawlana Rumi

Allah the Almighty says:

“Does man think that he will be left neglected?” (Al-Qiyamah, 75: 36)

“Then We will surely question those to whom a message was sent, and We will surely question the messengers.” (Al-Araf, 7: 6)

“So, if you disbelieve, how will you endure the day which will turn children gray?” (Al- Muzzammil, 73: 17)

“And whoever We grant long life, We reverse in creation. Will they not understand?” (Ya-Sin, 36: 68)

“When the sky breaks apart. And when the stars fall, scattering. And when the seas are erupted. And when graves are filleted. A soul will then know what it has put forth and kept back.” (Al-Infitar, 82: 1-5)

“Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting or lying on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying, ‘Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You! Protect us from the punishment of the fire.’” (Al-i Imran, 3: 191)

A prayer from David (as):

“Lord! Do not separate me from the circle of those who remember and invoke You! If I ever wish to enter the circle of the ignorant, break my feet before I ever get there!

For You to do so, would be a great blessing.”

From the *Mathnawi*:

“You only need a certain amount of ink to write out the letters of the Holy Qur`an. But to write out its meanings, boundless oceans and shoreless seas would not be enough, even if they were to flow as ink.

The Holy Qur`an is the mindsets and conduct of prophets come to life. If you recite and practice it with focus, count yourself among those who have met prophets! The more you read the parables of the prophets, the tighter the cage of your skin will become for the bird that is your spirit.”

Mawlana Rumi

PREFACE

God has blessed humans with a number of supreme qualities to lead them to the truth. However, He has also further helped them by appointing guides from among them with exceptional, God-given traits. Among those guides, the ones who received divine revelation are known as prophets. The prophets are righteous individuals, who have set an example for the rest of humankind and who were given three main duties:

1. To convey the revelations of God,
2. To cleanse and purify souls,
3. And to teach people the book and wisdom.

Sending prophets is our Lord's special way of helping humanity and this help started with Prophet Adam (as) in order to encompass the entire history of man. Adam (as) was not only the first man but also the first prophet.

Around 124,000 prophets have since walked on and cemented the cobbles of that sacred path to salvation. Although the core of the message they delivered remained unchanged, parallel to the progress of humanity, the path reached its summit and perfection in Prophet Muhammed (saw). It was through him that humanity was gifted the Holy Qur'an, the miracles of which have left doubters helpless and believers in awe, and which remains man's guidebook until the end of time.

The Holy Qur'an was sent to guide people to the truth and help them reach salvation in both worlds. It carries out this mission by dealing with several topics. One of the prominent ways by which the Qur'an fulfills this aim is to relate the parables of bygone nations. It is part of the Qur'an's profound wisdom that it uses the lessons of past nations to warn people against deviating from the straight path and encourage them to serve the Lord. It does so in such a wonderful style that it brings wrongdoings to life, and explains how divine justice responds to them and how good deeds are ultimately rewarded. It serves to not only pull people away from the wrong, but also whisk them away to conduct that brings joy.

The Qur'an places such weight on these stories that they comprise a third of its entire content.

In respect to the significance of these parables Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi (qs) reminds us to lend a close ear:

“The Holy Qur’an is the mindsets and actions of the prophets come to life. If you read the Qur’an carefully and put it into practice, then consider yourself having met with the prophets and friends of Allah. The more you read the parables of the prophets, the tighter the body cage will become for the soul bird.

It was only through these stories that we were able to break free. There is no other way to be freed from that cage other than this path, that is, the path of tawhid....

Have you not seen what the wind did to the people of Aad? Or have you not heard how the waters burst during the Great Flood?

Do you not know how the Sea of Grudge (Red Sea) destroyed Pharaoh and how Korah was plunged into the depths of the earth; what the ababil birds did to the army of the elephants and how a tiny fly ate the Nimrod’s head away, how it rained rocks on Sodom and Gomorrah and smothered them in the pit of a dark and filthy lake?

If I were to sit here and tell you how seemingly inanimate things have stood up, as if they were intelligent people, to help the prophets, Mathnawi would become so large in volume that forty camels would not be able to carry it!”



In order to strengthen the creed of tawhid in the hearts, the parables in the Qur’an examine the messages of the prophets and their people’s reaction to the truths they conveyed.

In accordance with the purpose of the revelation of the Qur’an, the wisdom in these stories can be summarized as follows:

To prove that Prophet Muhammed (saw) is the final messenger; to show that all prophets delivered the message that God is One; to ensure that those it addresses are able to learn their lesson easily; to awaken the hearts by encouraging people to admire righteous people and by warning them against sinners. Consequently, they inspire the servants of Allah take heed from the trials and tribulations that the prophets encountered, learn to be thankful and keep patient, no matter how bad their personal situations may appear.



We have humbly relied on the help of Allah (jj) to write this book, which offers the parables of the prophets as told by the Qur’an. It begins with the first leaf of the prophetic calendar and ends with the last, laying emphasis on the lessons and wisdom to be taken from their experiences. Here, our readers will find:

Adam (as), to whom the angels were commanded to prostrate,

Prophet Idris (as) who bore the mysterious wonders of the heavens,

Prophet Noah (as) and the Great Flood that washed away the earth from disbelief,

Prophet Hud (as) and the storms that turned the land of disbelief upside down,

Prophet Salih (as) and the quake that shattered the homes of stone and deceit,

Prophet Abraham (as) who turned the flames of Nimrod into a rose garden by his submission and trust in Allah,

Prophet Ismail (as), who was an embodiment of sincerity, loyalty, reliance upon Allah and submission to Him; and whose stories are reminded to all Muslims during pilgrimage every year,

Prophet Isaac (as), the patriarch of numerous prophets from the children of Israel,

Prophet Lot (as) and the grief that could not prevent a debauchery that sunk Sodom and Gomorrah,

Prophet Dhulqarnayn (as), and the flag of God's oneness that he carried far east and further west,

Prophet Jacob (as), and the yearning that turned him into a pillar of patience,

Prophet Joseph (as), and the journey that took him through slavery and the dungeon to becoming a king of the land and the king of hearts,

Prophet Jethro (as), and the eloquence that melted the hardest of hearts,

Prophet Moses (as), and the miraculous staff that sent the Pharaoh to his destruction in the eddies of the Red Sea,

Prophet Aaron (as), and his unshakable loyalty to his brother Moses (as)

Prophet David (as), and the hymns that put rocks, hills and animals in a trance,

Prophet Solomon (as), and the majestic wealth and kingdom he kept away from seeping into his heart,

Prophet Ezra (as), and the resurrection after a 100-year slumber that provided a snippet for life after death,

Prophet Ayyub (as), and the patience that never ran out,

Prophet Jonah (as), and the repentance that tore open the shrouds of darkness,

Prophet Elias (as), and the privilege of divine praise and favor,

Prophet Elisha (as), and the standard of righteousness,

Prophet Ezekiel (as), and the grace of divine compassion,

Prophet Luqman (as), and the legendary advices that made him the father of all doctors, medical and spiritual,

*Prophet **Zachariah (as)**, and the dignity that kept him from complaining when being sawed into two,*

*Prophet **John (as)**, and the heroism of accepting death with a smile,*

*Prophet **Jesus (as)**, and the mastery of spiritual wisdom that cured the ill and revived the dead.*

*In all, we have tried to bring to light the wisdoms presented in the lives of prophets that could point a way out of the spiritual troubles of our times. We have also tried to stress how all prophets were sent to give the good news of and prepare the scene for the coming of **Prophet Muhammad (saw)**, who is the secret of creation, the light of being, the pinnacle of man and a mercy to the world; and that God laid the prophetic road only to reach that final, perfect station. We have endeavored to express that as much as our strength and words allow.*



I would like to thank our friends in the academia for helping make ‘The Chain of Prophets’ more detailed and better referenced; and pray that their efforts become an endless source of charity for them.

We ask our readers to forgive us for any error they may come across. They are purely due to our shortcomings. As always, we seek refuge in the infinite mercy and compassion of Allah (jj).

Success is only through Him.

Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ

01.02.2004

Uskudar

INTRODUCTION

An eternal praise to the Almighty Allah (jj) for blessing His helpless servants with the peace and joy of faith.

Peace and blessings be upon the Noble Prophet (saw), who is the appointed means to lead humanity from darkness to light.

The Importance of the Qur'an's Stories

In the Qur'an, Allah Almighty recounts the real life experiences of the prophets and their people in an easily understandable narrative form, so that the human mind can better relate to and grasp the wisdoms they contain. In this respect, the Qur'an itself says:

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ
وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

“We relate to you, Muhammad, the best of stories in what we have revealed to you of this Qur'an, although you, before it, were among the unaware.” (Yusuf, 12: 3)

تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ
وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

“It is from the news of the unseen which We reveal to you. Neither you nor your people knew anything of them before this. So be patient, the best outcome is for the righteous.” (Hud, 11: 49)

وَكُلًّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ
وَجَاءَكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَذِكْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“And we make your heart firm through each story We relate to you of the messengers. And there has come to you, in this, the truth, an instruction and a reminder for the believers.” (Hud, 11: 120)

The Aims of the Parables of the Qur'an

The Qur'an narrates these stories in order to achieve a number of religious aims. These aims present detailed and comprehensive contents because they comprise almost all the reasons why the Qur'an itself was revealed. In this context, they aim to prove prophethood and revelation, the oneness and unity of Allah and the underlying unity of all the messages communicated by prophets. They also come with moral teachings, glad tidings for keeping patience and being thankful, as well as a warning against being rash and ungrateful. They also offer an insight into good and evil and inform us of the places where Divine power has become manifest in history.

It can be said that the most important and obvious aims of the parables of the Qur'an are as follows:

1. To prove and explain the principles of faith
2. ...as well as the truth of revelation and prophethood

Prophet Muhammed (saw) was illiterate. He did not learn how to read or write. He was never known to have sat down for a conversation with rabbis or priests, either. Despite that, the Qur'an revealed stories that startled even Jews and Christians. Some of those parables, like those of Abraham, Joseph, Moses and Jesus, were laid out so vividly and in such great detail that they alone served to prove that the Qur'an could only be a revelation from God. The Qur'an clearly explains these aims at the beginning or end of some of the parables it recounts:

وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْعَرَبِيِّ إِذْ قَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ الْأَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ.
 وَلَكِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَا قُرُونًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَاوِيًّا فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُو
 عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا وَلَكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ. وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلَكِنْ رَحْمَةً
 مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

“And you, [Muhammad], were not on the western side of the mount when We revealed the command to Moses, and you were not among the witnesses to that. But We produced many generations thereafter and a long time has passed since. And you were not a resident among the people of Madyan, reciting to them Our verses, but We were the senders of this message. And you were not at the side of the mount when We called Moses...but you were sent as a mercy from your Lord to warn a people to whom no warner had come before...that they might be reminded.” (Al-Hajj, 28: 28: 44-46)

3. To show that from Adam (as) to Muhammad (saw), religion has come from Allah; that all believers are a single nation; and that the One Allah (jj) is their Lord.

4. To reveal the blessings bestowed by Allah upon His prophets and His other distinguished servants.

5. To warn man against his archenemy, Satan.

Allah Almighty says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا
وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ. إِنَّمَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالسُّوءِ
وَالْفَحْشَاءِ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“...O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth that is lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy. He only orders you to evil and immorality and to say about Allah what you do not know.”

(Al-Baqarah, 2: 168-169)

6. To console and comfort Prophet Muhammed (saw) and all believers with the promise that the Lord will ultimately help those who do good and destroy those who do evil.

This aims to hearten Our Prophet (saw) and touch the souls of those whom he invites to the truth.

7. To ensure that man refines his soul and purifies his heart.

Needless to say, the parables of the Qur'an have a host of other purposes. Among the more important ones is to show that Allah has an infinite power to bring wonders into existence. Some examples are how Adam (as) was created from nothing and Jesus (as) was born without a father.

Allah uses these stories to instruct man in a number of ways, both overt and covert. They are also told in a way by which they are easily etched into memory, mostly because each story highlights a certain aspect unique to each prophet. Such that:

A look at the life of prophet Noah (as), above all, presents a case of unwavering patience and endurance in inviting people to the truth and consequently, provokes a dislike of disbelief, as well as disbelievers who are stubborn in their ways.

The life of prophet Abraham (as) embodies a firm struggle to eliminate paganism. He sets a brilliant example of how to keep trust and faith in Allah, even when he is about to be catapulted into the fire of Nimrod.

Prophet Moses (as) spent a good part of his life struggling against the tyranny of the Pharaoh and his cohorts; and later established for the believers a social order grounded upon divine law.

What makes the message of the prophet Jesus (as) stand out is his sensitive heart filled with mercy and compassion towards human beings and his distinctive traits of humility and forgiveness.

It is a source of admiration that prophet Solomon (as) was able to keep his heart intact through modesty and thankfulness, despite his dazzling and legendary power.

The life of prophet Job (as) is unique with instances of patience in the face of hardships and gratitude to Allah under all circumstances.

The life of prophet Jonah (as) provides a perfect example of how to turn to the Lord and repent with sincere remorse for one's mistakes.

Prophet Joseph (as) was unshakably devoted to Allah even while he was a slave. He held firm when a rich, famous and attractive woman tried to seduce her. It was beautiful conduct that stemmed from the beauty of his heart.

Prophet David's (as) life is that of a man in an awe of the greatness of God. The way he remembered and thanked his Lord with fear, awe and tears, offers us a lesson.

In turn, prophet Jacob (as) offers a great example of how never to despair and lose hope in the mercy of God even when blindness is cast over one's eyes.

As for the life of Prophet Muhammad (saw), it marks a perfection that encompasses all of the above and the more that words can never exhaust.

The Characteristics of the Qur'an's Stories

The Qur'an draws attention to the gist of the events. It does not place great importance to the elements of time, place or the names of the people. It avoids going into detail that distracts from the purpose and drowns the stories in unnecessary information, making them bland and difficult to understand.

Another characteristic of the parables of the Qur'an is that it only tells the parts of the parable, which are relevant. That is because it attaches importance to the moral side of the story, not the trivialities. It is for the same reason that the Qur'an does not necessarily begin to tell the story from the start. At times, it begins from the middle or even the end, without observing a chronological sequence. It does not allow the reader to become lost in the occasions of a time frame but drags out into the open an important stage of the story, regardless of its order in the scheme of things. It thus takes the reader to the wisdoms behind the event. In doing so, it breathes religious guidance into the parable, enlivening the reader's heart.

The Qur'an's stories generally begin with a riveting opening that draws the person in. The events are not lined up in a sequence with an insipid choice of words but they are brought alive in their full dynamism. The Qur'an stages the incidents that best teach man about his nature and leave much of the detail to the imagination.

The Qur'an repeats all these truths again and again.

The Wisdom behind the Repetition

One of the most important features of the parables of the Qur'an is that they are repeated. It is perhaps in the stories that Qur'an's art of repetition shows itself the most. Not all the chapters of the Qur'an contain a parable. Neither is the same story ever repeated in the same chapter. In fact, describing them as repetitions in the purest sense would not entirely be correct. Each so-called repetition sheds light on a different aspect of the same event, in the context of the chapter in which it is recounted. It is part of the beautiful style of the Qur'an.

Thus, each instance of the story teaches a different wisdom and opens a window for the mind into the world of the unknown. One example is that the story of Satan rejecting the command to prostrate to Adam (as) is narrated seven times throughout the Qur'an; yet each instance lays emphasis on a different trick and deceit that Satan resorts to.

The Qur'an itself explains the wisdom behind these repetitions:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحَدِّثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا

“And thus We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an and have diversified the warnings that perhaps they will avoid sin...and remember.” (Ta Ha, 20: 113)

وَذَكِّرْ فَإِنَّ الذِّكْرَ تَنْفَعُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“And remind, for indeed, the reminder benefits the believers.” (Al-Dhariyat, 51: 55)

Therefore, repetitions mean delivering the same essential message through different tones and wordings. This is because everyday occurrences are never repeated in the Qur'an. For example, the birth, youth and marriage of prophet Moses (as) are never repeated; but the events that are important in terms of the aim of his message, like his encounter with the Pharaoh, his showdown with the magicians and his tribulations with the spoiled Israelites are repeated exactly in four different places.

On the other hand, when the pieces of information about a person mentioned in different places is put together, it paints a brilliant and complete picture. The different aspects of each story form a unified account, without any disagreement or contradiction.

What the Qur'an repeats in the parables are essentially their meanings. It does so to inject divine wisdom into the hearts and souls in a way that people are most accustomed to hearing. Man better accepts an intended message if it is retold in different tones and choices of wording. That indicates that the Qur'an repeats, only because, psychologically, that is the most appropriate way to tell man a story and teach him a lesson through it.

Repetition also uncovers the same meaning through different patterns and combinations of expressions that elude even the most inventive writer. In that sense, it can be considered another miracle of the Qur'an that shows it is indeed the word of Allah and cannot be reproduced by man.

When repeating the meaning or the gist of the story, the Qur'an at times goes into a little detail, while at other times, it keeps it concise. This variety allows the Qur'an to address people of different mindsets and capacities. That is because some people need to hear some details to understand, whereas others can do with a summary. The Qur'an addresses all people from the lowest intellectual abilities to the highest. In this way, people of all levels, classes, or layers of society can benefit from the Qur'an, to the extent their capacities allow.

The Qur'an also repeats some words and sentences to achieve certain rhetorical subtleties, such as to increase the readers' shock, awe and fear; and to heighten the impact of the message by making the scene more vivid with each reprise. For instance, in chapter al-Q'ariah the three-time repetition of the word *الْقَارِعَةُ*, which gives the chapter its name, is to ensure that the reader feels the terrifying scene of Judgment Day to his bones.

On the other hand, each time that a different blessing bestowed by Allah upon man and jinn is mentioned in chapter al-Rahman, it is followed with the words:

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

“So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?” This statement is repeated for a total of thirty-one times. They serve to remind man his responsibility to accept and thank the Lord for all the blessings that He has given. This style of expression is also one-of-a-kind and unmatched in Arabic literature due to the fact that even though it is repeated for thirty-one times, it does not bore the listener. On the contrary, it gives a sense of tranquility each time it is recited.

Again, the following verse repeated ten times in chapter al-Mursalat:

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ

“**Woe, that Day, to the deniers!**” comes straight after the verses that mention a number of divine truths and warn those who deny them with a miserable end and brutal punishment. When commenting on this verse, scholars have taken into account the meanings of the preceding passages and explained it as:

“Woe to those who reject the Judgment Day, the great signs of Allah and His endless power, the countless gifts He has blessed man with, hellfire where the bad will be punished and paradise where the good will be rewarded”.

The Qur’an is a guide that invites to the truth, as well as a book of prayer and dhikr, that is to say, remembering the Lord. Prayer and dhikr have the most influence when they are repeated. Reciting chapter al-Fatiha in every cycle of ritual prayer, repeating the dhikrs after prayer as many as 33, 99 and 110 times, and the recurring dhikrs during prostration, are all to ensure that their truths are etched in the heart. Not only do these acts of worship establish a stronger connection between servant and Allah, the peace and blessings repeatedly sent to our Prophet (saw) also increase the bond with him. There comes a time when frequently repeated dhikrs allow the heart and the mind to attain their truth.

Junayd Baghdadi once advised a man who had asked him the meaning of “*La ilaha illallah*” to “Repeat those words constantly so that you acquire the truth of their meaning”.

On the other hand, reciting the Qur’an frequently, with a harmony between the tongue and the heart, also has a number of effects.

The Prophet (saw) has the following words regarding the benefits of reciting the last three verses of chapter al-Hashr:

“Whoever says *أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ السَّمِيعِ الْعَلِيمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ* at dawn and then goes on to recite the last three verse of al-Hashr, Allah will assign 70,000 thousand angels to repent for him until sunset. If he dies that day, he will die as a martyr. The same goes if he recites it at night”. (Al-Tirmidhi, Fada’il al-Qur’an, 22)

The Qur’an includes several other examples of the kind – such as how reciting chapter al-Waqi’ah saves a person from poverty, how certain other verses provide cure from illnesses, and so forth. Because the Qur’an is a Divine breath both in its wording and meaning, the repetition of the same words, as well as the repetition of the same meanings through a different choice of words, releases an inspiration that grips man’s heart and soul and realigns his life in line with God’s will. Yet, for man to receive that, the heart of the person who recites the Qur’an needs to acquire a certain blend. This is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the following narration about the encounter between Ali (kw) and a Bedouin.

One day, a poor Bedouin asks Ali (kw) for some charity. Because Ali (kw) has no other means on that day, he takes a handful of sand from the ground, recites some prayer and breathes into it. He then pours in the Bedouin's hand the that has now sand transformed into gold. The Bedouin is stunned. He asks Ali (kw) how he managed to do that and begs him to tell which prayer he recited into the sand. Ali (kw) calmly tells him that the prayer he recited was chapter al-Fatiha. So, the Bedouin elatedly lunges at some sand from the ground, recites al-Fatiha and breathes into it. However, nothing happens and the sand remains as it is. He asks Ali (kw) why the sand did not transform into gold, and Ali (kw) says:

“It's got to do with a difference of heart”.

Those who cannot read the entire Qur'an either for being negligent or unable to find time can easily recite a short chapter. This is because, as part of Divine wisdom, Allah Almighty has placed the most important messages, either partially or completely, in the shorter chapters, which virtually make them little Qur'ans in their own right. Imam Shafii in fact says:

“Had the Qur'an not been revealed except for chapter al-Asr, even that would have been enough, as you can find all the pillars of Islam in there...”

The following poem of Mehmed Akif testifies to that insight:

*Endless are the Lord's names but the Truth...none so grand
How grand it is for man to take truth by the hand
Remember the companions, who, before parting ways
Would always recite al-Asr...think about what it says
For the secrets of salvation are hidden beneath its hood
It first tells you to believe and then to do good
Be true and patient...and there you have it: humanity
Put those four together and defeated you shall never be*

The Prophets in the Qur'an and their Parables

The Qur'an introduces prophets as the most exceptional members of humanity. They did not become prophets by means of their personal effort but were chosen by Allah.¹ The Qur'an states:

1. The fact that prophethood is God-given and not a result of personal effort can also be understood from the verses given below:

“And this (prophethood) is the grace of Allah; and He gives it to whomever He wills”. (Al-Jum'ah, 62: 4)

“When a verse was revealed to them, they said, ‘we will never believe until we are given what the messengers have been given’. But Allah knows better who should be made a prophet.” (Al-An'am, 6: 124)

وَأَجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

“We chose them and We guided them to a straight path.” (Al-An'am, 6: 87)

اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا
وَمِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ

“Allah chooses messengers from the angels and from the people. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Seeing.” (Al-Hajj, 22: 75)

The virtues of each prophet, which in a sense are their distinguishing characteristics, are sprinkled throughout the Qur'an. Some of those verses state:

وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا

“And Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 125)

إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ. وَاذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ. إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذَكَرَى
الدَّارِ. وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ الْأَخْيَارِ. وَاذْكُرْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ
وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِنَ الْأَخْيَارِ

“Indeed, We found Job patient, an excellent servant. He was certainly among those who repeatedly turned to his Lord. And remember Our servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - those of strength and vision. Indeed, We chose them for their sincerity in their remembrance of the eternal abode. And indeed they are, to Us, among the chosen and outstanding. And remember Ismail, Elisha and Dhul-Kifl, and all are among the outstanding.” (Sad, 38: 44-48)

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا. وَنَادَيْنَاهُ مِنْ
جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا. وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا.
وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا. وَكَانَ
يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا. وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ
إِدْرِيسَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا. وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا

“You would never have expected this Book to be revealed to you. It is only a mercy for your Lord”.
(Al-Hajj, 28: 86)

“And mention in the Book, Moses. Indeed, he was chosen, and he was a messenger and a prophet. And We called him from the side of the mount from his right and brought him near, confiding to him. And We gave him out of Our mercy his brother Aaron as a prophet. And mention in the Book, Ismail. Indeed, he was true to his promise, and he was a messenger and a prophet. And he used to enjoin on his people prayer and alms and was pleasing to his Lord. And mention in the Book, Idris. Indeed, he was a man of truth and a prophet. And We raised him to a high station.” (Maryam, 19: 51-57)

Prophet Muhammed (saw), who Allah refers to as His ‘beloved’, combines the distinguishing characteristics of all prophets. About him, God says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

“And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 107)²

That the prophets were chosen people also points out to the fact that they were burdened with great responsibilities. Allah (jj) in fact says that they also are helpless without His assistance; and that they are human beings, who cannot in any way be ascribed with a divine nature:

فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“Then We will surely question those to whom a message was sent, and We will surely question the messengers.” (Al-Araf, 7: 6)

As mentioned in the above verse, even though prophets were under God’s guarantee, they, too, will be questioned about how carefully they fulfilled their mission. According to a narration, Solomon (as) will be the last prophet to enter paradise because of the enormous wealth he was given on earth and the amount of blessings he will need to give account for.³

2. The Noble Prophet (saw) is mercy in both this world and the other - through his guidance in this world and his intercession in the hereafter. As amply explained in a number of hadiths, after being resurrected, all people will be gathered on a vast plain. In tremendous distress, they will wait for their turn to be called into account, and will eventually start looking around for a savior. Each prophet will turn them away, saying they have their own problems to worry about. They will then come to the Prophet Muhammed (saw), who will prostrate beneath the Throne and ask the Lord to have mercy on his people. Allah will then give him the authority to intercede. The Prophet (saw) will then intercede, beginning from the believers with little sins to those who have done nothing good in life except to accept that God is One and the Prophet Muhammed (saw) is His servant and messenger. Eventually, he will lead them all into paradise. (Al-Bukhari, Riqaq, 51; Tawhid, 36, Tafsiru Surah, (17) 5; Muslim, Iman 332, 326, 327)
3. See, al-Tabarani, *al-Mujam al-Kabir*, XII, 94-95

However, apart from prophets, no one has a guarantee.⁴ So, in spiritual matters, one needs to look at those above him to improve the state of his heart; and in all things material, draw a lesson from those who are less privileged in order to remain thankful for what he has.

The Prophet (saw) says:

“The moment you see someone more privileged than you in wealth and creation, quickly turn your gaze to those who are less privileged.” (Al-Bukhari, Riqaq, 30)

There are other passages of the Qur’an that indicate that prophets will be called into question for their work:

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أُجِبْتُمْ قَالُوا لَا
عِلْمَ لَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ

“Be warned of the day when Allah will assemble the messengers and say, ‘What was the response you received?’ They will say, ‘We have no knowledge. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen.” (Al-Ma’idah, 5: 109)

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ. لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ.
ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ. فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ

“And if Muhammad had made up some false sayings about Us, We would have seized him by the right hand. Then We would have cut him from the aorta. None of you could prevent Us.” (Al-Haqqa, 69: 44-47)

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَىٰ هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا. يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوَدُّ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَصُوا الرَّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّىٰ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللَّهَ حَدِيثًا

“So how will it be when We bring from every nation a witness and we bring you, [O Muhammad] against these people as a witness? That Day, those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish they could be covered by the earth. They will not conceal from Allah a single word.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 41-42)

Ibn Masud (ra) was once reciting al-Nisa to the Noble Prophet (saw). When he came to the 41st verse that reads “So how will it be when We bring from every nation a witness and we bring you, [O Muhammad] against these people as a witness?”, the Prophet (saw) stopped him, saying “That will do for now, as he could not bear to lis-

4. With that said, it could also be said that the ten companions known as *ashara-i mubashsharah* who were told by the Prophet (saw) that they would enter paradise, are under guarantee.

ten to the petrifying scene the verse evoked. When Ibn Masud (ra) looked up, he saw the Prophet (saw) crying from fear. (Al-Bukhari, Fada'il al-Qur'an, 32; Muslim, Musafirin, 247)

The Greatness of the Qur'an and the Virtues of Our Prophet (saw)

The above verse states two things, among others. Being a prophet comes with a heavy responsibility and the Qur'an, which the Prophet (saw) conveyed, is entirely and indubitably the word of God. Elsewhere, the Qur'an declares:

ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

“This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 2)

The Qur'an is a book of Divine origin and ensures man the happiness of both worlds. It goes without saying that being of Divine origin, the Qur'an is perfect by nature. In part, the Qur'an proves this through its brilliant expression.

The Qur'an was given to the final prophet Muhammed Mustafa (saw) as the final message from God and a miracle to last until the final hour. Each prophet was given a miracle that fitted with and stood above the treasured skills of the time, to help them prove the truth of their mission. Those with sparks of light in their hearts who witnessed the miracles and acknowledged them as being far and above anything man could ever produce, accepted that the prophets were men of truth, whereas those deprived of even the slightest judgement dismissed them as magicians. However, even they had no other choice than to admit that what the prophets presented them were of a miraculous nature. Every person in Mecca saw the Prophet (saw) split the moon. Some believed in him, others did not. However, they all accepted it as a miraculous deed.

The staff of Moses (as) turned into a dragon and consumed all the hype surrounding magic, which was very popular in Egypt at the time. With medicine being the most cherished discipline of his time, Jesus (as) was given a miracle that no doctor could ever come close to. He raised the dead.

Prophet Muhammed's (saw) time was the golden age of poetry and rhetoric. Festivals like Ukaz, Dhu'l Majaz and Majanna were organized for great poets and orators to face-off in front of crowds with the best of what they could improvise. Poems that won the first prize and were considered the best of their generation would be written on satin cloths and hung up on the walls of Ka'bah. Seven of the best were on display on Ka'bah, known as 'the seven hanging poems'. However, that was only until the arrival of the Qur'an. They were quickly taken down and became a thing of the past, just like the festival that had been held for centuries in their honor. No poet could hang his or her winning poems on the wall of Ka'bah any longer.

The message of Prophet Muhammad (saw), which left even the best orators speechless, covers all places and times until the final hour. Therefore, his authority, power and miracles comprise and is superior to all those of the prophets before him. At the same time, because his duty involved setting a lasting example to ordinary human beings, he carried out most of his actions in a way they could imitate.

It should also be stressed that except for him, the duties of all prophets have been limited to a certain time and place. For that reason, many of the details of their lives and conducts have not made it to us. Yet, as the message of Prophet Muhammed (saw) is binding for all times and places until the end of the world, the smallest details about his conduct, including his personal life, have been handed down to us through an authentic and dependable line of tradition. And it will continue to be handed down until the end of time.

The Qur'an makes mention of the universal nature of his prophethood in the following:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ
وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأُمِّيِّ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتَّبِعُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ

“Say, ‘O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger to you all from Allah...to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god except Him; He gives life and causes death.’ So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him that you may be guided.” (Al-Araf, 7: 158)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا كَافَّةً لِّلنَّاسِ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“And We have not sent you to except to entire mankind...as a bringer of good tidings and a warner. But most of the people do not know.” (Saba, 34: 28)

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا.
الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ
شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا

“Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His Servant that he may be to the worlds a warner. He to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and who has not taken a son and has not had a partner in dominion, and

has created each thing and determined it with a precise determination.” (Al-Furqan, 25: 1-2)

Behind the universal nature of his prophethood lies a Divine Will to make sure that each and every person to live during the final times is given the opportunity to follow his impeccable example.

In line with that aim, the Prophet (saw) was given a number of miracles. Miracles serve to affect the masses and convince them to obey their prophets. They aim to make sure that even the most powerful and prestigious individuals of society submit to the call. In doing that, the Prophet (saw) relied on, together with others, the more superior miracle of the Holy Qur’an, which perfected the art of expression. Although miracles are extraordinary feats displayed through prophets, the expression of the Qur’an itself, which served to indisputably prove the truth of the Prophet’s (saw) call, is a miracle that defies imagination. Thus, the Divine word entrusted in the hands of the Prophet (saw) like an eternal flame, was the main reason as to why the people of his age, who very well knew the fine details of the art of expression, rhetoric and eloquence, submitted. Among them was Umar (ra). He had set out with the vilest of intentions to murder the Prophet (saw) but was stopped in his tracks by a few verses of the Qur’an he happened to hear on the way. With the speed of lightning, those verses took him from one opposite pole to another and delivered him to salvation.

Another similar example among many others is the case of the daughter of the illustrious poet Imru’l-Qays. On hearing a short passage of the Qur’an, she felt compelled to exclaim:

“This cannot be the word of man! If there is such a word on earth, it is best that my father’s poem be brought down from the wall of the Ka’bah! Take it down and put these verses up in its place!”⁵

Even the pagans were so captivated by the sound of the Qur’an that they would try to speak over it or make a noise just to suppress their inner urge to accept. The Qur’an itself mentions this when it says:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْلَبُونَ

5. As the saying goes, the spoken word reminds of the speaker. A majestic speech is only reflective of the majesty of the being by whom it is spoken. Thus, the magnificence of the Quran’s speech comes from none other than the magnificence of God; and in the face of it, human beings have continued to be at a loss for words. The enigmatic character of the Quran’s language is that it looks easy; it is comprised of everyday, conversational speech that rolls effortlessly of the tongue and shows how effortless it must have been for its speaker, God, to articulate it. But despite looking easy, it is at the same time impossible to imitate. This is a divine mystery that perhaps poses the greatest of all dilemmas.

“And those who disbelieve say, ‘Do not listen to this Qur’an and speak noisily during its recital that perhaps you will overcome.” (Fussilat, 41: 26)

Still, some pagans would secretly listen in to the Qur’an. Even the most ingrained among them like Abu Jahl would lend out an ear behind walls. Although they would not believe, they would still be mesmerized by the sound. At times, they would even catch each other in the act and but would part ways without speaking a word of it in public, due of course to the mulishness of their denial.

However, they can hardly be blamed for being touched by the Qur’an. The Qur’an is meant to affect. It is designed to rescue humanity from the darkness of denial and bring about the greatest revolution by changing man’s approach to life, the universe and of course to himself. The best example of that is the way in which it was able to deliver the people of the Prophet’s (saw) time out of what was known as an age of ignorance.

The Holy Qur’an has an affect even on animals, as indicated by the personal experience of Usayd ibn Hudayr (ra):

“I was reciting the Qur’an one evening and my horse was tied-up and standing next to me. Then suddenly, the horse reared up. It calmed down only when I stopped reading. I resumed reading but the horse reared up once again. My son Yahya was sleeping nearby and it got to a point where I became worried that the horse may trample him under its hooves. Therefore, I grabbed Yahya and placed him by my side.

I then looked and noticed specks of light dotted around the sky. They looked like lanterns. I kept looking at them, as they rose higher and higher and eventually disappeared into the distance.

The next morning, I explained what had happened to the Messenger of Allah (saw). He said:

“Keep on reading, Usayd”. He then asked me, “Do you know what those things were that you saw?” I said I did not.

“They were angels who had come to hear you recite the Qur’an”, he said. “Had you have continued reading, they would have stayed until dawn...and people leaving their homes for prayer would have been able to see them.” (Al-Bukhari, Fada’il al-Qur’an, 15)

The reason as to why the Qur’an has an irrepressible effect on all creatures has intimately to do with the authority of the Prophet (saw). He is the final messenger. God’s act of sending prophets ends with him and his prophethood spans all space and time until the final hour. And the Holy Qur’an is the final revelation that exercises a power equal to that. As long as the earth turns, it comprises the answers to all the problems to come. The Qur’an is hence a wonder of expression, both in its wording and meaning.

This Divine gift will remain a guide and a wonder of art that proves the truth of the Prophet's (saw) call until the day humankind is resurrected.

Not only is the Qur'an a masterpiece of eloquence in the way it elaborates its wisdom, it is also a book no prophet before has been privileged with, to the extent that it addresses all space and time. This quality of the Qur'an is designed to stand the test of time and continue to light the way for people.

Whatever the Qur'an contains, it is purely from God. Even the order and arrangement of the verses are based on revelation, without a slightest interference by the Prophet (saw).

The Qur'an's impeccable rhythm is also the work of God. It is so melodic that making the slightest change or swapping the order of words instantly breaks the harmony. The late scholar Muhammad Hamidullah recounts a conversation he once had with a musician on the subject:

"A French musician, who had just become Muslim, suggested that in chapter al-Nasr, it was in bad musical taste to pause at '*efwaaajaa*'. He assumed it was a rule of recital that you had pause there. However, I explained to him that it was in fact incorrect to pause there and that it was proper to instead read the word in full, as in '*efwaaajan*' and then connect it with the next word '*fasabbih...*' and only then come to a pause. Therefore, it would be, '*fi diinillaahi efwaaajan. Fasabbih*'. He then turned around and said, 'I stand corrected for ever having question the harmony of the Qur'an. It is way beyond anything man can compose...and I believe in it now than perhaps I ever did before.'"

This quality of the Qur'an has left a lasting impression on people's hearts. Arabs entered the fold of Islam in masses, after hearing the verses roll through the lips of the Prophet (saw) himself.

There is also a recent example to how the expression of the Qur'an is a miracle in its own right.

Ali Uskudarli, who used to be the imam of the Yeralti Mosque in Istanbul, also served as an imam of the palace of Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II. His students from the Higher Islamic Institute Mehmet Ali Sari and Ismail Karacam once explained that he was part of a delegation that travelled to Hungary on the invitation of the Austro-Hungarian Emperor. After taking part in some cultural activities, the Emperor politely asks Ali Uskudarli to recite some Qur'an, and he does. According to Mehmet Ali Sari, he recited in the mode of nihawand. At the time, Ali Uskudarli is a young hafiz, a professional reciter with a delightful voice and a beautiful vocal style. The Emperor is so visibly enthralled by the sound of divine word echoing in the hall, that he turns around to the Empress and says a few things to her ear. Ali Hodja is

curious to find out; so afterwards, he asks the translator, whether he overheard what the Emperor had said. The translator tells him the exact words:

“The word of man cannot possibly have such an effect on man”.

It is simply thanks to the miracle of the Qur’an, and its spectacular effect on both the heart and the mind, that the Prophet (saw) informs Muslims that they will outnumber the members of all other religions:

“Each prophet has undoubtedly been given a miracle to help people believe. As for me, I have been given the Qur’an. And I hope that my nation will be a lot more than others on the Day of Judgment.” (Al-Bukhari, Itisam, 1)⁶

The Prophet (saw) places his hope on the Qur’an to have a greater following. This contains a number of wisdoms.

The Qur’an is unlike any other miracle in that it does not take place in a certain place and time, and then disappear. It is ever present with its wording and meaning to astound human reason. As long as there is reason and knowledge, its verses will be reflected on. It will continue to be understood with greater depth and its finer meanings will be picked up from between the lines.

What comes next is that the Qur’an’s message is not restricted to a certain time or people but envelops all times and entire humankind. At every age, there will be scholars who acknowledge it as the miracle it is, which will help increase the followers of God’s Messenger (saw).

The scientific discoveries made centuries after the revelation of the Qur’an in fact establish, time and again, its miraculous nature and confirm that it indeed is the word of God. Research into the stages of human creation, the mysteries of the universe, the motion and the makeup of the earth, the sun and the moon, as well as physical, geographical, medical, social and many other sciences continue to lay bare this truth.

Just one example is teleporting. Teleporting, which scientists now agree is possible, is to transport an object instantly from one location to another. In 2001, a small amount of water was divided into its molecules and teleported to another place. The Qur’an explicitly spoke of this 1,500 years ago, at a time when such a thing would not have occurred even to the wildest imagination. The 40th verse of al-Naml recounts how the throne of Balqis was teleported across a distance of 2,000 kilometers in half the time it takes to blink an eye.

With each passing day, Rumi’s words about the Qur’an make greater sense.

6. In fact, statistics show that Islam is spreading far quicker than Christianity and Judaism.

“It only takes a bottle of ink to write out the letters of the Qur’an. However, shoreless oceans could not offer enough ink and all the forests on earth enough pens to write out its secrets.”



The Almighty has dared all humans and jinn to come until the final hour to produce a book like the Holy Qur’an. To this day, that challenge has gone unanswered. The Qur’an first declared:

قُلْ لَّيِّنَ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ
هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا

“Say, ‘If mankind and the jinn gathered in order to produce the like of this Qur’an, they could not do so, even if they were to assist one another.’” (Al-Isra, 17: 88)

The challenge was then reduced to just ten similar chapters. However, it was still too big to ask:

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ
وَادْعُوا مَنْ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

“Or do they say, ‘He invented it’? Say, ‘Then bring ten chapters like it that have been invented and call on the help of whomever you can besides Allah, if you are true to your word!’” (Hud, 11: 13)

The Lord then further dropped the amount to just a single chapter, to let it be known that the Qur’an is indeed His word and, therefore, inimitable:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ
وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ. فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ
تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ

“And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Muhammad], then produce a chapter the like it and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you are true to your word. But if you do not - and you will never be able to⁷ - then fear the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 23-24)

7. Not only is it impossible to replicate the Quran, it is also impossible to distort it, unlike what happened to the Torah and the Bible. As declared in the verse, **‘We have undoubtedly revealed the Quran...**

Rumi stresses that the Qur'an's wisdoms and mysteries will shine forth only if it is read with a clean heart:

“Before you read the Qur'an or the hadith of the Prophet (saw), tidy up your heart and pull yourself together. Do not blame the garden if you cannot smell its flowers. Blame your nose...and your heart!”

In the Qur'an, Allah (jj) says:

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, or are there locks upon their hearts?” (Muhammad, 47: 24)

The above verse tells us that a sound heart is needed to understand and feel the Qur'an and grasp its secrets. The Qur'an unlocks its mysteries only to a sound heart. Allah (jj) says:

نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ. عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ

“The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down. Upon your heart, [O Muhammad] - that you may be of the warners.”⁸ (Al-Shuara, 42: 193-194)

Thus, it is necessary that we learn the Qur'an through the teachings of the Prophet (saw), just as his companions did. Benefitting from the Qur'an very much depends on the degree by which follow the Prophet (saw), who in fact says:

“The knowledge which Allah (jj) has sent through me is like a land that receives plenty of rain. A patch of that land is soil that absorbs the rain it needs and allows lots of greenery to grow on it. Another patch holds the water on its surface, for people to drink from it, and obtain water for crops and animals. And then there is another barren patch that neither absorbs nor holds the water.” (Al-Bukhari, 'Ilm, 20)

Suhrawardi says that the first two types of land mentioned by the Prophet (saw) refer to people who learn and master the Prophet's (saw) wisdom and teach others. The third indicates those who do not lift their heads to what is going on around them and who reject the truth the Prophet (saw) has brought.⁹ He adds:

“The land that is the heart of scholars has flourished through the reviving rain of knowledge and wisdom, as has produced fertile crops. Allah (jj) has said:

and We will be the one to protect it' (Al-Hijr, 15: 9), the Quran is under Divine protection. This is evidenced by the fact that despite doing their utmost to cut Muslims off Islam, the Soviets could not manage to alter even a single letter of the Quran.

8. Warner, or its original *inzar*, is a person who advises people to do what is right and abstain from the wrong by reminding them of their consequences in the hereafter.

9. See, Suhrawardi, *Awarif*, p. 5-6

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا

“He sends rain down from the sky, and valleys flow according to their capacity.” (Al-Rad, 13: 17)

Ibn Abbas (ra) tells us what that means:

“The water in that verse means knowledge, while the valleys are hearts”.¹⁰

The greatest interpreter of the Qur’an is the Prophet (saw). All his hadiths are in a way interpretations of the divine book.

Allah (jj) states:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَاسْأَلُوا
أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ. بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ
لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And We sent not before you except men to whom We revealed. So ask the people of knowledge if you do not know. We sent them with clear proofs and written orders. And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.” (Al-Nahl, 16: 43-44)

The greatest interpreters of the Qur’an after the Noble Prophet (saw) are saints, who practice what they have learnt and have acquired a share of his spiritual life.¹¹

Hearts fogged and darkened by sin and the thought of all things other than the Lord have nothing to take whatsoever from the Qur’an. The Qur’an does not unlock its secrets, for instance, to orientalists who have knowledge in appearance but lack the spirit. The Almighty declares:

10. Suhrawardi, *Awarif*, p. 8

11. The famous scholar of the Quran and hadith, Suyuti says:

“Nobody should scurry to interpret the Quran before mastering the following disciplines: *lughah* (vocabulary), *nahw* (grammar), *sarf* (morphology), *ishtiqaq* (etymology), *maani* (semantics), *beyan* (expression), *badii* (eloquence), *qiraah* (recitation), *kalam* (theology), *usul-i fiqh* (legal methodology), *sabab-i nuzul* and *qissah*, (the reason of revelation of the verses and the stories of the Quran), *nasikh-mansukh* (abrogated verses), *fiqh* (law), *hadith* and a knowledge, which is God-given. The last is a something God gives to people who practice what they have learnt, and is pointed out to by the hadith, “Practice what you know...and Allah will teach you what you do not.” (Suyuti, *al-Itqan*, IV, 213-215)

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ آيَاتِيَ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كُلَّ آيَةٍ
لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَبِيلَ العِجْيِ
يَتَّخِذُوهُ سَبِيلًا ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ

“I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant upon the earth without right; and if they should see every sign, they will not believe in it. And if they see the way of right, they will not adopt it. But if they see the way of error, they will adopt it. That is because they have denied Our signs and they were heedless of them.” (Al-Araf, 7: 146)

It is for that reason that in many verses, the Qur’an declares that ingrained tyrants, disbelievers and sinners will never find the way.¹²

Such is the greatness of the Holy Qur’an. We have tried to convey its stories here to serve as a guide in the times we live.

May Allah (jj) allow us to mirror the conducts of the prophets in our lives, with all the lessons and wisdoms they contain, and give us a share of their patience, gratitude, trust, mercy, compassion, modesty and selflessness.

Amin.



12. The expression is لَا يَهْدِي, ‘God does not guide’. The Quran mentions it exactly 26 times. Just a few examples are:

وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

“...Allah does not guide the tyrants.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 258)

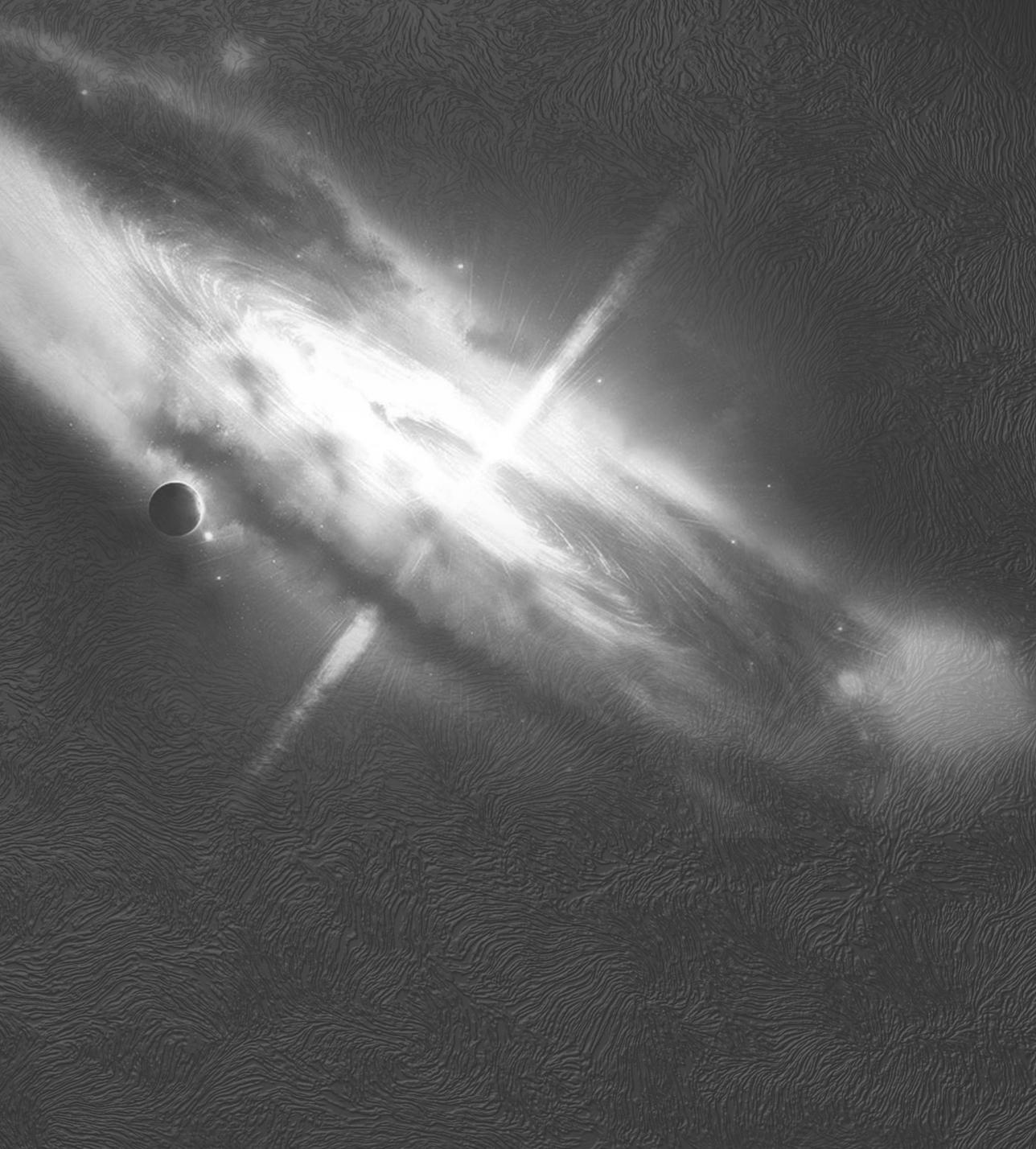
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الكَافِرِينَ

“...Allah does not guide the disbelievers.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 264)

وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الفَاسِقِينَ

“...Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient.” (Al-Maidah, 5: 108).

*Dedicated to the Light of Existence,
the Prophet Muhammed Mustafa (saw),
to whom the universe itself has been dedicated,
as well as the entire line of the prophets and saints.*



PROPHET
ADAM

-peace be upon him-

The prophet to whom the angels prostrated

ADAM

-peace be upon him-

In pre-eternity, only Allah (jj) existed. He wished to be known and created the universe through a manifestation of His divine attributes and names.

God's attributes, including those we do not know of, are most evidently noticeable in three places:

- a. The universe
- b. The Holy Qur'an
- c. Man

The universe is where the divine names transpire physically; while the Qur'an is where they appear verbally. It could be said that the Qur'an is the universe wrapped in words.

And man is like the essence, the kernel of that universe. Humans are the only creatures to have been given a share of almost every single one of God's attributes, whether in small measure or large. It is for that reason that man is referred to as the 'most honorable of all creation.' Only in man do divine qualities like *mudill*¹³ and *mutakabbir*¹⁴ appear alongside their opposites like *hadi*,¹⁵ *rahman* and *rahim*. As stated by the Qur'an, humans are therefore predisposed towards both good and evil:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا. فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا.
قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا. وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

“And by the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it with wickedness and righteousness. He who purifies it has succeeded. And he who has instilled it with corruption has failed.” (Al-Shams, 91: 7-10)

Man must therefore strive for perfection, by purifying his ego of lowly qualities and tendencies and developing the higher ones. This is done through the teachings of the prophets, and saints who follow them. On the path towards God, man is capable of surpassing even angels, for they lack the power and ability to sin. Nevertheless,

13. *Mudill*: He who leads those who deserve it, astray.

14. *Mutakabbir*: He who continually shows majesty and greatness.

15. *Hadi*: He who guides and fulfils wishes.

while man has the potential to outdo angels, if he resists God's truth, he can also end up lower than animals. A man, who is able to soar beyond the obstacles of the ego, is really a masterpiece of art. He is a summary of the grand book that is the universe and a key to the mystery of creation. He may well appear to be a lump of flesh and bones but he stores many truths in his spirituality.

Ali (kw) points to that in a poem:

*You have your cure but you do not see
You do not know that you are your enemy
You might think you are a speck so slight
But in you is the cosmos with all its might¹⁶*

It is vital to read and properly understand the signs which the Lord has engraved all over existence. God's first command to the Prophet (saw) was "Read!" To read, here, does not just refer to reading something off a piece of paper. It means to observe and reflect on things with the eye of the mind. Thus, the verse could also be interpreted as "Read the word of God; and then think about the truths hidden in the universe and in yourself...and then try to work out the truth that underlies all things created."

Commentators of Rumi's *Mathnawi* have offered a further explanation:

"The Qur'an begins with 'Read!', while the Mathnawi begins with 'Listen!' which is its interpretation. It is to say, 'Listen to the word of God! Listen to the mysteries! Listen to the truth buried deep within you!"



It is with Adam (as) that man's journey in life begins. Adam (as) is the first man, the first prophet and the first spiritual guide. His spirit contained the essence of every single human being to come until the end of time, like an endless array of shadows falling on top of one another. The Qur'an points to that in the following words:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً

"O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and from it its mate...and dispersed from both of them many men and women." (Al-Nisa, 4: 1)

16. Some scholars have drawn resemblances between human organs, behavior and natural phenomena. Accordingly, bones are like mountains, the hairs are like vegetation, the veins are like rivers, breathing is like the wind, speaking is like thunder, and so forth. The idea here is that man is the universe in miniature form and therefore bears its marks.

And Allah (jj) informs us about how He gave man greater honor than the rest of creation:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ
وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

“And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things...definitely preferred them over much of what We have created.” (Al-Isra, 17: 70)

The universe is decorated with countless samples of the Lord’s masterworks. However, the greatest art therein, is man, created ever so perfectly. Suleyman Chelebi expresses that in his *Mawlid*:

*The Almighty created Adam
And adorned the universe with him*

Man is the minor universe, while the cosmos is the major. They are different appearances of the same truth and two sides of the same leaf. They are virtually twins. Because man is the miniature version of the cosmos, it is his responsibility to work out its mysteries and get to the bottom of the truth underlying creation.

Man is an exceptional being. Just as a grain of wheat contains all the qualities of wheat, man carries the truth of all beings that exist in the universe. In a sense, man is like a seed in which the entire cosmos is folded up. Sheikh Galip underlines that in a poem:

*See yourself with joy, you are the core,
You are man... the eye of the world*

Man has been created for many purposes. One of them is that God wished to produce a pinnacle of creation to demonstrate how beautifully He creates. This aim is very important, when we consider that God also created an entire cosmos, with all its qualities we know and others we can perhaps never find out about, just for man’s benefit.

In its natural form, the earth is beautiful. Man is responsible with enhancing its beauty with works that come from the heart. That is because God has made him His deputy or caliph on earth. Man has been given this role because he possesses the natural ability to carry it out. To show him how, Allah (jj) has laid out a detailed program in the Qur’an for him to follow.

Those who are successful in this duty reach a spiritual height, which the Lord conveys through the Prophet (saw) (*hadith qudsi*):

“I shall declare war on whoever is hostile towards someone I truly love. A servant comes close to me by performing what I require of him; and he draws even nearer through voluntary deeds, until he wins My love. Once I love him, I become his ears that hear, eyes that see, hands that grip and feet that walk. I grant him all his wishes...and protect him, if He seeks my protection.” (Al-Bukhari, Riqaq, 38)



The Qur’an states:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“**All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds.**” (Al-Fatiha, 1: 1) The Lord has brought many worlds into existence. On some reports, their number ranges from 18,000 to as many as 360,000. This could even be a figure of speech, pointing to a far greater number than what the human mind can possibly grasp. However, all these worlds could be classified into two types:

1. The world of creation (*khalq*)
2. The world of command (*amr*)

Man has been given a share of both.

The Qur’an points to how creation boils down to these two worlds:

أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“**Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command; blessed is Allah, the Lord of the worlds.**” (Al-Araf, 7: 54)

Scholar Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır interprets this verse as follows:

“The acts of willing and creating, as well as accepting and enforcing law, completely belong to God alone. Therefore, physical and countable beings are His property; so are the commands that occur in and through them. Simpler put, He alone creates and does. Not only are bodies, matter and shape His invention and construct, the spirit and force that animates them into action are from His influence and power. No one apart from God can turn nothing into something, or something into nothing. He alone has the power to create, to turn the unthinkable into necessary and to regulate them with a law. Everything other than him (*masiwa*) is strictly under His control; they are nothing but His command come to life. Allah is the One who creates and exercises total control over everything. So, in reality, neither is there anything that can withstand His power to create, nor is there any action in the universe that does not conform to His command.”

The universe made up of beings created in and bound to space and time, is called the world of creation. This is also referred to as the tangible (*mulk*) or the sensible (*shahadah*) world. As human beings, we relate to this world through our five senses.

There is also an inner, metaphysical world, which is the domain of the spiritual. This is called the world of command. This world is not subject to or bound by space and time. It has simply come to be through the Divine command 'be!'. Thus, it is also called the divine kingdom (*malakut*) or the realm of the unperceivable (*ghayb*). The intellect, soul, the heart and spiritual mysteries are of this world. So, is the spirit itself:

قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي

“Say, ‘the spirit is of among the commands of my Lord.’” (Al-Isra, 17: 85)

And in the following verse, the two acts of creation that correspond to the two worlds spoken of, are mentioned in the same breath:

إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُ إِذَا أَرَادَ شَيْئًا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

“His command when He wills a thing is but to say to it ‘be,’ and it is.” (Ya Sin, 36: 16: 82)

The Major Reasons behind Our Creation

1. As the Qur’an states, we were created mainly to know and serve God.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“And I did not create the jinn¹⁷ and mankind except to serve Me.” (Al-Dharyyat, 51: 56)

Serving God, which the verse tells us is the reason behind man’s existence, is so great a rank that it is also finds its place in the *kalima shahadah*, the profession of faith in Islam. There, it says Our Prophet (saw) is above all a servant and only then

17. As opposed to human beings who have been created from soil, jinn are created from bright and smokeless fire. They have no mass but are capable of assuming the form or appearance of beings that do. Even though they are able to travel at the speed of light, in many other areas, they are far less developed than human beings are. They have lower intelligence. Our Prophet (saw) has another distinct quality in that he was sent as a prophet to both humanity and jinn. Thus, he is also called ‘*Rasulu’th-Thaqalayn*’, ‘the prophet of the two species’. Muslim scholars of law, like Ghazzali and Ebu’s-Suud Efendi, who were known to settle disputes among both people and jinn, were similarly known as ‘jurists for both species’ (*mufti’th-thaqalayn*); while spiritual masters known to have guided them both were known as ‘masters of both species’ (*murshidu’th-thaqalayn*).

a messenger. This shows that being a servant of God has priority and that prophethood is conditional upon serving God.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) would warn people who would go overboard in praising him, with the words:

“Do not raise me above the rank I deserve...for Allah made me a servant before He made me a prophet.” (Al-Haythami, IX, 21).

Elsewhere in the Qur’an, it is said:

قُلْ مَا يَعْزُبُا بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ

“Say, ‘What would my Lord care for you if not for your supplication?’”

(Al-Furqan, 25: 77)

Being a servant requires one to gain *marifatullah*, which is the wisdom of recognizing and knowing the Lord. Imam Maturidi says genuine faith has two conditions:

a. Knowledge of God (*Marifatullah*)

Man was created to recognize God and fulfil his duty of being a servant. In the verse previously mentioned, the Almighty says He brought human beings into existence to that they could *لِيَعْبُدُونِ* that is to say, ‘worship Him’. Some scholars have interpreted that as *لِيَعْرِفُونِ*; ‘so that they will recognize Allah (jj) in the heart and acquire knowledge of Him.’ (Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, IV, 255)

So, above all, it is God’s desire to be known that has led to the creation of man. The Prophet (saw) tells us that God said:

كُنْتُ كَنْزًا مَخْفِيًّا فَأَحْبَبْتُ أَنْ أُعْرَفَ فَخَلَقْتُ الْخَلْقَ لِأُعْرَفَ

“I was a secret treasure. I created the universe, for I wished to be known.” (Ismail Hakki Bursawi, *Kanz-i Makhfi*)

b. Love

God states in the Qur’an that:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

“But those who believe are stronger in love for Allah.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 165)

Another main purpose for our existence on earth is to love the Lord more than anything else. He has loved us, given us loads of blessings we cannot possibly count; and in return, He wants us to nurture a love for Him that eclipses our love for all things else. He also warns that failure to do so comes with grave consequences:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَزِدْكُمْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ
يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ

“O you who have believed...whoever of you should turn back from his religion, know that Allah will bring forth in their place a people He will love and who will love Him...” (Al-Ma'idah, 5: 54)

Another verse alludes to the fact that individuals and societies are destroyed for no other reason than ‘the loss of love’:

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ
وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِينُ
تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا
حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ

“Say, (Muhammad), ‘If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient.”

(Al-Tawbah, 9: 24)

The Prophet (saw) says that tasting the sweetness of faith depends on three things:

“To love Allah and His Messenger more than anything else, to fear falling into disbelief after having believed more than falling into a pit of fire, and to love and hate only for the sake of Allah.” (Al-Bukhari, Iman, 9, 14; Muslim, Iman, 67)

However, the path of loving God runs through obeying, following and loving the Prophet (saw) deep from the heart, to the point of virtually becoming lost in him. God declares:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبُّكُمْ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ
لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Say, ‘If you love Allah then follow me, so that Allah will love you and forgive your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.”¹⁸ (Al Imran, 3: 31)

18. *Ghafur*: He who forgives all sins. *Rahim*: He who pardons sinners and awards believers in the afterlife.

The below hadith tell us that loving the Prophet (saw) is the prerequisite of true faith:

“By Lord who has my life in His hands, you will not have truly believed until you love me more than your mother, father, children and entire humankind.” (Al-Bukhari, Iman, 8)

2. God created man to put His greatness and immaculate artisanship on display. Man is indeed a wonder of creation:

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ. وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

“And on the earth are signs for those with strong faith...and in yourselves. Then will you not see?” (Al-Dhariyat, 51: 20-21)

Following the verses that detail the stages of man’s creation, God also says:

فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

“So blessed is Allah, the most beautiful of creators!”¹⁹ (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 14)

Being the wonder of creation, man is God’s envoy on earth and the most honorable of all beings. The Qur’an states:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

“And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.’” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 30)

Scholar Ismail Hakki Bursawi interprets ‘being God’s envoy’ as follows:

“Allah is saying ‘I will adorn man with some powers of My Own; from My will and attributes. He will exercise some authority over other beings as my proxy. He will implement My law on My behalf. Nevertheless, he will not be the master; he will not exercise that authority for his own, personal interests. Man will use his will to implement My will, his command to implement Mine and execute my law. Those who come after him, will take over the duty, which is when the mystery of ‘And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth’ (Al-An’am, 6: 165) shall be revealed.” (Quoted from Elmalili Hamdi Yazir, *Hak Dini Kuran Dili*, I, 299-300)

19. Even though the Arabic word ‘to create’, which is ‘*khalq*’, means to invent something and can sometimes be used for other beings, calling God ‘the most beautiful of all creators’, does not mean God is the better creator among a pool of others. In this matter, Allah (jj) is alone. For example, if Ali is the ‘best student’ in his class, that does not mean there are other students in the same class, who do well in school but not quite as good as Ali. We can call Ali the best student, even if he is the only good student in his class.

Man is endowed with a distinct quality and potential to reach God, which even the angels envy. The Qur'an says:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

“We have certainly created man in the best of stature.” (Al-Tin, 95: 4)

3. God created man to make his divine names appear more vividly.

Also pointing to that are the Prophet's (saw) words, “*Endow yourselves with the morals of Allah*” (Al-Munawi, al-Ta'arif, p. 564). Among all beings, the divine names appear the most in man. Because the negative names of God do not transpire in angels, they do not have the barrier of the ego to deal with either. However, man does. Only man has the potential to overcome the ego and reach God. It is why he has been appointed God's envoy.

That also explains why the finest human being, the Prophet Muhammad (saw), was able to go beyond the *Sidra* Tree at the end of the seventh heaven, when even the finest angel, Jibril, could not.

Aziz Mahmud Hudayi gives wonderful voice to man's journey on earth and his eventual return to the Lord:

*We were burnt by timeless love
And fly around the eternal blaze
We glided from the land of one,
To the land of many, we came to gaze,
We passed through many worlds and more
And stopped at the world of man to stay
Our mortal bodies have now long died
We have swum to the sea, the drops left behind
Nothing we have is worthy for He
Except that, His grace we hope to find
To embrace forever till eternity
And it is His mercy we have in mind
In the end to pass the world of many
For privacy with the One of His kind*

We simply need to be constantly aware of the reason why we are here.

The Creation of Adam (as)

God wished to create man as the most honorable of all creation, so that he can recognize and worship Him, and do beautiful works on earth. Angels, who were created long before with the sole duty of worshipping Him, were the first to find out:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا
 أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ
 وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.’ They said, ‘Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?’ Allah said, ‘Indeed, I know that which you do not know.’” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 30)

To that, the angels responded:

قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

“They said, ‘Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise.’”²⁰ (Al-Baqarah, 2: 32)

The term used there for ‘successive authority’ is *khalifah*, commonly translated to English as ‘caliph.’ To act as a caliph is to represent someone by more or less serving as his or her deputy. Here, it refers to someone who represents God’s will on earth and executes His commands. Going by that, man becomes a means and vehicle for God to fulfil his light.²¹

There is also another aspect. When someone of a higher order designates another as his deputy, he at the same time honors him. This applies to the manner in which Allah (jj) has appointed human beings as His caliphs. Man, in fact, has a natural capability to do so. The spirit Allah has breathed into man has the quality to allow man to govern. However, with that said, man does not, by any stretch of the imagination, literally stand for God. In other words, he is not a god on earth. He is a mortal being simply given the task of executing God’s commands. That is what is meant by being a caliph.

The above verse recounts a dialogue that takes place between Allah and the angels. When the angels are told of the news of man’s creation, they say they already worship Allah more than any other being possibly can. In a way, they are trying to say that they should be given the role of representing Allah ahead of anyone else. However, Allah simply responds by saying, ‘I know things you do not.’ This implies that the angels’ ability to worship Him more than anyone else is not enough to cut

20. *Alim*: He who knows everything past, present and future through his eternal wisdom. *Hakim*: He who exercises the best judgment over all affairs.

21. In fact, the Almighty has made great imams of the likes of Bukhari, Abu Hanifah, Shafii, Malik and Ibn Hanbel, among others, as well as our Sufi elders, a means for His religion to shine until the Day of Judgment.

them out for the role. That role requires two things, which they lack: they do not carry Divine spirit and do not have knowledge of the divine names. However, human beings are given both. In that regard, they are masterpieces of divine art; and both by their inner and outer makeup, are a perfect fit for that role.

The Wisdom behind the Angels Questioning Allah

1. The angels were simply curious about the purpose as to why man would be created. Otherwise, it was not a question asked in protest or because they were jealous of Adam (as). Both the Qur'an and Sunnah tell us that angels lack the power and ability to rebel against Allah, be envious of or hold grudges against others.

2. The angels may have found out that man would eventually end up causing turmoil on earth and shed blood. Many scholars say that the angels can see and read the Preserved Tablet (*lawh-i mahfuz*), on which all events, past and future, are registered.²²

3. They may have asked because Allah may have already told them about the evils human beings would get up to.

4. Another view suggests that the angels felt apprehensive about man because they knew that the jinn, who created long before them, wound up causing great trouble.



It is narrated that when He wished to create man, Allah whispered to the earth, "I will make myself a caliph from your soil. Among them, there will be those who obey Me and others who rebel. I will place those who obey me in paradise and send the rebels to hell!"

He then sent the four archangels, Jibril, Mikail, Israfil and Azrail bring back a handful of soil from various places on earth. However, the earth resisted, pleading "I cannot give any part of me that may end up being thrown into the flames of hell!"²³

22. See, Razi, Tafsir, XXXI, 114.

23. This shows that beings, which we take to be lifeless and still, are conscious enough to feel the weight of responsibility. In fact, the Prophet (saw) had one day ascended Mount Uhud alongside companions Abu Bakr, Umar and Ali (r.anhum), when the mount began to tremble, upon which the Prophet (saw) said, "*Stay calm, Uhud...you have no other weight than that of a prophet, a trustworthy and two martyrs*". (al-Tirmidhi, Manaqib, 18/3703)

All natural beings, including plants and animals, in fact give thanks to and remember the Lord in their own tongues. The Quran says, "**The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him. And there is not a thing that does not praise Allah but you do not understand their way. Indeed, He is ever Forbearing and Forgiving.**" (Al-Isra, 17: 44) Other examples that come to mind are the date trunk that moaned with a longing for the Prophet (saw) (Al-Bukhari, Manaqib, 25) and how Red Sea distinguished Moses (as) from the Pharaoh (Al-Baqara, 2: 50).

So, Jibril, Mikail and Israfil returned empty-handed, and told Allah, “The earth sought refuge in You and asked to be pardoned because it did not wish to give away any part of itself doomed for punishment. We did not feel it was right to force it to submit”.

However, Azrail feared the thought of returning to Allah without fulfilling the command he was ordered and went ahead. He collected different types of soil, red, white and brown from all over the world; mixed them all up and presented it to God. For his tenacity, Allah gave him the role of also taking man’s life.²⁴



Man is made from earth and he carries its characteristics. There are times when earth becomes dry, parched under the sun and longs for water. A time comes when it has to endure the brunt of winter, and it then comes back alive with the rains of spring. It becomes painted with a captivating beauty of colors and fragrances, as if to put on show the magnificence of the divine brush.

Man shares a fate similar to that of earth. He quivers in the whirlwind of worldly ambitions, like sand dunes in a desert storm. He lets the tyranny of his ego knock him around and lay waste to himself. Only when he overcomes that does he find peace. It is then that he becomes a focal point of divine mercy and inspiration. Like a parched soil covered and concealed by a flood of rain, he becomes selfless. And like spring, he then offers the beauty he has to the benefit of others.

Man’s mortal body is made from earth. It is fed from the earth and in the end returns to it. It heads back to what it came from. Every single element found in earth is also more or less found in the human body. In a sense, the body is the earth that appears in a different form. According to one etymology, ‘Adam’ means ‘soil’; and the first man was given that name to point to his origin.²⁵ The Qur’an says:

خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

In recent years, Japanese scientist Masaru Emoto conducted remarkable research into frozen water crystals. He discovered that the crystals are made up perfect hexagons, and can be found in their most spellbinding and beautiful form in natural spring waters untouched by man. So, he did an experiment, where he put some of this water in two separate containers. He whispered words of love, compassion, prayer and gratitude into one, and insults, including the word ‘Satan’, into the other. The crystals in the first container retained their natural splendor; yet crumbled and lost all their visual beauty in the second. In the same experiment, he also found that the crystals react differently to beautiful music and ugly, distorted rhythms. Emoto then went on to do a similar experiment on two jars of rice – one marked with the words ‘thank you’ and the other with the word ‘stupid’. And each day for a month, he whispered the words into each jar. The first batch of rice retained its freshness and sparkle, while the second darkened and started emitting a foul odor. (M. Akif Deniz, *Ilk Adim*, February, 2003)

24. See, al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, I, 89-90.

25. See, Ibn Sa’d, *Tabaqat*, I, 26.

“He created Him from dust; then He said to him, ‘be,’ and he was.” (Al Imran, 3: 59)

Just as soil comes with different colors ranging from red and yellow to brown, so do human beings. Soil can also have a soft or hard feel, which similarly reflects on different temperaments:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ ثَمَرَاتٍ مُخْتَلِفًا
أَلْوَانُهَا وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بَيْضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا وَغَرَابِيبُ
سُودٌ. وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالْدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَلِكَ
إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ

“Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colors? 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 colors similarly. Only those who have knowledge from among His servants, fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving.” (Fatir, 35: 27-28)

The Prophet (saw) says:

“Allah (jj) created Adam from a handful of soil collected from all parts of the earth. Some of Adam’s children are therefore red, some are white, others black and then there are those who are combination of these colors. Some of them are born mild and others harsh.” (Abu Dawud, 16)

It is narrated that, “Allah kneaded the soil with which He created Adam for forty days”. (Al-Tabari, *Tafsir*, III, 306). Each of these days represent a phase whose length or nature is unknown.

It is also narrated that the mud used to create Adam (as) was set to rest for forty years. It was then baked in a mold and received a rain of sorrow for thirty-nine years, and a rain of joy for one. Hence, man’s sorrow is greater than his happiness. Saints have said:

هَا هِيَ الدُّنْيَا إِذَا أَضْحَكَتْ يَوْمًا أَبْكَتْ أَيَّامًا

“Such is life. If it makes you smile for a day, it makes you cry for days on end.”

The rain spoken of there is not physical but spiritual. The word rain is only a metaphor.

However, sorrow is always followed by joy. Great rewards come in the wake of patience in the face of pain; just as the Prophet's (saw) Night Journey took place after a painful visit to Taif and the happier days of Medina came after troublesome years in Mecca.

The Qur'an declares:

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

“For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.” (Al-Inshirah, 94: 5-6)²⁶

When chapter al-Inshirah was revealed, it made the Prophet (saw) very happy to find out that a single hardship came with two sets of ease, and he told the companions:

لَنْ يَغْلِبَ عُسْرٌ يُسْرَيْنِ: إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

“One hardship can never defeat two eases...for with every difficulty, there certainly is not just one ease but two”.

An old Arabic poem draws inspiration from al-Inshirah to point to a way out of trouble:

إِذَا ضَاقَ بِكَ الْأَمْرُ تَفَكَّرْ فِي “أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ”

فَعُسْرٌ بَيْنَ يُسْرَيْنِ إِذَا فَكَّرْتَهُ تَفَرَّحْ

*Reflect on Inshirah when trouble strikes,
For it is ambushed by ease on both sides*

Without a doubt, the world is a place of trial filled with troubles of all sorts. The Qur'an tells us that:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ
وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ
رَاجِعُونَ. أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

26. The verses repeat the words difficulty (*usr*) and ease (*yusr*) twice. But on both occasions, difficulty or *usr* comes with the Arabic prefix -al, which functions like the English 'the', rendering it a definite noun. On the other hand, the prefix -al does not precede ease, or *yusr*, on either occasion, making them indefinite nouns. What this means according to the rules of Arabic grammar (which is the same in the English language) is that the two difficulties are of the same kind and therefore really one and the same, whereas the two eases are not one and the same, but double. Thus, there is always twice as more ease than difficulty. (See, al-Bukhari, Tafsir, 94).

“And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient...who, when disaster strikes them, say, ‘We belong to Allah, and to Him we will return.’ Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the guided.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 155-157)

Even plants grow to their full potential after a long, patient wait. Spring follows only after the earth has endured the blizzards of winter. Man becomes mature only through ordeal and patience.



The Qur’an lists the stages of Adam’s (as) creation as follows:

1. The Soil Stage

خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

“He created Him from dust; then He said to him, ‘be’, and he was.” (Al Imran, 3: 59)

As mentioned before, human beings are made of soil and carry its traits. Soil is walked on and clawed through to sow crops or build things. However, it does not react in the slightest. This is where human traits such as patience and modesty come from. However, in some people, the stillness of the earth can also transpire in laziness.

2. The Mud Stage

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ

“He who perfected everything which He created and began the creation of man from mud.” (Al-Sajdah, 32: 7)

At this stage, water comes into the equation. Water cleanses and it represents purification. It finds expression in man’s chastity and tendency to keep himself clean, both physically and spiritually.

3. The Sticky Mud Stage

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ لَازِبٍ

“Indeed, We created men from sticky mud.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 11)

Mud sticks; and represents man’s loyalty and resilience in sticking to a task. Nevertheless, this can also reflect in stubbornness and holding onto prejudices.

4. The Dried Mud Stage

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ

“And We did certainly create man out of clay from an altered black mud”

(Al-Hijr, 15: 26)

Here, air enters the scene, as it is the force that dries up mud. Air is also what makes mud move; and the same force that has animated man into action. However, at the same time, like the wind, man can tend to be fickle and waver.

5. The Shaped Mud Stage

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ

“And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘I will create a human being out of clay from an altered black mud’”. (Al-Hijr, 15: 28)

This refers to the ability of man to shape and be shaped, as well as to train and educate. He can put this ability to either good use or bad. He just needs to be pointed to the right direction.

6. The Baked Clay Stage

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ

“He created man from baked clay like pottery” (Al-Rahman, 55: 14)

Here, fire enters the scene. It is from this fire that pride, conceit, deceit, jealousy and rebellion to Allah’s commands originate from.

This is man in his original creation. Elsewhere, the Qur’an also offers a summary of how the children of Adam (as) will come into the world:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ. ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ. ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

“And certainly We did create man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging. Then We made the sperm-drop into a

clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump of flesh,²⁷ and We made from the lump, bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah , the most beautiful of creators²⁸.”

(Al-Mu'minin, 23: 12-14)

It is only in our century that the science of medicine has been able to discover what Allah revealed in the Qur'an some 1400 years ago about the stages of the embryo's development in the womb.

In the above verses, Allah speaks of the remarkable phases of man's creation. The first man was made from soil or dust, which are not worth much and have nothing special about them. The same goes for his descendants born into the world from the mother's womb. The baby is first a drop of sperm, then a cold clot of blood and afterward small lump of flesh. Not only is their sight not appealing, they can even make many people queasy. But then, with a strike of God's divine brush, they together form the elegant and spectacular masterpiece that is the human being. She then comes into the world spirited, full of energy and vigor only for the clock to be turned back on her with old age, until she finally returns to where she came from: to dust. She is left in the grave to rot and disappear. However, like a drop of mercury, a tiny particle of bone called the *ajbu'z-zanab* defies the whole course of decay. From that bone, she springs back to life and is resurrected, just like a plant that grows from one tiny seed, but where the entire process is fast forwarded.

Allah uses numerous occasions in the Qur'an to invite man to contemplate his journey in this world of multiplicity.

وَمَنْ نَعْمَرَهُ نُنَكِّسُهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ

“And whoever We grant a long life to, We reverse in creation. Will they not understand?” (Ya Sin, 36: 68)

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ
مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْقَدِيرُ

“Allah is the one who created you from weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, and then gave you weakness after strength and white hair. He creates what He wills, and He is the Knowing, the Competent.” (Al-Rum, 30: 54)

27. The term used for a lump of flesh is *mudghah* and it literally means a piece of chewed meat. This is one of Quran's many miracles that science has stumbled upon only this century. It comprises the third phase of a baby's development in the womb, where the embryo looks much like a piece of chewed meat that carries teeth marks.

28. See, footnote 19.

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى

“From the earth We created you, and into it We will return you, and from it We will extract you another time.” (Ta Ha, 20: 55)

This goes to show that the human body, which goes through all the stages of life on earth, is destined for mortality. What is eternal is the human spirit. It is through the spirit that man will embark on a journey to either heaven or hell; to either joy or doom. Rumi says:

“Feed your body only little of the sweet and fatty stuff; for feeding the flesh starves the spirit. Feed your spirit, so that it can travel to eternal life full of strength”.

The Breathing of the Spirit into Man

After creating man from a handful of dust, Allah further gave man an exclusive privilege by breathing into him a secret of His Own. Through the breathing of the spirit, man was brought to life. This gift of life shows how valuable man is in Divine sight. Allah says:

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي

“And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit...”
(Al-Hijr, 15: 29)

Yet, the expression that Allah breathed His spirit into Adam (as) is only symbolic. It is similar to how an adult communicates a complex event to a child in a simpler way, simply because he has not yet acquired an intellectual capacity to grasp it. What the expression refers to in the broadest sense is that Allah instilled some of His own qualities in man, to the extent that man’s capacity can hold. It is through the power of this breath that man recognizes his Lord, serves Him, and acquires an understanding of the divine mysteries as much as he can grasp. This understanding occurs in the heart. What is meant by the heart here is not the physical organ that pumps blood to the body but the place that feels emotions and which serves as the canvass on which divine signs show themselves.

Having a spirit gives man the power and responsibility to fulfil three duties:

1. To know himself and recognize his inner truth
2. To know and recognize his Maker
3. And to realize that he is nothing compared to his Maker.

It has been said that:

مَنْ عَرَفَ نَفْسَهُ فَقَدْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ

“Whoever knows himself, knows his Lord”. (Ajluni, *Kashf al-Khafa*, II, 361)



Just as the Light of Muhammed was the first being ever created, the spirit of Prophet Muhammed (saw) was the first of all spirits. Hence, the Prophet (saw) is also called *Abu'l-Arwah*, the Father of Spirits. The spirits of all other human beings are like a jewelry box that exists only for the sake of the gem inside.

Abu Hurayrah (ra) explains that the companions once asked the Prophet (saw) when exactly he was given prophethood. The Prophet (saw) said:

“...when Adam was between the spirit and the flesh”. (Al-Tirmidhi, *Manaqib*, 1)

For that reason, Prophet Muhammed (saw) is also really the first ever prophet. We will discuss this in greater detail, when we talk about how the angels were ordered to prostrate to Adam (as).

The spirit can be understood in two levels:

1 The spirit as such, also known as *ruh-i sultani*, or the king spirit. It is separate from the body. It exists with the body only to function through it and keep it in check. The perishing of the body does not affect it. It only ends its control over it.

2 The soul, also known as *ruh-i hayvani*, or the animal spirit. The soul is dif-fused throughout every single organ of the body. Its center is the mind. It has control over the blood flow. It is the starting point of all human action. Without the soul, humans would not be able to produce anything.²⁹

It is through the combination of spirit and soul that all action comes into effect.

The Five Stages of the Spirit

1. The Stage of Nothingness

In pre-eternity, only Allah existed. No other being existed apart from Him. Naturally, there were no spirits speak of. The Qur'an asks:

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا

“Has there not come upon man a period of time when he was not even thing worth a mention?” (Al-Insan, 76: 1)

29. See, Ismail Hakkı Bursevî, *Temamu'l-Feyz* (prepared by Ali Namlı), unpublished MA thesis, Istanbul, 1994, p. 47.

2. The Stage of Existence

For a number of reasons known and unknown, Allah brought spirits into existence before bodies. A hadith states:

“Spirits were created 2,000 years before their bodies”. (Al-Daylami, *Musnad*, II, 187-188)

3. The Stage of Entering Bodies

Spirits were created long before bodies. After giving an oath to Allah that they would recognize and accept his lordship, they began to be delivered, one by one, to bodies according to the divine plan drawn up in pre-eternity. The first delivery of spirit was to the body of Adam (as):

وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي

“...and when I breathe into him from My spirit” (Al-Hijr, 15: 29)

4. The Stage of Leaving the Bodies

Once spirits complete their time on earth, they will one by one leave the bodies just as they had entered them. This is an inevitable end, which no person can avoid. It is called death. As the Qur’an declares:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ

“Every soul will taste death.” (Al Imran, 3: 185)

5. The Stage of Returning to the Bodies

But Islam teaches us that death is not really an end but a new beginning for spirit in an eternal life, just like a baby coming out of his mother’s womb. Man will be called into account for the life he led on earth. If he passes the questioning, he will begin a life of eternal bliss. If he fails –and may Allah (jj) protect us all from that- he will be punished. Below is just a couple among hundreds of verses the Qur’an has about the resurrection of man:

قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنْشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ

“Say, ‘He who produced them the first time will give them life. And He is Knowing of all His creation.’” (Ya Sin, 36: 79)

وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ

“And when the souls are paired.” (Al-Takwir, 81: 7)



It is impossible know the exact nature of the spirit that Allah has breathed into man. It is a divine secret from a world beyond. It therefore exceeds the grasp of the human mind which is conditioned by the here-and-now. The Qur'an confirms that human beings have little ability to make out what the spirit is:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي
وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

“And they ask you about the spirit. Say, ‘The spirit is of the command of my Lord. And mankind has not been given of knowledge except a little.’” (Al-Isra, 17: 85)

Scholars have interpreted the above verse in a number of ways:

The spirit is a mystery that only Allah (jj) knows.

The spirit is the essence of all command or action.

The spirit itself is a command or action of Allah.

The Arabic word used in the verse is *amr*, which can be translated as command in both its senses: to command someone to do something or have command over another. Accordingly, spirit becomes both the command or deed of the Lord Himself and the essence by which man commands. Thus, it is through the spirit that man receives Allah's attributes, which he has been given to fulfil Allah's commands on earth. Being the envoy or caliph of Allah on earth required man to receive the spirit. That is how he becomes caliph; and he could not have been the caliph any other way.

Exercising command is a privilege exclusive to human beings. A lion may be stronger than man but is weak in the face of the authority man is able to exert and how he is able to progressively develop his skills. Even if a lion lived a thousand years, it would not be able to build itself a house or invent a vehicle that would cut the time and energy it spends chasing prey.

Neither are angels privileged with this kind of a divine manifestation. Only human beings are. Man is created in the best of forms. However, that does not mean he necessarily remains at that level. He also risks plunging below the level of animals. That is because man combines both positive and negative qualities. He carries divine attributes like the Merciful and the Compassionate, as well as Deceiver and the Supreme. Among all creation, only man has this dual nature.

The verse above states in no uncertain terms that man has been given very little knowledge to grasp the nature of the spirit. Therefore, it is best that one does not get carried away in self-importance and exceed his limitations to try and solve the mystery that the spirit is. One must instead think about the great responsibili-

ties that come with having received it and focus on being a better person in the sight of Allah.



After creating Adam (as), Allah taught him the names of things, to take him to a level that angels would envy and appreciate. The Qur'an recounts:

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

“And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, ‘Tell Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.’” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 31)

The angels heaped praises on the Lord and excused themselves of a duty that well exceeded their capabilities. It was then that Allah (jj) said:

قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ

“He said, ‘O Adam, inform them of their names.’ And when he informed them, He said, ‘Did I not tell you that I know the unseen aspects of the heavens and the earth? And I know what you reveal and what you conceal.’” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 33)

According to one view, Adam (as) learnt the names, nature and qualities of all things on earth. This includes information about the truth of matter, the secret of creation, fate and the wisdoms behind it and all the mysteries in the heavens and earth, including the Preserved Tablet. In short, it is knowledge of divine names as they transpire in all things created, first and foremost in the heart.³⁰ Knowing Allah happens through the heart. The truth of matter reveals itself only if the heart has acquired the blend to sense it. That, in turn, depends knowing Allah's names. Allah in fact presents himself to human understanding through His names, by declaring:

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى

“The most beautiful names belong to Allah.” (Al-Araf, 7: 180).

Man establishes connection with Allah through His names. Without them, it would have been impossible. Human beings are fashioned in a way where they can identify and give voice to things through their names. For human beings, any given thing must have a name; and in turn the name confirms the existence of the being in

30. For more detail, see Osman Nûri TOPBAŞ, *İmandan İhsâna Tasavvuf*, p. 309.

question. It was for that reason that Allah first taught Adam (as) every name under the sun and established his superiority to angels through it. Knowing the true name of a given being also implies recognition of its nature. How else would we know anything about Allah if we did not know His names?

Therefore, man always needs to know the names that provide him information about his Lord. A person feels the need to appeal to Allah with a name appropriate to his situation or state of mind. If it were not for the names, the connection would have been broken. It could be said that these names give voice to human beings who inevitably feel tongue-tied to truly express Allah's essence and divinity. Just repeating the Divine names suffice to strengthen faith, bring peace and divine presence to the heart and increase love for the Lord. They keep the heart away from the world and turn it to the eternal life with a thirst to reunite with the Creator. This is the reason as to why the names of the Lord feature so heavily in the prayers advised by the Prophet (saw) for various situations.

A believer who has fallen on hard times and feels the need for divine mercy more than ever, searches for the right words that best sum up his troubles. He clutches onto *Rahman* and *Rahim*, the Merciful and the Compassionate. When feeling crushed under a world of sin and sensing that his connection with the Lord is slipping away, he exclaims *Ghaffar* and *Sattar*, the Forgiver and the Concealer. When gazing at the divine wonders that appear in the universe and his spirit, he looks for words that could best sum up his amazement and stem the tides of his inner excitement - and finds them in *Allah-u Akbar*, Allah is the Greatest. In whatever situation one may find himself in, he can unlock the gates of his inner problems and find a cure through the keys offered by the divine names.

It is for that reason that Allah has made himself known to human beings in a way they can relate to. That is not to say that these names are not factual. They are. However, the names themselves have a personal connection for man. For example, Allah presents himself with names like Powerful, Forgiver and others because man can find these qualities also in himself, albeit in a very limited form. What man has in himself, he can also understand and relate to. It allows man to know Allah the way Allah wants Himself to be known and the only way that man can. This is a gift Allah has granted human beings to make their journey to faith and salvation easier.

Thus, in a way, in the above verse, Allah declares, "I will reveal to man the names of things, the wisdoms and mysteries behind them, as well as the beauty and art by which they come to be".

It also implies that man has virtue and honor only to the extent of what he knows. So, it is necessary for man to turn his knowledge into wisdom and good action, for the ultimate aim of *taqwa*. Allah (jj) states:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقِيكُمْ

“The most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.”

(Al-Hujurat, 49: 13)



The human mind is created. It needs evidence to confirm the existence of Allah. It works its way to a cause through its effect, the artist through the artwork. It can only understand wisdom with the help of revelation. However, the mind has only a limited ability to grasp the content of revelation. Although a person can proceed towards knowing Allah with the mind, he can only do so up to a certain point. There comes a point where the mind can journey no more. That is when the remainder of the journey is made with the heart. However, even the heart is not enough to reach the absolute truth. Allah's essence is absolute; that is to say, it stands alone without needing or depending on anything else to exist. To reach what is absolute through something, be it the mind or the heart, that by nature depends on things outside itself to exist, is impossible.

The Qur'an says:

وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ

“...and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 255)

Still, man must not fall behind on the journey towards trying to know Allah. He must do what he can to find means to reach his Lord. The best examples of this search are offered by prophets, like Abraham (as) who said:

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ

“And he said, “Indeed, I will go to my Lord; He will guide me.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 99)

Prophet Muhammed (saw) also lamented, “*We have not been able to know You, Lord, the way You deserve*” (Munawi, Fayzu'l-Qadir, II, 520), which underlines both the impossibility of knowing Allah in the truest sense of the term but also the need to continue to try and get there.



The Prophet (saw) received three types of knowledge from Allah:

The first is a secret between him and Allah (jj). This knowledge was not conveyed to people because it exceeds human grasp. It can only be understood through the prophetic light. An example are the meanings behind the *huruf-u muqattaa*, the

combination of letters that appear at the beginning of some chapters in the Qur'an. Apart from what the Prophet (saw) was assigned to convey to people, there were things revealed to him personally, which he did not communicate to others. The below hadith confirms this:

"If you knew what I knew, you would laugh less and cry more". (Al-Bukhari, Kusuful, 2; Muslim, Salat, 112)

Another hadith says:

"I have such moments with my Lord which neither angels of the highest rank nor prophets could ever comprehend." (Munawi, Fayzu'l-Qadir, IV, 8)

The second type is the law or sharia, which was revealed to be explained to the public. Every single person on earth is required to believe in this and act accordingly. The below verse points to this type of knowledge in general:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ
وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ

"O Messenger, announce that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message." (Al-Ma'idah, 5: 67)

The Prophet (saw) was also given a third type of knowledge meant for only certain people. He (saw) forbade the teaching of this knowledge to those who lacked the depth to understand it. He once told Ibn Abbas (ra):

"Do not ever tell people things their minds would not be able to take. If you do, you would only be pushing them into tribulation." (Daylami, Musnad, V, 359/8434). Based on that, Ali (kw) gave the same advice:

"Tell people things they will understand and keep a lid on the others. Would you like it for people to disclaim Allah and His Messenger?" (Al-Bukhari, Ilm, 49)

Ibn Abbas (ra) recounts an incident when the companions asked the Prophet (saw) whether they should convey every knowledge they learned from him.

"Indeed", the Prophet (saw) said. "But except for things people would not be able to grasp...it would only cause them trouble". Ibn Abbas (ra) himself would often resort to figures of speech when explaining something in public. (Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanzu'l-Ummal, X, 307/29537)

Abu Hurayrah (ra) has said:

"I received two cups full of knowledge from the Messenger of Allah (saw). I have conveyed one. But had I have conveyed the other, you would have slit my throat!" (Al-Bukhari, Ilm, 42)

This knowledge was disclosed only to the more gifted companions like Abu Bakr (ra) and Ali (kw). It contains truths only people with an exceptional understanding can grasp. Still, every person is required to seek this knowledge as much as his capacity allows. For his own salvation, one must try to develop his capabilities towards refining his faith, with feelings of sincerity and piety, so as to try and reach that level. In other words, one must look to live the Sufi life as beautifully as one can. This is possible only by cleansing the soul and purifying the heart.

Personal salvation above all requires adhering to the truths as taught by Islamic law. Immersing oneself in Sufism simply makes room to realize those truths by turning knowledge into a constant awareness.

Islamic law addresses everyone. It therefore takes into regard the weakest person and keeps its requirements at a bare minimum. This is a result of Divine mercy. Sufism, on the other hand, is based on capability. Thus, it keeps the road to progress open-ended and allows those with skill to proceed all the way until the stages of *fana fillah*, becoming lost in Allah, and *baka billah*, reviving eternally through Allah. For instance, the legal standard of alms is one-fortieth. However, at the same time, Allah has kept charity open-ended, even advising believers to donate even the things they need. It could be said that the minimum standard of charity laid down by Islamic law is based on the minimal level of the heart. However, as the heart skips levels, so does the measure of charity.

So, the truth of the matter is that Sufi knowledge is a God-given (*ladunni*) knowledge that can be obtained through spiritual training, as much as personal aptitude allows. This type of knowledge is evidenced by the fact that the Qur'an mentions it on numerous occasions. The Almighty blesses the hearts of those who resist the desires of the flesh out of Divine fear and love, with gifts that the scales of the mind cannot weigh. It is a special kind of wisdom, which Allah (jj) says He grants to those with piety (*taqwa*):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا وَيُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ
سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ

“O you who have believed...if you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion and will remove from you your misdeeds and forgive you. And Allah is the possessor of great bounty.” (Al-Anfal, 8: 29)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَآمِنُوا بِرَسُولِهِ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ
وَيَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ نُورًا تَمْشُونَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“O you who have believed...fear Allah and believe in His Messenger; He will then give you a double portion of His mercy and make for you a light by which you will walk and forgive you. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Al-Hadid, 57: 28)

People of the likes of Imam Ghazzali and Abdulqadir Jilani first mastered Islamic sciences as taught in books and schools. It was through their depth of heart that they were later able to make progress on the path that leads to the Lord and on which the finer details of the unknown open up. Allah (jj) revealed to them the secrets He withholds from the general public, as much as their hearts could take. If it was not for that, they would not have been able to come of age; and we would most likely never would have heard of them.

The Angels Prostrate to Adam (as)

After creating Adam (as), breathing into him from His spirit and teaching him the names, Allah ordered the angels to prostrate to him. The Qur’an recounts:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ.
فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ. فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ
كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ. إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى أَنْ يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ. قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ
مَا لَكَ أَلَّا تَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ. قَالَ لَمْ أَكُنْ لِأَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ
صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ

“And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘I will create a human being out of clay from an altered black mud. And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down to him in prostration. So the angels prostrated - all of them entirely. Except Satan; he refused to be with those who prostrated. Allah said, ‘What is the matter with you that you are not with those who prostrate? He said, ‘Never would I prostrate to a human whom You created out of clay from an altered black mud.’” (Al-Hijr, 15: 28-33)

This event is so important that the Qur’an mentions it, in its different details, in exactly seven chapters. It contains a fine point. The devil ignores the command of Allah and follows his ego. He puts his logic and reason ahead of the divine command. The same goes for human beings. Any person who allows his own personal judgment to overrule Allah’s own, commits the same mistake as the devil. The Qur’an issues a warning against that:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَقْدِمُوا بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ

“O you who have believed, do not put yourselves before Allah and His Messenger but fear Allah.” (Al-Hujurat, 76: 1)

Allah then asks the devil:

قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِمَا خَلَقْتُ بِإِيْدِي

“What prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My two hands?” (Sad, 38: 75)

The ‘two hands’ mentioned in the verse represents Allah’s power, as well as the value He attaches to man. Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi also points to another meaning beyond:

“The two hands are manifestations of Allah’s beauty (*jamal*) and majesty (*jalal*). Man’s body and soul are the appearance of Allah’s majesty, while his spirit is the appearance of His beauty. Man combines both these divine attributes. However, in the devil, only majesty manifests and he is therefore deprived of beauty”.

The Prophet (saw) says:

“Allah created Adam in His own image”. (Muslim, Birr, 115)

Allah transcends all images and imagination. Therefore, what this hadith speaks of is not the physical image but the inner image; not the body but the spirit.

If these divine names did not appear in Adam (as) and if he had not been given qualities superior to other created beings, he would then have been unable to fulfil his duty as Allah’s caliph on earth. Man has this ability by default. Nevertheless, he can truly execute this duty only if he reaches finesse to become an *insan-i kamil*, a perfect human being, by cleansing his ego, refining his morals and purifying himself.

This means that man has the potential to even surpass angels, given he develops his potential to believe and love and brings direction to his life. Nevertheless, if he gives sway to denial, trickery, jealousy and conceit, he can end up at a place lower than animals. The Qur’an states:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنْسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا
يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ
كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ

“And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, eyes with which they do not see,

and ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is them who are the heedless.” (Al-Araf, 7: 179)

The devil did not prostrate to Adam (as) due to the conceit and vain he had kept hidden inside. He was well respected until then. He had enough knowledge to teach angels.

On that note, the incident further points to a couple more things: knowledge and rank have the danger of inciting the ego and that knowledge alone is not enough to ensure that one obeys Allah. The devil was from among the jinn, created from a bright, smokeless fire. So, he used his limited wisdom to assume that a bright, smokeless fire was superior to the mud that Adam (as) was created from. He supposed he had greater honor and worth based on that. He assumed it would be humiliating for someone made from a better substance to bow to a lesser being. However, it was a flawed analogy; and it only goes to show how insufficient reason can be in arriving at a judgment.

One must therefore never resort to analogy when faced with a Divine command. Analogy that defies the scripture is invalid and has no merit. Satan made that mistake. Besides, the devil's assumption that 'fire is superior to earth' is only relative. Earth has many features that are superior to fire. Yet, in the end, what is important is not to compare them but to heed to the command of Allah. The real sin the devil commits here is his attempt to pass judgment outside of Allah's own; so much so, that he even has the temerity to argue with Allah:

قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ

“Satan said, ‘I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay!’” (Al-Araf, 7: 12)³¹

The devil saw the mud of Adam (as) but not its value. He was fooled by appearances to see the spirituality behind it. What he did not know was that man was designated as the caliph of Allah on earth. He saw Adam (as) through the eye of his ego and therefore could not peer beyond its matter. He took his own reasoning as standard, not Allah. He was taken aback and acted with instinct. Until then, the devil had never been met with a situation that tested his feelings and had never been subjected to such a trial. He could not make sense of Divine wisdom. He let himself drown in the dark corridors of his ego and miserably, went up in arms against Allah.

The devil did not want to lose his perceived advantage over Adam (as) and abstained from falling to prostrate. However, by doing so, he found himself in a worse position than he could have ever conceived. Allah banished him from his

31. Also see, al-Hijr, 15: 33; Sad, 38: 76.

privileged position. He was humiliated in front of the angels, who until then had greatly respected him, and was expelled in shame:

قَالَ فَاخْرُجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ. وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ اللَّعْنَةَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

“Allah said, ‘Then get out of it, for indeed, you are expelled. And indeed, upon you is the curse until the Day of Recompense.’” (Al-Hijr, 15: 34-35)

Elsewhere in the Qur’an:

قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُونُ لَكَ أَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيهَا فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ

“Allah said, ‘Descend from Paradise, for it is not for you to be arrogant therein. So get out; indeed, you are of the debased.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 13)³²

While trying to prove his superiority, the devil ended up losing favor. At that point, he feared for his life and pleaded:

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

“He said, ‘My Lord, then reprieve me until the Day they are resurrected.’” (Al-Hijr, 15: 36)³³

In His Eternal Wisdom, Allah granted his wish:

قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ. إِلَى يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ

“Allah said, ‘So indeed, you are of those reprieved...until the Day of the time well-known.’” (Al-Hijr, 15: 37-38)³⁴

As we have mentioned before, Adam (as) contains every single human being to come until the final hour in his selfhood. Thus, each person inherits a share of Adam’s (as) honor but also incurs the same hatred that the devil nurtured towards him. However, at the bottom of it all, man needed an obstacle that he could overcome to allow his full spiritual potential to flourish. For that, the devil was needed as an agent. The devil was necessary to fill that role, so were the events surrounding the ‘forbidden tree’, which ended up having man banished from paradise and begin his trial on earth. The devil is the obstacle that keeps human beings from developing

32. Also see, Sad, 38: 77-78.

33. Also see, al-Araf, 7: 14.

34. Also see, al-Araf, 7: 15.

their spirituality by seducing their desires. Man must therefore remain constantly alert. It is that alertness that leads to spiritual maturity.

It is those reasons that underlie Allah's decision to allow the devil to roam until the final hour. To balance the ledger, Allah has also kept the gates of mercy open for man until his final breath. However, until then, man has to also wage a fierce battle with the devil, who sent out this warning:

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتِ عَلَيَّ لِيُذَخَّرَنِي إِلَى
يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لِأَخْتِنِكَ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا. قَالَ أَذْهَبُ فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ
مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاءُكُمْ جَزَاءً مَوْفُورًا. وَاسْتَفْزِرْ مِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ
مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَأَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِم بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ وَشَارِكْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ
وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعَدْتَهُمْ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا

“Satan said, ‘Do You see this one whom You have honored above me? If You delay me until the Day of Resurrection, I will surely destroy his descendants, except for a few. Allah said, ‘Go, for whoever of them follows you, indeed Hell will be the recompense of you - an ample recompense. And incite whoever you can among them with your voice and assault them with your horses and foot soldiers and become a partner in their wealth and their children and promise them.’ But Satan does not promise them anything except delusion.” (Al-Isra, 17: 62-64)

The above verse points to the most important tactics the devil employs to manipulate man:

- Above all, the devil can delude only those who he has power over.
- He tricks man using all sorts of instruments and songs that human beings take a natural liking to and can therefore be easily misled by. Scholars have interpreted the term ‘*sawt*’, translated as ‘voice’ in the above verse, as any sound that incites rebellion to God.
- The devil mobilizes the help of men and jinn in tasks it cannot undertake alone.
- He deceives human beings mostly through their children and wealth.

Following God's permission, the devil felt a little more secure; and in brazen rudeness, tried to blame Allah for his rebellion:

قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ.
ثُمَّ لَأَتِيَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ
وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

“Satan said, ‘Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit and wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful to You.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 16-17)

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

“Satan said, ‘My Lord, because You have put me in error, I will surely make disobedience attractive to them on earth, and I will mislead them all.’” (Al-Hijr, 15: 39)

The renowned Sufi Yahya ibn Muadh (d. 872) describes the upper hand the devil has over man:

“The devil is idle; he has nothing to do. However, we, on the other, are always busy. He sees us but we do not see him. We forget our duty but he never forgets his. To make matters worse, our egos are in his service.”

The Qur’an warns:

وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ

“...do not follow the footsteps of Satan.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 208)

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

“Indeed, Satan is an enemy to you; so take him as an enemy. He only invites his party to be among the companions of the blaze.” (Fatir, 35: 6)

Thus, the Qur’an singles out the devil as the clear enemy of man and advises us to seek refuge away from him in Allah. Just some of those verses are:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيَاطِينِ. وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ

“And say, ‘My Lord, I seek refuge in You from the incitements of the devils. And I seek refuge in You, my Lord, lest they be present with me.’” (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 97-98)

وَأَمَّا يَنْزِعَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْعٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ. إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَائِفٌ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ

“And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is Hearing and Knowing. Those who fear Allah remember Him when they are touched by an impulse from Satan...and at once they have insight.”

(Al-Araf, 7: 200-201)

To seek refuge means to rely on the protection of someone from a thing that is feared. In chapter an Nas, Allah commands us to seek exclusively His protection from the devil. It is the Almighty alone who can fend off the tricks of Satan, who leaves no stone unturned to deceive man.

The Prophet (saw) also has the following advice:

“If you say the basmalah when entering your home or while eating, the devil tells his soldiers, ‘...you may neither spend the night or have dinner here’. Nevertheless, if one you do not say the basmalah when you enter your home, then the devil tells them, ‘...you have got a place to spend the night’. And if you do not say the basmalah while eating, the devil says ‘...you have got a place to stay and some food to eat’”. (Muslim, Ashribah, 103)

Another way of protecting oneself from the devil is *ikhlas*, that is to say, to be sincere in one’s faith to Allah. The Qur’an quotes the devil as declaring he will trick all human beings except for:

إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمْ الْمُخْلِصِينَ

“...Your chosen servants.” (Al-Hijr, 15: 40)

The Almighty affirms:

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنْ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ

“Indeed you will have no authority over My servants, except those deviators who follow you.” (Al-Hijr, 15: 42)

Ikhlas is to keep hypocrisy out of all action, to avoid showing off in deeds of worship and to protect the heart from blemishes that taint its purity. It is to think of the pleasure and love of Allah (jj) alone and regulate all behavior accordingly. In that sense, *ikhlas* serves as an armor against all the evil by which the devil hopes to delude man. It allows man to see them for what they are beyond their fancy appearance. However, to obtain *ikhlas*, the heart needs to reach a certain blend; and it obtains that while striving towards *marifatullah*, knowledge of Allah.

Another powerful force against the evils of the devil is to remember Allah both verbally and in the heart. Abandoning the remembrance of Allah leads to devil becoming one's constant company. All sins are committed the moment one forgets Allah. It is impossible for one to genuinely say the *basmalah* and sin; say Allah and do an injustice or break a person's heart. Allah says it Himself:

وَمَنْ يَعِشْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقِضَ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ

“And whoever is blinded from remembrance of the Most Merciful - We appoint for him a devil, and he is to him a companion.” (Al-Zukhruf, 43: 36)

We can also be safe from the devil through a dedication to Allah and His Messenger that comes deep from the heart, by exerting our every effort in the way of Islam and elevating Allah's name on earth. In return, Allah (jj) guarantees His help:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ

“O you who have believed...if you support Allah, He will support you and plant your feet firmly on the ground.” (Muhammad, 47: 7)

However, those, on the other hand, who turn their backs on Allah's commands and follow the devil, can only end up in one place:

لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكَ وَمِمَّن تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

“I will surely fill Hell with you and those of them that follow you all together.” (Sad, 38: 85)

لَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

“Whoever follows you among them - I will surely fill Hell with you, all together.” (Al-Araf, 7: 18)

It is therefore vital that we recognize the devil for who he is: our archenemy who will resort to every trick he knows to send us to the pits of hell.



It is narrated that the angels then lifted their heads from off the ground and saw that the jinn they had previously known as Azazil and who had gained fame for spending a lot of his time worshipping the Lord, had morphed into an evil creature. So, they prostrated again, to thank Allah for protecting them from a similar fate.

It was after he refrained from prostrating that Azazil became Satan and the embodiment of evil. He was no angel; he was created from fire. He was a jinn among the angels of paradise but, therefore, unique. Thus, he felt superior to Adam (as) and

could not get his head around the fact that Adam (as) carried a spirit and had been appointed the caliph of Allah. He blocked his ears to divine command and let his ego take hold. He was ignorant of the fact that his knowledge was nothing compared to Allah's own:

مَا أَشْهَدْتُهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَا خَلْقَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ
وَمَا كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذَ الْمُضِلِّينَ عَضُدًا

“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 the misguiders as assistants.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 51)

And in the verse before that, the Almighty cautions his servants against forgetting their reason of existence and befriending Satan and his cohorts:

كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ أَفَتَتَّخِذُونَهُ وَذُرِّيَّتَهُ أَوْلِيَاءَ
مِنْ دُونِي وَهُمْ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ بِئْسَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلًا

“He was of the jinn and departed from the command of his Lord. Then will you take him and his descendants as allies other than Me while they are enemies to you? What a bad exchange for the wrongdoers.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 50)

It must be borne in mind that Allah did not command the angels to worship Adam (as) by telling them to prostrate. It was simply to let the angels know that Adam (as) was superior to them through his inner potential and the attributes he had been given. Allah had breathed into Adam (as) from His own spirit and favored him over other beings.

It was also to get the angels to observe the divine command without question. The fact is that even though Adam (as) may have been the object in front them, it was really Allah that they prostrated to and worshipped. Adam (as) was nothing more than what the Ka'bah is during ritual prayer. Prostrating towards the Ka'bah is not to worship it. It is to worship Allah (jj). The Ka'bah is simply a hub that absorbs Divine mercy and regulates the prayer to ensure that believers are united in the act by facing the same direction.

The Creation of Eve

Right after Adam (as), the mother of mankind, Eve was created. The Qur'an states:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً

“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 1)

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

“It is He who created you from one soul and created from it its mate that he might dwell in security with her.” (Al-Araf, 7: 189)

As we have mentioned before, there was a time when there was only Allah. He wanted to be known and as a result, the cosmos or the world of multiplicity came to be. Allah wanted to be known because of His love. If it was not for love, nothing would have been created. Love is the reason why every single being has come into existence. Specifically, it is the love Allah felt for the Prophet Muhammed (saw), as is evidenced by a *hadith qudsi*.³⁵

The love released by Allah is of a nature that must return to Him. It is necessarily inclined to return to its origin. However, it needed a carrier; and that is the reason why Adam (as) was created. He marks the beginning of the journey of love back home. Because man carries love, he also feels the same need to return the love he is given.

Oneness is reserved to Allah alone. Thus, every single species was created in pairs with a mutual attraction towards one another. The entire cosmos follows this law. From plants and animals to man and matter, including the electrons and protons that we cannot see with the naked eye, everything comes in pairs. In fact, the Qur'an says:

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

“And of all things We created two mates...perhaps you will remember.” (Al-Dharyat, 51: 49)

This is also necessary for existence, in the most general sense, to return to its origin, which is, Allah. The return from the world of multiplicity to that of unity is a course that existence naturally and necessarily follows. The attraction felt between

35. The relevant hadith can be found under the below discussion on ‘The Pardoning of Adam (as) and Eve’.

opposite pairs within the same species acts as a bridge for that return. Allah has also made that attraction a means for species to continue.

There is another aspect related to that. Man is in exile in that he is distant from Allah. A life in exile brings with it loneliness, despair and sorrow, where man feels the need to be consoled. The proverbial saying that 'Only Allah can be alone' has good reason. Everybody else needs care and comfort. Man is born with these needs. Despite abounding in all the beauties of paradise, even Adam (as) felt the need for a companion of his own kind. Since then, women have been bridges for men to reach Allah through love; and the same goes for men in relation to women. The love for Layla only has meaning if in the end it takes man to love for *Mawla* or Allah. Otherwise, Layla becomes an idol that leads man astray in the trial of life. Layla is a symbol. It is not always necessarily a woman. It can be wealth, rank or anything else the ego lusts after that takes him away from Allah. In that case, desire and through it the ego, become gods.

So, due to a number of underlying wisdoms, Allah wished for Adam (as) to have a partner of his own kind in whom he could find solace and comfort. He created Eve from Adam's (as) lower left rib.

Ibn Abbas and Ibn Masud (r.anhum) narrate from the Prophet (saw) that Adam (as) was made to settle in Paradise after Satan was expelled. For a while, Adam (as) walked around feeling lonely, despite everything he had at his disposal. So he asked Allah for a partner. He woke up one day to find another person by his side.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am a woman", she said. "Allah made me so you could find rest and peace in me".

Eve's name is originally Hawwa, which means alive. She was given that name because she was created from another living being, Adam (as). (Al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, I, 103-104)

The Prophet (saw) says:

"Treat women kindly, for they have been created from the rib. If you try to straighten them, they will fracture. However, if you leave them to be, they will remain bent. So treat women kindly." (Al-Bukhari, *Anbiya*, 1)

Women are emotionally a lot richer than men are. When describing how the baby is created in the womb, the Qur'an informs us that the fluid that the father contributes, comes from around his *sulb* or backbone, while the mother contributes from her *taraiib*, from between her breastbone near her heart, which is the center of

emotions.³⁶ This comes from the role that Allah has given to women, which is to protect and educate her children. Women must therefore be treated nicely. The father cannot look after a baby like a mother can. He cannot change nappies as well as her or deprive himself of sleep as willingly to look after the baby. A mother can sacrifice herself for her children without blinking an eye but a father must think twice. A mother constantly dotes over her child, feels the child's pain and joy in her bones. She carries the child for nine months in her belly, two years in her arms and for the rest of her life, in her heart. She cannot eat unless her child does. If her child breaks down in tears, so does she. It is therefore impossible for a child to pay her back.

After creating our mother Eve, Allah the Almighty said:

وَيَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا
وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

“O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat from wherever you will but do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers.” (Al-Araf, 7: 19)

And the trial of human beings began.

Life in Paradise

Allah allowed both Adam and Eve (as) to live in paradise and help themselves to anything apart from the fruit of the forbidden tree. He also informed them both that Satan is their clear enemy.

فَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَى.

“So We said, ‘O Adam, indeed this is an enemy to you and to your wife. Do not let him not remove you from Paradise, so you would suffer.’ (Ta Ha, 20: 117)

And they lived in paradise comfortably, enjoying whatever it could provide. The Qur'an describes:

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَى. وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَأُ فِيهَا وَلَا تَصْحَى

“Indeed, it is promised for you not to be hungry therein or be unclothed. And indeed, you will not be thirsty or be hot from the sun.” (Ta Ha, 20: 118-119)

36. See, al-Tariq, 86: 6-7.

The Descent from Paradise to Earth

The trial of man began with the creation of Adam (as). As far as we can know, the angels were tested when they were commanded to prostrate to him. All the angels passed the test because they had no egos that would influence them to do otherwise. Nevertheless, Satan failed. He was a jinn and he had an ego.

After testing the angels and the devil with Adam (as), Allah tested Adam and Eve with the devil. He gave the devil the opportunity through the forbidden tree, which was the only thing in paradise He had declared out of bounds.

It was then that the ego itself began its long battle to keep man from obeying Allah's commands. Some reports suggest that the influence of Eve had a lot to do with Adam (as) reaching for the forbidden fruit.

Women have been created more sensitive and susceptible than men. They therefore become influenced more easily. Since the beginning, Satan has used this to his advantage. This perhaps has never been more glaring than today, where women are used as tools for advertisements and propaganda in commerce as well as politics. While women are means for men to find peace and comfort, they also pose a great trial. However, having said that, man's happiness in both worlds depends on women. Sawban (ra) recounts the following:

“We were on a campaign when Allah revealed:

وَالَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ
وَلَا يُنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

‘**And those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah - give them tidings of a painful punishment.**’ (Al-Tawbah, 9: 34). Some companions then remarked, ‘no more hoarding gold and silver...but if we only knew what was better so we could get hold of it’. It was then that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

‘The most valuable things you can have are a tongue that remembers, a heart that gives thanks and a righteous wife who helps her husband keep faith.’ (Al-Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 9/9)

Another hadith states:

‘After taqwa, man benefits most from a righteous wife. If he asks her for something, she does it. If he looks at her, he feels joy. If he promises to do something for another, his wife will do anything she can so that he keeps his word. And if he has to go far away, his wife protects his honor and wealth.’ (Ibn Majah, Nikah, 5/1857)

“The world is full of things to enjoy. However, the best of them is a righteous wife”.
(Muslim, Rada, 64; Nasai, Nikah, 15; Ibn Majah, Nikah, 5)

For that reason, Ali (kw) suggested that the verse:

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and protect us from the punishment of the Fire” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 201) *may also be interpreted as, ‘Lord, give us a righteous wife on earth and the women of paradise in the hereafter and keep us safe from the tricks of women’.* (Ali al-Qari, *Mirqat*, VI, 265)



Satan was resorting to every trick he knew to deceive Adam and Eve (as). The Qur’an recounts what unfolds:

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَى

“Then Satan whispered to him...he said, ‘O Adam, shall I direct you to the tree of eternity and possession that will not deteriorate?’” (Ta Ha, 20: 120)

فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَا وُورِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوَاتِمِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَن تَكُونَا مَلَكَتَيْنِ أَوْ تَكُونَا مِنَ الْخَالِدِينَ . وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ . فَدَلَّاهُمَا بِغُرُورٍ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوَاتِمُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَنَادَاهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا أَلَمْ أَنهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكَ الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقُلُّ لَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

“But Satan whispered to them to show them that which was concealed of their private parts. He said, ‘Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you become angels or become of the immortal. And he swore by Allah to them, ‘Indeed, I am to you from among the sincere advisors. 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.³⁷ 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-Araf, 7: 20-22)

37. Out of all creatures, only people cover themselves. Human beings also need to clothe to protect the honor, dignity, modesty and solemnity that Allah the Almighty has bestowed upon them. They will otherwise lose all of those qualities. The loss of modesty and the rise of nudity is among the biggest signs of the end of times. The Prophet (saw) says, *“Modesty and shame (haya) are part of faith”*. Even though Adam and Eve (as) did not have any other human being to pry on them in paradise, they still

Adam and Eve approached the forbidden tree because of their *nafs* or ego. It is the constant hurdle which human beings have to overcome. The value of a victory is proportionate to the obstacles overcome to get to it. An ego that holds a person in shackles is cause for destruction. However, on the other hand, an ego that is trained and refined is means for eternal gains. It has been said:

“The ego is your steed. Treat it gently and with care”.

The fact of the matter is that the Almighty has given man free will and where he ends up depends on the choices he makes. This free will is limited compared to Allah’s eternal freedom. However, man has enough freedom to shape his personal destiny. It is therefore imperative for us to use our freedom in line with what Allah has commanded us with, and seek refuge in His mercy from His wrath.

Adam and Eve (as) fell for the trick the devil had devised to seek vengeance from them. After realizing what they had done, they quickly left his side. They drew closer to the angels and began repenting with the words they had learned from Allah:

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“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-Araf, 7: 23)

The Almighty forgave them but due to a number of underlying wisdoms, willed to send them to earth:

قَالَ اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ. قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُونَ

“Allah said, ‘Descend, as enemies to one another.’³⁸ And for you on the earth is a place of settlement and enjoyment for a time. He said, ‘Therein you will live, and therein you will die, and from it you will be brought forth.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 24-25)

However, not before teaching them where the path to salvation lay, not only for them but also for their generations to come:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوْآتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا
وَلِبَاسِ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ

felt ashamed from other beings, and tried to cover themselves with whatever leaves they could find. And this shows that covering oneself and its spiritual source, which are the feelings of propriety and shame, are one of man’s most innate qualities.

38. The reference there is to the enmity between man and the devil –and his cohorts-, as well as amongst human beings, which was to develop and persist until the final hour.

“O children of Adam...We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment. But the clothing of *taqwa* - that is best.” (Al-Araf, 7: 26)

The above verse states that clothes are not enough to cover man. It is really the dress of *taqwa* that cleanses the heart of negative thoughts and emotions and enables man to come to terms with his responsibilities before Allah. *Taqwa* also determines people’s superiority over one another:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

“Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.” (Al-Hujurat, 76: 13)

And elsewhere in the Qur’an, right after we are told of the incident that saw Adam and Eve (as) banished from paradise, we are warned:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْآتِهِمَا إِنَّهُ يَرَاكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

“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. Indeed, he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you do not see them. Indeed, We have made the devils allies to those who do not believe.” (Al-Araf, 7: 27)

The Almighty created the parents of humankind in paradise. However, as a result of them reaching out to the forbidden tree, they were taken out and sent to the world, the realm of trial. A few of the reasons as to why it turned out that way may be listed as follows:

1. Allah had already willed for the species of mankind to live on earth.
2. The Lord wanted them to appreciate the blessing that paradise was and do good on earth in the hope of returning there one day.
3. Allah wanted to separate from among Adam’s (as) generation those worthy of paradise from others who deserve hellfire.
4. Allah wanted humankind to enforce His law on earth and work towards its improvement.
5. It is a riddle of fate that human reason can never solve.

Man's Vulnerabilities

Allah has sowed the seeds of both good and bad in the soul of man and given him opportunity to develop whichever side he wishes. Man, therefore, has a twofold nature, positive and negative. He has strengths and weaknesses. The Qur'an has focused more on man's psychological weaknesses to caution him against tripping over his ego and encourage him towards the good.

1. Man is Unjust and Ignorant

On this, the Qur'an says:

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا
وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

“Indeed, we offered the Trust to the skies and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man did. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.” (Al-Ahzab, 33: 72)

The ‘trust’ mentioned in the verse represents the responsibility man has shouldered to fulfill the commands of Allah. Man fulfils what that trust requires of him by using his reason and will. Only man has been given this trust and it is what separates human beings from the rest of creation. It is due to that trust that man faces a trial in this life.

The fact the skies, the earth and the mountains shied away from shouldering that burden goes to show that things we think to be immobile and lifeless are in fact conscious enough to realize the weight responsibility:

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِنْ
خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“If We had sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and coming apart from fear of Allah. And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought.” (Al-Hashr, 59: 21)

The above verse illustrates that inert beings are capable of reacting both emotionally and physically to divine commands.

Allah tells us that man shouldered the trust because he is by nature unjust and ignorant; and therefore takes on responsibility without weighing the consequences.

The opposite of injustice is justice. Man can be just and avoid becoming unjust by doing lots of good deeds. In chapter al-Asr, Allah says good deeds are necessary for man to keep away from misery and loss.

The opposite of ignorance is knowledge. Knowledge has two parts. It comes with outer sciences as well as inner. Ghazzali suggests that true wisdom requires one to combine both, when he says, "True scholars, who inherit the prophets, are those who are steeped in both sides of knowledge".

Allah states:

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِدًا وَقَائِمًا يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ
هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

"Is one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating and standing in prayer, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, like one who does not? Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' Only they will remember Allah...those who are people of understanding."

(Al-Zumar, 39: 9)

Zamakhshari interprets that verse as follows:

"By 'those who know', the Almighty refers to people who obey and occupy themselves with deeds of worship; and by 'those who do not know', He means others who abstain. By so doing, He regards believers who are busy with worship as among the knowledgeable, which also implies that people who abstain from obeying and worshipping the Lord can never be scholars in the truest sense. Thus, the verse reproaches people who rely on the little knowledge they have to indulge in the world and avoid obeying and worshipping the Lord." (*Kashshaf*, V, 156)

The consequence of all this is that we can steer clear from being unjust and ignorant only to the extent we turn our knowledge, in both the senses mentioned above, into wisdom. In other words, to cure ourselves of these spiritual diseases, we not only need to invest in the mind but also in the heart.

The above verses also warn of the misery that results from turning a blind eye on the wisdom that Allah encourages us to seek.

It is a heavy responsibility, which the Mathnawi interpreter Tahiru'l-Mevlevi expresses as:

*To come empty-handed would have been rude
But Lord, sins are all I could bring to You
And what mountains said would make them crack
I've dragged twice as much here on my back*

Sufis say man's primal essence is ignorance; and fall back on the Qur'an's description of man as 'very ignorant' as proof. Absolute knowledge belongs to Allah alone. In the Qur'an, it is said:

وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

“Mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little.” (Al-Isra, 85) And this is contrasted with the boundless knowledge of Allah through a tremendous imagery:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ مَا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

“And if all the trees upon the earth were pens and the sea was ink, replenished thereafter by the seven more seas, the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.” (Luqman, 31: 27)

The Prophet (as) also says:

“During that incredible journey where Khidr (as) held Moses (as) witness to many wonderful and mysterious incidents, a sparrow landed on the deck of a ship they had boarded and began to collect some water from the sea with its beak. Khidr (as) drew Moses' (as) attention to it and remarked:

“What you, I and entire creation know is a drop compared to the sea of Allah's knowledge.” (Al-Bukhari, Tafsir, 18/4)

Scholars have drawn on that comparison to say that the knowledge of the people is a drop compared to the sea of what saints know, the knowledge of the saints is a drop compared to the sea of what prophets know, the knowledge of the prophets is drop compared to the sea of what Prophet Muhammed (saw) knows, and the knowledge of the Prophet (saw) is a drop compared to the sea of what Allah (jj) knows.

Nevertheless, if a person manages to acquire *taqwa* through the little knowledge he has, Allah will grant him wisdom. The person is then given his share of *marifah*, where he begins to know God as He should be known. It is then that the divine mysteries start to unfold. As the Qur'an says:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ

“Fear Allah...and He shall teach you.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 283)

The renowned Qurtubi interprets that verse as:

“Here, Allah (jj) guarantees that He Himself will teach those who fear Him. A person who has *taqwa* will be given a light in his heart that enables him to grasp the truths and separate right from wrong.” (Qurtubi, III, 406)

This is confirmed by the words of the Prophet (saw):

“*Those who practice what they know will be taught by Allah of things they do not know*”. (Abu Nuaym, Hilyatu'l-Awliya, X, 15)

2. Man is Hasty

Allah points to this aspect of human psychology in the following:

خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ

“**Man was created of haste.**” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 37)

وَيَدْعُ الْإِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَاءَهُ بِالْخَيْرِ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُولًا

“**And man supplicates for evil as he supplicates for good...and man is ever hasty.**” (Al-Isra, 17: 11)

Just as man wants good, he also invites evil through his action. That is because he is hasty. He finds it difficult to remain patient and wait, so he wants to lay his hands on things as soon as possible, before their time has come. More often than not, it ends badly. A rule in the Ottoman legal code, *Majallah*, states that ‘Whoever seeks to have something before its time comes shall be deprived of it’. That is to say, the court punishes the person by banning him from having that thing indefinitely.

Man’s impatience also shows in his desire to have things without putting in the effort. He wants to live paradise on earth. Many people therefore abandon the thought of the afterlife and indulge in the world. Not only do they have no concern for the great rewards they could be receiving on the other side, they also do not even think about the great punishment they may face. Because of their impatience, they can neither separate right from wrong nor consider the kind of end they will meet. The Qur’an describes them as:

كَلَّا بَلْ تُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ وَتَذَرُونَ الْآخِرَةَ

“**No! You love the immediate and leave the hereafter.**” (Al-Qiyamah, 75: 20-21)

People tend to easily curse others when they are angry or find themselves in situations of discomfort. The correct attitude would be to try and solve the problem by remaining patient and levelheaded. But man is impatient; and many a person

faced with troubles loses hope and lets himself plunge into despair. There are even those curse themselves by wishing to die. This is utterly wrong.

Anas (ra) recounts:

“The Messenger of Allah (saw) one day visited a person who was ill and reduced to skin and bones. He asked the man, ‘Were you praying for something from Allah?’ The man said, ‘Yes, I used to ask Allah to give the punishment awaiting me in the afterlife here, so I could avoid it after I am dead’.

‘Praise be to Allah’, said the Messenger of Allah (saw). ‘You do not have the strength for that. Why did you not just pray, ‘Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and protect us from the punishment of the Fire?’

The man then recited that prayer and not long after, got back on his feet.”
(Al-Bukhari, Marda, 19; Daawat, 30; Muslim, Dhikr, 10, 13)

Muslims must therefore never curse. They must instead patiently pray for the good to come to them, and commit themselves to work for the good of others. We should heed to the advice of the Qur’an and pray:

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter and protect us from the punishment of the Fire”. (Al-Baqarah, 2: 201)

3. Man is Self-Seeking

The Qur’an declares:

وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرِحُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ إِذَا هُمْ يَقْنَطُونَ

“And when We let the people taste mercy, they rejoice therein, but if evil afflicts them for what their hands have put forth, immediately they despair.”

(Al-Rum, 30: 36)

Man is not forbidden from rejoicing in things he is blessed with through Allah’s mercy. He is in fact commanded to be happy about them.³⁹ However, these should be celebrations of the One who gives him these blessings. They should inspire feelings of gratitude towards Allah. So, the above verse refers to only those who follow their desires and bask in their own glory. As the Qur’an says:

39. See, Yunus, 10: 58.

لَا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ

“Do not exult. Indeed, Allah does not like the exultant.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 76)

These types of people, even when they do worship, they do so to get ahead in the world. Because they trust their own personal powers alone, they immediately fall into despair the moment they eventually fall into trouble through their own doing. They lose complete hope in Allah (jj). That happens because they have placed their trust not in Allah who is eternal but petty things that are mortal. The Qur’an perfectly illustrates this self-seeking nature of man, when it says:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ
خَيْرٌ اطمأنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فِتْنَةٌ انقلبَ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ

“And there is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns his face to the other direction. He has lost this world and the Hereafter. And that is a clear loss.” (Al-Hajj, 22: 11)

There are others unable to release themselves from the clutches of their egos and who therefore worship Allah only reluctantly. They do so not because they are sincere but because there is a worldly benefit to be had. For these people, Allah’s name remains only on the tip of the tongue and never makes its way down to the heart. They do rejoice and half-heartedly thank Allah if they taste personal success. However, if they fall on hard times, they completely turn away.

4. Man is Ungrateful to Allah

The Qur’an says:

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنُودٌ. وَإِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ ذَلِكٍ لَشَهِيدٌ

“Indeed man is ungrateful to his Lord. And he very well knows it.” (Al-Adiyat, 100: 6-7)

The Qur’an brings this aspect of man alive by showing his tendency to go whichever way the wind blows:

وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُونَ إِلَّا إِلَٰهًا فَلَمَّا نَجَّكُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ أَعْرَضْتُمْ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا. أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ

عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ وَكِيْلًا. أَمْ أَمِنتُمْ أَنْ يُعِيدَكُم
فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَى فَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِنَ الرِّيحِ فَيُغْرِقَكُم بِمَا
كَفَرْتُمْ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهِ تَبِيعًا

“And when adversity touches you at sea, you lose thought of all those you invoke except for Him. But when He delivers you to the land, you turn away. And ever is man ungrateful. Can you be sure that He will not cause a part of the land to swallow you or send against you a storm of stones? Then you would not find for yourselves an advocate. Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back into the sea another time and send upon you a hurricane of wind and drown you for what you denied? Then you would not find for yourselves against Us an avenger.” (Al-Isra, 17: 67-69)

Another verse reads:

فَأَمَّا الْإِنْسَانُ إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَنَعَّمَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَكْرَمَنِ
وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَهَانَنِ

“And as for man, when his Lord tries him, is generous to him and favors him, he says, ‘My Lord has honored me’. But when He tries him and restricts his provision, he says, ‘My Lord has humiliated me.’” (Al-Fajr, 89: 15-16)

We tend to forget that our Lord tests our patience at every moment. However, it is only to reward us. Many people who fall into financial or personal troubles overlook the fact they are only means of ease and rewards in the afterlife and instead think that Allah has forsaken them. They are no longer able to appreciate what they have. They forget the need to give thanks for what they have no matter how little these may be and ignore the fact that those who do not appreciate what they have will not be given the things they lack.

The thought that they are only being tested does not even cross their minds. That is despite Allah saying:

وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً

“And We test you with evil and with good as trial” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 35) Losing sight of this fact takes man to the edge of disbelief and turns him against Allah, where obsession with the fleeting pleasures of this life makes him blind to what awaits eternally. The Qur’an says:

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ

“Allah created man from a sperm-drop; then he suddenly becomes clear adversary” (Al-Nahl, 16: 4)⁴⁰

5. Man is Greedy and Stingy

These two traits have a lot to do with man's expulsion from paradise. Unless they are bridled, they pose one of the biggest threats in both this life and the hereafter. Allah therefore does not want man to give them any breathing space:

كَلَّا بَلْ لَا تَكْرُمُونَ الْيَتِيمَ. وَلَا تَحَاضُّونَ عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ. وَتَأْكُلُونَ
التُّرَاثَ أَكْلًا لَمًّا. وَتُحِبُّونَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا

“No! But you do not honor the orphan. And you do not encourage one another to feed the poor. And you consume inheritance, devouring it altogether. And you love wealth with immense love.” (Al-Fajr, 89: 17-20)

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا. إِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا.
وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا

“Indeed, mankind was created anxious. When evil touches him, impatient. And when good touches him, he withholds it.” (Al-Ma'arij, 70: 19-21)

وَإِنَّهُ لِحُبِّ الْخَيْرِ لَشَدِيدٌ

“And indeed he is, in love of wealth, intense.” (Al-Adiyat, 8)

The last verse refers to wealth with the word *khayr*, which means ‘good’ and is perhaps similar to how the English word ‘goods’ refers to commodity. However, the Qur’an uses that in irony. It criticizes the perception held by many who strive for wealth, believing that wealth is categorically good. It is not necessarily the case. However, because man thinks it is, he tends to keep a tight fist on the ‘goods’ he has and does not wish to spend it on others. Even though he is go-getting in making that money, he is equally lackluster when it comes to spending it on others and comes up with excuses like he is not really all that rich. He suddenly turns ingrate. Chapter al-Qalam contains a powerful story about two land owners, where one meets a sad end because of his arrogance and unwillingness to give back some of what he was given.⁴¹ Allah (jj) further warns:

40. Also see, Ya Sin, 36: 77.

41. See al-Qalam, 68: 16-33.

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ. الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ.
يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ. كَلَّا لَيُنْبَذَنَّ فِي الْحُطَمَةِ

“Woe to every scorner and mocker...who collects wealth and continuously counts it. He thinks that his wealth will make him immortal. No! He will surely be thrown into the Crusher.” (Al-Humazah, 104: 1-4)

قُلْ لَوْ أَنُّكُمْ تَمْلِكُونَ خَزَائِنَ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّي إِذًا لَأَمْسَكْتُمْ
خَشِيَةَ الْإِنْفَاقِ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ قَتُورًا

“Say, ‘If you possessed the depositories of the mercy of my Lord, then you would withhold out of fear of spending.’ And ever has man been stingy.” (Al-Isra, 17: 100)

6. Man is Jealous

This is one of man’s most dangerous features. The Qur’an says:

وَأُخْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ

“Souls were made inclined to jealousy.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 128)

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

“Or do they envy people for what Allah has given them of His bounty?”
(Al-Nisa, 4: 54)

The Prophet (saw) also warns against the harms of being jealous:

“Avoid jealousy...for jealousy devours the good like a fire devours wood.” (Abu Dawud, Adab, 44)

Subsequent to telling us that offering charity is the best cure for jealousy, Allah says:

وَمَنْ يُوقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful.” (Al-Hashr, 59: 8)

7. Man is Weak

Animals have been given the power to adjust themselves to their surroundings and live by themselves shortly after they are born. Yet, human beings have not. As babies, they are weak and vulnerable; and need years of care before they can set out into the world on their own. The Qur'an states:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ ضَعْفٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَعْفٍ قُوَّةً ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ ضَعْفًا وَشَيْبَةً

“Allah is the one who created you from weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, and then gave you weakness after strength and white hair. He creates what He wills, and He is the Knowing, the Competent.” (Al-Rum, 30: 54)

But man should not count on the strength that comes with his youth to rebel against Allah; for he will eventually age and return to a period of weakness and exhaustion. The regrets felt at old age will not turn back the clock to bring back lost opportunities and appease the longing and pain felt deep in the soul. The Qur'an paints an evocative picture:

وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ

“And he to whom We grant long life We reverse in creation; so will they not understand?” (Ya Sin, 36: 68)

If human beings are weak physically, they are even weaker psychologically. The below verse points to both:

وَخُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا

“And man was created weak.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 28)

Through the example of Adam (as), the Almighty further alludes to how human beings lack willpower and determination, and are generally forgetful:

وَلَقَدْ عَاهَدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلِ فَتَسِيٍّ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا

“And We had already taken a promise from Adam before, but he forgot; and We did not find him to be determined.” (Ta Ha, 20: 115)

It is said that *insan*, which is the Arabic term for human, comes from two words. First is *nisyan*, or forgetfulness. As the above verse reminds us, Adam (as) had forgotten the word he had given Allah. The other is *unsiyyah*, which means habituation,

whereby man quickly acclimatizes to whatever surrounding he finds himself in. He, in time, takes a liking to it and virtually assumes its color.

We have no reason to be conceited, when the Qur'an frequently reminds us how weak and helpless we are. Allah has created man not from a precious drop of tear but a drop of sperm. That is what we ultimately are. It is therefore upon us to realize that we are nothing compared to the might of Allah. We have been warned:

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ
وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا

“And do not walk upon the earth exultantly. Indeed, you will never tear the earth apart, and you will never reach the mountains in height.” (Al-Isra, 17: 37)

Man is naturally predisposed to serve. He therefore has two possibilities in front of him: he can either serve his ego or God. To become a worthy servant of God, he must first overcome the ego. He has to do so in order to be true to the oath he made to the Lord that, as a spirit, he would recognize and serve Him on earth.

When the spirit gave this oath, everything was clear. He could see the angels and gaze at divine majesty. However, as the Prophet (saw) tells us, once this spirit was breathed into the womb on the embryo's 120th day, it became enslaved by the five senses and detained inside the ego. It lost its lightness and finesse, and became clouded and heavy, veiled away from the truth. However, it has been shown a way to break through this cloud. Refining the five senses by cleansing the ego in the manner Allah (jj) has taught and through the innate capabilities it has been given, the spirit can tear this veil right open. Nevertheless, giving direction to the five senses is possible only through cleansing the heart and purifying the soul. At the end of it, the thick cloud evaporates and the heart becomes open to receive the truths.

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي

“And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit” (Al-Hijr, 29) This spirit breathed into man is from a world beyond the sensible. It is immortal. It has entered a body that is part of the sensible world and therefore mortal. It needs to be released. Rumi offers the following parables to draw attention to the need to save the spirit from drowning in the body and enabling it to take control:

“The spirit inside the body is hidden and invisible, like oil in yoghurt. You need to give the yoghurt a shake for the oil to appear. And for the spirit to take control of the body, the body needs to be deprived and put through some toil.”

For the heart to rid itself of base desires for the world and retain that sensitivity, it needs to be filled with divine emotions. It is otherwise impossible to gain that wisdom referred to as *marifah*. Above all, one must ask Allah for it, as Necip Fazil underlines in the below poem:

*Lord, I have weight,
Lightness is your trait
Have mercy on me.
From these ripples of grease
Give me sweet release
Have mercy on me.
I'm crushed under clothes
Of flesh and bones
Have mercy on me.*

In the Qur'an, Allah (jj) says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى . وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

“He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself. And mentions the name of his Lord and prays.” (Al-Ala, 87: 14-15)

وَالشَّمْسُ وَضُحَاهَا . وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَاهَا . وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّاهَا . وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا .
وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا . وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا . وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا . فَأَلْهَمَهَا
فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا . قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا . وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

“By the sun and its brightness. And by the moon when it follows it. And by the day when it displays it. And by the night when it covers it. And by the sky and He who constructed it. And by the earth and He who spread it. And by the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it. And he has failed who corrupts it.” (Al-Shams, 91: 1-10)

Islam aims to raise elegant, sensitive and profound human beings to serve Allah in the truest sense. This maturity finds only those who reach a certain depth of feeling and understanding. These people have perfected their faith and are described by Allah (jj) as:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ
عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

“The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely.” (Al-Anfal, 8: 2)

الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَهُمْ
وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

“Who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts are fearful, and to the patient over what has afflicted them, and the establishers of prayer and those who spend from what We have provided them.” (Al-Hajj, 22: 35)

Once a heart is filled with divine love, every action becomes ultimately directed towards winning divine pleasure. That is when man begins to set out on a journey to understand the wisdom behind his creation and the truths of the universe as well as the Qur’an. As for ignorant and ill hearts that are unable to acquire this finesse and depth, they are at a remove from the love of Allah (jj). As the Qur’an says:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

“Then woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah. Those are in manifest error.” (Al-Zumar, 39: 22)

At the same time, the verse alludes to how hearts that become distant from remembering Allah (jj) lose their humane quality.

The ego wants to revel in every single pleasure on earth. Yet, this appetite can be tamed and the ego restrained through spiritual purification. Without it, a person becomes a total slave to the ego and its relentless desires. The Qur’an states:

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلاً

“Have you seen the one who takes as his god his own desire? Then would you be responsible for him?” (Al-Furqan, 25: 43)

It is striking that the Qur’an says these people take their desires as their god. The Qur’an always uses the word desire (*hawa*) as the opposite of knowledge, which is based on revelation:

وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ
مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّكَ إِذًا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

“So if you were to follow their desires after what has come to you of knowledge, indeed, you would then be among the wrongdoers.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 145)

The Qur'an tells us that following one's desires is the most important cause of deception. People who especially choose to listen their desires in religious matters stray from the path that leads to Allah.

To properly purify the ego, one needs to commit himself to methods of spiritual training, which include self-restraint (*riyazah*), remembering Allah (*dhikr*) and attending spiritual circles (*sohbah*). We all know that faith takes place in the heart. However, the heart is also the center of speech. Therefore, true servanthood begins when the name Allah said by the tongue also finds expression inside the heart. That is what makes the ego erode. By continuing *dhikr*, the truth of the spoken word begins to encompass a person's whole being. Everything, apart from Allah, becomes erased from the heart. The person slowly begins to enter Allah's presence and acquires the state of *ihsan*, or sincerity before the Almighty. He worships Allah as if he sees Him.

The Pardoning of Adam (as) and Eve

After violating the command of Allah and succumbing to the temptation of the devil, Adam and Eve (as) were removed from paradise and sent to earth. Angels took Adam (as) to the Island of Ceylon south of India and Eve to an area off the Red Sea, where the city of Jeddah is today. For a long time, they were separated from each other. In the meantime, both continued repenting tirelessly, but for a while, to no avail. Finally, they said:

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“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-Araf, 7: 23) It is also narrated that they mentioned the name ‘Muhammed’ (saw) in their prayers and sought intercession in his spirituality. Through that, they were finally forgiven. The Prophet (saw) explains:

“After Adam (as) committed the error that expelled him from paradise, he understood his mistake and prayed:

‘I ask you to forgive me, Lord, for the sake of Muhammed’.

Allah (jj) said, ‘How do you know Muhammed when I have not even created him?’⁴²

42. In pre-eternity, there was only God. Because He wanted to be known by humans and jinn, as much as they could grasp Him, He created the *masiwa*, which is everything apart from Him. And the first substance He created was the Light of Muhammed; hence, the Prophet's (saw) words that he was already a messenger when Adam (as) was still between spirit and the flesh (Al-Tirmidhi, Manaqib, 1). That means that while the Prophet's (saw) essence that is known as the Light of Muhammed was the first substance ever created, his birth on earth is complementarily the last of all prophets; and brings

Adam (as) replied, 'Lord, when You created me and breathed into me Your spirit, I lifted my head; and I saw these words inscribed on top of the pillars of Your throne: There is no god but Allah and Muhammed is His messenger. I knew there and then that he would have to be the best of creation to be mentioned in the same breath as Your name!'

'You have spoken the truth', Allah (jj) said. 'Muhammed is the best of my creation. Pray to me for his sake. Since you have, I have forgiven you. I would not have created you, if it was not for Muhammed.'" (Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, II, 672)

So, Adam (as) recalled the honor of the Prophet Muhammed (saw) in Allah's sight and prayed that he be forgiven for his sake. The Almighty pardoned him and sent him an angel to guide him to Mecca. Another angel was sent to Eve, who started making her way to Mecca from Jeddah. The two were reunited late afternoon (*Asr*) on the ninth of Dhul'hijjah. They broke down in tears and repented once more.

The love and attraction Adam and Eve felt for each other stems from the fact that Eve was created from Adam's own flesh.

Not only did the Almighty forgive them both in His Eternal mercy and grace, He has also extended that pardon to all those who pray at that very spot of reunion each year, on the same date and hour. That is the reason why pilgrims ascend Mount Arafat each year and pray for forgiveness.

The First Murder on Earth

After reuniting, Adam and Eve (as) settled in the area where the city of Mecca now stands. Mecca is therefore also known as *Ummu'l-Qura*, the mother of all cities. In a relatively short amount of time, they had many children, mostly because Eve gave birth to multiple children in a single labor. Children born during the same labor were siblings and were forbidden from marrying one another. They could only marry those born to a separate labor.

Cain (*Kabil*) wanted to marry his sister. Abel (*Habil*) warned him that this was forbidden by the law and that he could only marry a girl born to a different labor. Cain would not hear any of it and insisted what he was trying to do was right. So, Abel made a proposal. They would both offer sacrifices to Allah to see which one of them was right.

At that time, people would offer sacrifices appropriate to their line of work and leave the sacrifice on a mountain top. They would wait for a certain period of time and check up on it. If the sacrifice was consumed by a fire sent down from the skies, it was accepted. Otherwise, it was not.

the prophetic chain full circle. What is referred to in the above hadith is therefore not the spirit of the Prophet (saw) but the Prophet (saw) in the flesh.

Abel was a shepherd by trade. He had a flock of sheep and chose his grandest, most well-fed ram as sacrifice. Cain was a farmer; and he set aside a bundle of his weakest sprouts of wheat to offer to Allah.

They waited a bit and set out on the mountain top to see what had become of their offerings. Abel's ram was gone but Cain's scrawny bunch of wheat sprouts was still there (Ibn Sad, 38: I, 36). He became enraged and killed Abel. The Qur'an recounts the incident:

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقْبِلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَلْ
مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ. لَئِن بَسَطْتَ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ
لَتَتَّقُنِي مَا أَنَا بِبَاسِطِ يَدِي إِلَيْكَ لِأَقْتُلَكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ. إِنِّي
أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبُوءَ بِإِثْمِي وَإِثْمِكَ فَتَكُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ.
فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الخَاسِرِينَ. فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا
يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُؤَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ قَالَ يَا وَيْلَتَا أَعَجَزْتُ أَنْ
أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَذَا الْغُرَابِ فَأُوَارِيَ سَوْءَةَ أَخِي فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ النَّادِمِينَ

“And recite to them the story of Adam’s two sons, when they both offered a sacrifice. And it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other. The latter said, ‘I will surely kill you.’ The former said, ‘Certainly, Allah only accepts from the righteous. If you should raise your hand against me to kill me - I shall not raise my hand against you to kill you. I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds. And I want you to shoulder my sin and your sin so you will be among the companions of the Fire.’⁴³ And that is the recompense of wrongdoers. And his

43. There are two issues to consider here. First is the question as to how a murderer can shoulder the sins of his victim, when the Quran says, “...and no-one shall bear another’s burden” (Al-Isra, 17: 15). This has been explained in a number of ways. A hadith says, “When two people hurl insults at one another, the person who started it takes the sin, unless the other person oversteps the boundaries” (Muslim, Birr, 69). In other words, as long as the victim does not go overboard in his insults, the instigator incurs both his sins for having started it and the sins of the other. When Abel says ‘my sin’, he is talking about the sin he would have incurred had he retaliated against Cain for trying to kill him. Take a case where one person strikes another with an intent to kill, the other fights back and they both wind up dead. The aggressor shoulders two counts of murder, while the defender one count. But if the defender refrains from striking back, he can avoid the sin of this single count of murder altogether. But the aggressor still shoulders two counts of murder and a double sin – one for killing an innocent person and two for starting something that led to his own death. Another interpretation is that when Abel says ‘my sin’, he may also be referring to the sin Cain is about to commit by murdering him; and when he says ‘your sin’, all the sins Cain has accumulated over a lifetime without repenting.

ego made him murder his brother, so he killed him and became among the losers. Then Allah sent a crow searching in the ground to show him how to hide the disgrace of his brother. He said, ‘Woe to me! Am I more helpless than a crow that I did not know how to hide my brother’s body?’ And he became of the regretful”

(Al-Ma’idah, 5: 27-31)



This is a story that compares a mind enlightened by the light of revelation with a mind fettered by the clutches of the ego. The mind has value and a place within revelation. A mind that accepts revelation as its guide arrives at wisdom. However, a mind that rejects revelation becomes exposed to the perils of the ego. The mind is a knife that can be used for many purposes. You can slice bread with it or stab someone to death. Cain’s mind took a stance against revelation; and it took him off the road and laid waste to his afterlife.

For people deprived of piety and sincerity, the mind poses a danger not only to themselves but also to others. As the story of Abel and Cain shows, it can even lure someone into murdering his own brother. However, as is evident in the case of Abel, a mind led by revelation shrouds the person in a fear of Allah, where one offers good advice even to those out to get them.

People gripped by the disease of jealousy are blind to what they have been blessed with and constantly covet what others have. Jealousy can make a person do the unthinkable. It makes the person wage an inner war against the will of Allah. However, it is a lose-lose situation that ends up bringing the person shame and an eternal remorse, as well as taking him to a fierce punishment that awaits. Again, the cure for this illness is to train and cleanse the ego that relentlessly commands evil (*nafsu’l-ammarah*) and turn it into a soul that is happy with whatever Allah has to give (*nafsu’l-mutmainnah*).

Abel and Cain have opposite personalities, similar to the contrast between an angel and the devil. Cain devilishly tries to point the finger at the other, whereas Abel conducts himself like an angel, showing no fear despite being on the verge of losing his life. Cain insists on his mistake like the devil, while Abel turns to Allah.

Secondly, just as it is wrong to wish for something bad to happen to oneself, it is equally wrong to wish bad for another person. So, why would a good man like Abel want Cain to commit a sin? There are two possible answers. One is Abel’s words are not meant literally. He did not want Cain to murder him. Much to the contrary, he wanted Cain to come to his senses and change his mind and chose those words only for effect – like egging on someone ‘to do something’, hoping he will back off. The other explanation is that while it is impermissible to want another person to commit a sin, it is permissible to wish for sinners to be punished. So understood, Abel would have meant, ‘I wish for neither you nor I to commit a sin but if you insist on going ahead, I would wish from God to duly punish you.’ But out of these two possible explanations, the first sound more reasonable. (Elmalili, III, 1654).

The Qur'an goes on to stress how grave a sin it is to murder someone for no reason, and the how great it is to save a person's life:

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

“Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless in return for another or for corruption in the land, it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. Whoever saves one soul, it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.” (Al-Ma'idah, 5: 32)

On the first murder -and fratricide- to take place in the history of humankind, the Prophet (saw) has the following words:

“Adam's son is given a portion of blame for every single innocent soul to be murdered on earth...for it was him who blazed the trail”. (Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 1; Muslim, Qasamah, 27)

The Messenger of Allah (saw) also says:

“A person who breaks new ground in good action receives a reward for himself, as well as a share of the rewards of others who follow his trail. It does not reduce their rewards in any way. However, a person who breaks ground in bad action incurs a sin for himself, as well as a share of the sins of others who follow his trail. It does not reduce their sins in any way”.

That shows that neither good nor bad actions necessarily end where they begin.

Ghazzali offers some evocative words in his *Ihya*:

وَطُوبَىٰ لِمَنْ مَاتَ وَمَاتَ مَعَهُ ذُنُوبُهُ
وَالْوَيْلُ الطَّوِيلُ لِمَنْ يَمُوتُ وَتَبَقِيَ ذُنُوبُهُ مِثِّي سَنَةٍ

“Fortunate is he whose sins die with him. Woe to the unfortunate soul whose sins live on for hundreds of years after his death.”

The Prophet (saw) has further said:

“There will come a time when there will be so many tribulations that a person seated will be better than the person who walks; and the person walking will be better than the person who runs.”

When Sad ibn Abi Waqqas (ra) asked, “What should I do, Messenger of Allah, is someone breaks into my house and tries to kill me?” the Prophet (saw) advised:

“...then be like Abel.” (Al-Tirmidhi, Fitan, 29/2194)

Islam orders the protection of five things: life, reason, religion, offspring and property. A person must do whatever is necessary to protect these things when they come under attack. However, while doing so, he must stick to the path of Islamic law. Yet, if a person finds himself in a situation where there is no other option than to either be the aggressor or the victim, then as the Noble Prophet (saw) advises, he must prefer to be the latter.

After Abel's death, Eve gave birth to Seth (as),⁴⁴ whose name means a 'blessing from Allah'. Seth (as) is one of those prophets not mentioned in the Qur'an. He received a 50-page revelation from Allah. On his deathbed, Adam (as) called Seth (as) to his side and taught him about the hours of day and night and the types of worship appropriate to each time. He also told him about the coming of the Great Flood.

Adam (as) passed away on a Friday. Angels descended to wash his corpse, wrap him in a shroud and bury him. Some sources say he lived a 1,000 years. Others suggest he passed away at the age of 930.

Lessons from the Life of Adam (as)

1. We must be cautious of and alert to the ploys of our archenemy Satan, who relentlessly encourages us to commit evil.
2. We must pay special attention to the need to train the ego and purify the heart in order to rid our souls of negative traits such as conceit, jealousy and impulsiveness, which otherwise may lead us to eternal misery.
3. Upon committing a sin, we must immediately repent just like Adam (as) did.
4. Even if we made no mistakes at all, we still need to repent to give voice to our inability to properly thank the Lord for all He has given us.
5. Judging by the 'forbidden tree' incident, sinners can regain their lost innocence through repentance.
6. Like Adam (as), we must invoke the name of our Prophet (saw) in our prayers; and keep him in our hearts and minds in good times and bad.
7. Like Abel, we must make sure that our spirit quashes our ego, so that we understand the mystery behind Allah's words that 'man was created in the best of forms' (*ahsani taqwim*).
8. We must always remember that a person who leads people to good will continue to receive a share of their rewards, and that a person who leads people to bad, will incur a share of their sins. While Abel broke new ground in good, Cane did so in evil.

44. Seth (as) is also known as Shis.

9. Ultimately, it teaches us that the human being has been honored as the best among creation.

In short, Adam (as) was:

- ...the first to live in both paradise and earth
- ...the first to dress
- ...the first to forget
- ...the first to blunder
- ...the first to repent
- ...the first prophet (he was also given a 10-page revelation)
- ...the first to struggle in the way of Allah
- ...the first to grieve for his children
- ...the first to greet another
- ...the first to till the land
- ...and the first human being

Peace be upon him...



REMORSE AND REPENTANCE

The world is a place of trial and human beings have therefore been given the capability to do both good and evil. Man's character takes shape according to whichever side of these capabilities he develops.

It is part of human nature to thank a person, even if it be in return for a favor as small as half a glass of water. This indicates the degree of gratitude we should have for the countless blessings that Allah has given us. Man would only dishonor himself, if he were to yield to his ego and turn a blind eye to all the things Allah has blessed him with.

Man sways towards sin, after he succumbs to his ego and loses the light of faith in his heart. Without moral support, his conscience loses its spiritual depth and ability to think clearly. He becomes gullible and vulnerable. Sins assume an affable appearance, like a sweet melody, and are committed without the slightest weight of concern.

The sins man commits as a result of his blind affection for the world damage his honor and dignity as a human being and darken his spirit.

Yet, man is born innocent and opens his eyes into the world free of guilt. Religion is a divine blessing to ensure that he retains that natural innocence as he matures. We need to keep this in mind to tear open the veil of ignorance that blocks our vision and feel the guilt of sin deep in our conscience. We need to remember it to awaken the sleeping emotions of virtue from within. It will then allow us to turn to Allah with hearts burning with remorse and eyes flooded with warm tears. This remorse is called *tawbah*. The prayers of forgiveness that overflow from the heart and raise palms to Allah, are called *istighfar*.



Allah (jj) is pleased with seeing his servants feel remorse and pray for forgiveness. That is because He carries the names Rahman and Rahim, the Merciful and the Compassionate.⁴⁵ He also says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ

45. *Rahman*: He who possesses a mercy unimaginable. *Rahim*: He who shows mercy and delivers that mercy to entire creation.

“Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 222)

Allah’s mercy and compassion for human beings is incomparably greater than even a mother’s love for her child. Allah does not want to punish man; but man deserves punishment if he stubbornly insists on injustice and ingratitude. According to the precedence *Rahman* and *Rahim* have over other Divine names, Allah’s mercy is much greater than His wrath, as is beautifully described in the hadith below:

“Think of a wayfarer who, while travelling on camelback in the middle of a desert, has his camel run off on him along with his food and drink; he then runs to and fro in search of it but to avail, and in despair, sees no other option than to lie down on the sand and wait for death to take hold of him...when suddenly he parts his eyelids and sees his camel right next to his feet. He then feels a happiness much greater than he could ever feel, wants to thank Allah, but jumbles his words in excitement, and says, ‘Allah...you are my servant and I am your lord’.

The satisfaction that Allah feels whenever one of you repents is far greater than that.” (Muslim, Tawbah, 7; Al-Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 49)

Everything in the universe is soaked up in Allah’s mercy.

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ

“My mercy encompasses all things.” (Al-Araf, 7: 156) The mercy that Allah has for human beings is unimaginable. The Prophet (saw) confirms that in a *hadith qudsi*, which reads:

“My mercy has definitely exceeded My wrath!” (Al-Bukhari, Tawhid, 15)

Because of that, the prophets persistently invited their people to repent.

Apart from prophets, no-one is innocent. Each person is flawed by nature and always runs the risk of falling into sin. Repentance is therefore key. The Qur’an even contains a chapter called ‘*Tawbah*’, which alone expressed the need for us to turn to Allah in remorse for our mistakes. The Qur’an mentions the word ‘*tawbah*’ more than eighty times. Again, in addition to hundreds of places where Allah promises He will forgive those who repent, the divine names ‘*Ghafur*’ (the Forgiver), ‘*Ghaffar*’ (the Persistently Forgiving) and their derivatives are mentioned nearly a hundred times. On each occasion, they encourage remorse and repentance; and they are coupled with the promise that Allah will forgive those who do.

Wisdom requires a feeling of guilt over a sin, while the conscience makes it necessary to ask Allah for forgiveness. Being carefree about a sin and not even realizing the need to turn away from it, is a symptom of a total failure of the heart and

a journey towards hell; and may Allah (jj) protect us all from that. His warning does not leave much to imagination:

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

“And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.”

(Al-Hujurat, 76: 11)

The Prophet (saw) also states:

“Remorse for a sin is repentance right there. After one repents for a sin, it is like he never committed it to begin with”. (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 30/4252; Suyuti, Jamiu’s-Saghir, II, 161).

However, with that said, a person should not delay repenting with a confidence that Allah will forgive him anyway. He should repent immediately, which is needed for the repentance to be accepted, as is indicated by the Qur’an:

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِنْ قَرِيبٍ فَأُولَئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

“The repentance accepted by Allah is only for those who do wrong in ignorance and then repent soon after. It is those to whom Allah will turn in forgiveness, and Allah is ever Knowing and Wise” (Al-Nisa, 4: 17)

And that is followed by a notice to those who listen to the devil and postpone repenting:

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّى إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْآنَ وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارًا أُولَئِكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

“But repentance is not accepted of him who continues to do evil deeds up until death comes to him and he says, ‘Now I repent’; or of those who die while they are disbelievers. For them We have prepared a painful punishment.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 18)

Some scholars have therefore said, “Catch up with repentance before death catches up with you”. (Munawi, Fayz’ul-Qadir, V, 65).

It is also not enough for just the tongue to express the remorse. It is necessary for the heart to quiver with guilt. One also needs to put in effort not to commit the same mistake again.

Rumi explains the state of mind needed for repentance to be genuine:

“Repent with a heart burning in the flames of remorse and moist eyes...for flowers bud only in sunny and wet soil.”

Remorse and repentance deliver both individuals and society to salvation. The Prophet (saw) offers us the outlook we should all adopt:

“If Muslims knew just how fierce Allah’s punishment was, they would lose hope in paradise. If non-Muslims knew just how vast Allah’s mercy was, they would have every hope of entering paradise.” (Muslim, Tawbah, 25)

Every Muslim should therefore live between fear and hope; so much so, that if the word got out that only one person was destined for hellfire, he should fear that person might be him. Contrarily, if he heard that only one person would enter paradise, he should be hopeful that he might be that person.

There are levels of fear, just as there are levels of love. Sinners fear Allah’s punishment, while saints fear losing His love.

It should be remembered that even prophets committed minor blunders. They suffered the anguish and remorse of those blunders and, in that way, were made to experience human vulnerability. That is because absolute superiority belongs only to Allah (jj). Only He transcends vulnerability.

The first prophet to repent was Adam (as). The Qur’an retells the words he and Eve pronounced at that moment:

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“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-Araf, 7: 23)

And their prayer offered a brilliant blueprint for their generations to follow.

Allah (jj) gives His servants the wonderful news that He will forgive them on the condition they accept His invitation to repent:

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

“Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful. And he who repents and does righteousness does indeed turn to Allah with accepted repentance.” (Al-Furqan, 25: 70-71)

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ
فَاسْتَعْفَرُوا لِدُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرِ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَى
مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ. أُولَئِكَ جَزَاءُ هُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ
تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ.

“And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves, remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah? - and do not knowingly persist in doing wrong. Their reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide eternally; and excellent is the reward of the righteous workers” (Al Imran, 3: 135-136)

The verse informs that pious souls do not insist on their sins and are quick to seize the ropes of repentance. It is because they are well aware that:

لَا صَغِيرَةً مَعَ الْإِضْرَارِ وَلَا كَبِيرَةً مَعَ الْإِسْتِغْفَارِ

“There is no such thing as a small sin that comes with insistence and no such thing as a great sin that comes with repentance”. The Qur’an tells us:

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Do they not know that it is Allah who accepts repentance from His servants and receives charities and that it is Allah who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful?” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 104)

قُلْ مَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ

“Say, ‘What would my Lord care for you if not for your supplication?’” (Al-Furqan, 25: 77)

What is important in prayer is piety, love and sincerity. Genuine prayers are expression of love. The above verse states that person gains value in the sight of Allah only through a genuine prayer made with love. Hence, one’s repentance must come deep from the heart. The Qur’an further says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحًا عَسَى
رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ

“O, you who have believed...repent to Allah with sincere repentance. Perhaps your Lord will remove from you your misdeeds”. (Al-Tahrim, 66: 8)

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ لِلَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِي اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“Except for those who repent, correct themselves, hold fast to Allah, and are sincere in their religion for Allah, for those will be with the believers. And Allah will give the believers a great reward.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 146)

وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ
أَنْ تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا عَظِيمًا

“Allah wants to accept your repentance, but those who follow their passions want you to digress into a great deviation.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 27)

Even if one tries his best to stay away from sin, he cannot be exempt from the duty of repenting, inasmuch as it is impossible for him to properly thank Allah for all that He has given. This applies to everyone. Even if one presumably managed to properly thank Allah, that itself would be a blessing that would require another show of gratitude. The debt of gratitude would regenerate itself forever.

But the fact is it is almost impossible for man to keep a distance from sinning altogether. It is part of his fabric. He has got to sin, realize how weak he is as a result and turn to Allah. How much he feels his nothingness compared to the Lord depends on the quality and depth of his prayer. The Prophet (saw) said:

كُلُّ بَنِي آدَمَ خَطَّاءٌ، وَخَيْرُ الْخَطَّائِينَ التَّوَّابُونَ

“The son of Adam sins every day...but the best of sinners is the one who repents.”
(Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 30/4251)

Not even prophets are immune to mistakes, however small they may be. They, too, have erred from time to time and have turned to their Lord in repentance. Again, the Prophet (saw) says:

“There are times when my heart becomes veiled...but I repent to Allah a hundred times a day.” (Muslim, Dhikr, 41; Abu Dawud, Witr, 26)

“By Allah, I pray more than seventy times a day to be forgiven.” (Al-Bukhari, Daawat, 3; Al-Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 47; Ibn Majah, Adab, 57)

Yet, the Prophet's (saw) repentances were not so much for a mistake than they were about gaining greater intimacy with the Lord and acquiring His pleasure. Also, because the Prophet (saw) was constantly progressing on the spiritual path, whenever he reached new heights, he would repent for the comparatively lower level he had been in before. He has taught believers a number of ways to repent. The most important of them is known as *sayyid'ul-istighfar*, or the king of repentances.

Shaddad ibn Aws (ra) narrates it from the Prophet (saw) himself:

"The best repentance is when a person says:

اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ رَبِّي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ خَلَقْتَنِي وَأَنَا عَبْدُكَ، وَأَنَا عَلَى
عَهْدِكَ وَوَعْدِكَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ، أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّ مَا صَنَعْتُ، أَبُوءُ لَكَ بِنِعْمَتِكَ
عَلَيَّ وَأَبُوءُ لَكَ بِذُنُوبِي فَاعْفِرْ لِي، فَإِنَّهُ لَا يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ

"Allah...You are my Lord and there is no god but You. I am Your slave and I remain true to the word and oath I have given You best as I can. I seek refuge in You from the evils of the mistakes I have wrought with my own hands. I thankfully pay homage to all the things You have blessed me with, hereby in Your presence. I admit to my sins and ask that You forgive me...for there is no-One else but You who can forgive my sins."

The Messenger of Allah (saw) went on to say:

"Whoever says this prayer sincerely from the bottom of his heart in the day and dies before nightfall, will enter paradise. Whoever says this prayer sincerely from the bottom of his heart in the evening and dies before dawn, will enter paradise." (Al-Bukhari, Daawat, 2, 16; Abu Dawud, Adab, 100-101; Al-Tirmidhi, Daawat, 15; Nasai, Istiadhah, 57)

We cannot imagine, let alone count, Allah's blessings. The Qur'an declares:

وَأَتَاكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا
تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ

"And He gave you from all you asked of Him. If you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them." (Ibrahim, 14: 34)

Prominent scholar Ata ibn Abi Rabah, who was able to see many of the Prophet's (saw) companions, relays an incident that offers a glimpse into the Prophet's (saw) awareness to repent:

"I once asked Aisha (ra) about an action by the Prophet's (saw) that she admired the most.

‘Did he ever do anything that was not admirable?’ she said. ‘But there was one night, when he came to my bed, laid down a bit and said, ‘Allow me to get up and worship my Lord for a while’.

I said, ‘Honestly, I would love to spend time with you but I would love it more for you to do what you wished’.

He then got up to take wudu. As he stood to pray, he began to weep. He wept so much that his chest quickly became bathed in tears. He kept on weeping as he bowed, and again as he prostrated. He wept some more as he raised his forehead from the ground. This continued all the way until Bilal (ra) called out the adhan for the dawn prayer. Bilal, too, noticed that the Prophet (saw) had cried and he could not help but ask:

“Why do you cry this much, Messenger of Allah, when all your past and future sins have already been forgiven?”

“Shouldn’t I be servant who properly thanks his Lord?” he replied. “By the name of Allah, I received such a revelation tonight, that shame on those who read it without contemplating it”. He then went on to recite:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي
الْأَلْبَابِ. الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ
السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding...who remember Allah while standing, sitting or lying on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying, ‘Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You above such a thing...protect us from the punishment of the Fire”

(Al Imran, 3: 190-191) (Ibn Hibban, II, 386)

With those words, the Prophet (saw) is telling us that blessings from Allah should increase the amount of gratitude we should feel, not decrease it.

The above verses stress the need to do three things: to contemplate the might and majesty of Allah (jj), to feel utterly helpless in the face of it, which naturally leads to a third – to seek refuge in Him in prayer and repentance.

The night these verses were revealed, the Prophet (saw) shed so many tears until dawn that they would have made the stars in the skies envious. The tears of believers are jewels of the night, lanterns in the dark grave and dews of the gardens of paradise.

Daybreak is the best time to repent. Allah tells us that people who will abound in eternal rewards will be those who revive their dawns:

كَأَنُورًا قَلِيلًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ

“They used to sleep but little of the night. And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness.” (Al-Dhariyat, 51: 17-18)

وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا

“And those who spend part of the night to their Lord prostrating and standing in prayer.” (Al-Furqan, 25: 64)

Just as the sun breaks through the night at dawn, repentances at that time tear open the darkness of sin and deliver us to the sunshine of divine compassion.

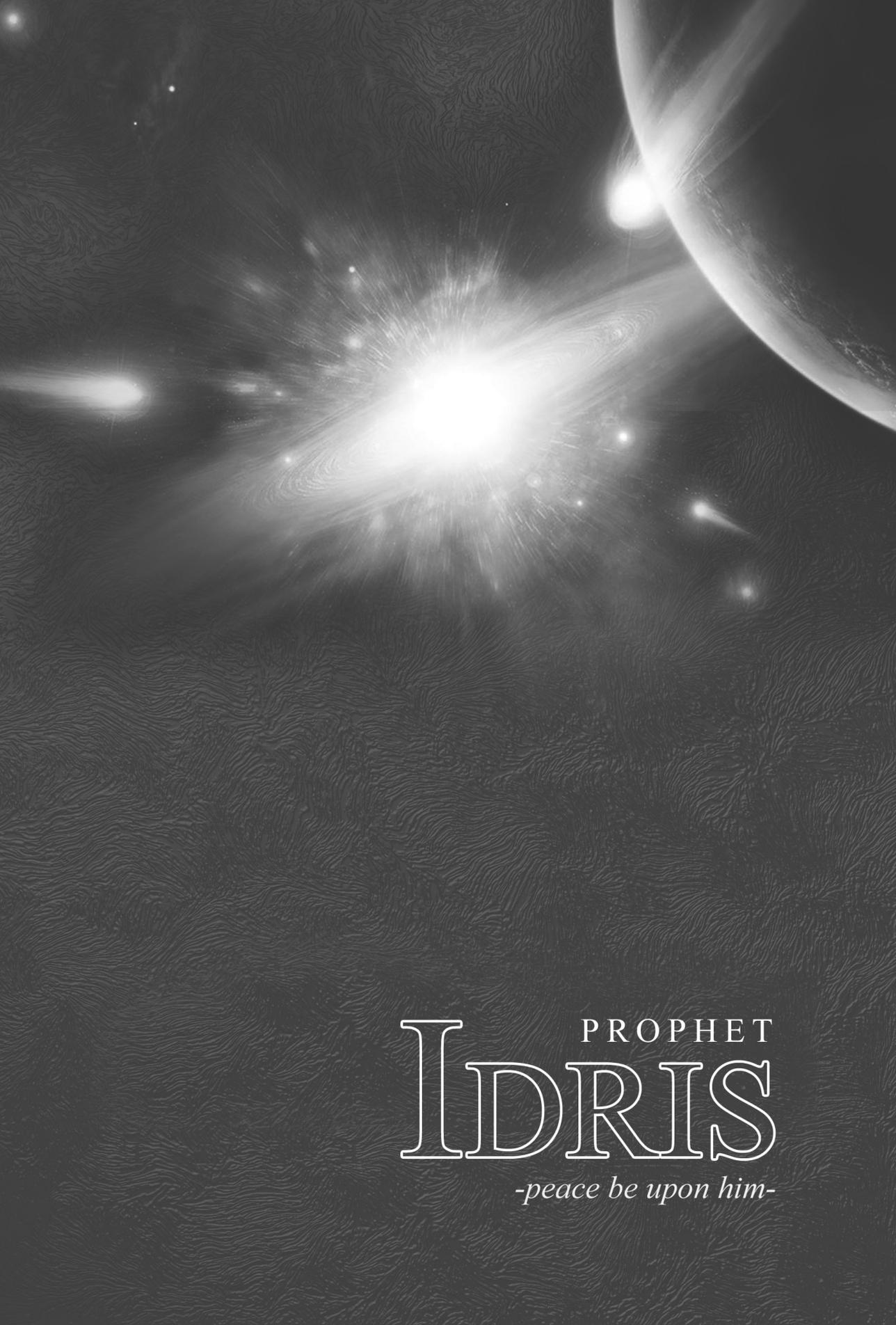
May the Almighty make our hearts alert and grant us an endless life of joy in His land of mercy.

Amin...



Prophet Adam





PROPHET
IDRIS

-peace be upon him-

The prophet who held the key to divine mysteries

IDRIS

-peace be upon him-

It has been narrated that Idris (as), also identified as Enoch, was born in Babylonia. He is the sixth great grandson of Adam (as).

Idris (as) engaged heavily in worship long before he was made a prophet. He would keep company with the righteous and earn his living as a tailor. In fact, the craft of tailoring begins with him.

Idris' (as) society were descendants of Cain and had become spiritually corrupt. They had deviated from the path shown by Seth (as) and abandoned the duty of servanthood. They had blurred the line between right and wrong, and would do the wrong believing it was right. So, to set them straight, Allah made Idris (as) a prophet and gave him a revelation of thirty pages. Idris (as) conveyed the edict to his people, which reminded them of the right and wrong.

Angels would come to visit Idris (as) in groups and have conversations with him. It is estimated that Idris (as) had around a thousand followers.

Idris (as) was known for his words of wisdom, some of which are:

"A wise person does not look at the faults of others or rub their mistakes in their faces. Neither does wealth make him arrogant and corrupt his morals".

"He who does not cleanse his soul has no brain".

"The love of the world and the love of the hereafter never come together in a single heart".

"When you pray, keep your intentions clean".

The Qur'an tells us that towards the end of his life, Idris (as) was raised to the heavens:

وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا

"And We raised him to a high place." (Maryam, 19: 57)

That 'high place' may be somewhere close to Allah or a place in paradise, as well as the fourth tier of the heavens. It is in fact reported in a *hadith*:

“When I went up to the fourth heaven during the Night Journey (Miraj), I came across a man. Jibril told me he was the prophet Idris and asked me to greet him. So, I greeted him; and he responded, saying, ‘Greetings righteous brother and righteous prophet!’” (Al-Bukhari, Badu’l-Khalq, 6; Muslim, Iman, 259-264)

Some scholars have suggested that Idris (as) is still in the heavens, and still alive.

The Qur’an praises Idris (as) for being loyal.

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

“And mention in the Book, Idris. Indeed, he was a man of truth and a prophet.” (Maryam, 19: 56)

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ
وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“And mention Ismail and Idris and Dhul-Kifl; all were of the patient. And We admitted them into Our mercy. Indeed, they were of the righteous.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 85-86)

Rumi compares Idris (as) to Jesus (as), who like him, was raised to the heavens:

“Through a tremendous effort to abstain from the world, Idris and Jesus became like angels. They reached a point where they could almost do without food and water. Because they resembled angels so much, they were raised to the heavens to join their kind.”

Patience and self-denial matured the souls of both Idris (as) and Jesus (as) to the point they were raised to the heavens like angels. That tells us that it is also possible for us to reach spiritual heights if we cleanse our egos and purify our hearts.

The prophets represent the zenith of spiritual progress; yet they have also set an example in material progress. Just as Adam (as) mastered the craft of agriculture, Idris (as) mastered the art of tailoring. Writing, which began with the first human being, had also developed a great deal in the time of Idris (as).

In short, Idris (as) was:

- ...a prophet who received pages of revelation
- ...a man praised in the Qur’an as upright and virtuous
- ...the patriarch of tailors
- ...raised to high ground
- ...a pillar of patience

...among the righteous
...graced with divine mercy
Peace be upon him...



THE HEART AND ITS SECRETS

Idris' (as) life exemplifies an admiration of Allah's majesty and shows us how a purified heart can open up to divine manifestations. It also gives us opportunity to see how man, who risks becoming worse than animals, may also surpass the rank of angels.

The heart is at the center of the spiritual and physical worlds. With the help of Allah, a purified and trained heart may allow a person to leave angels behind in spirit, even though physically, he may appear like any other human being.

At this point, it would be proper to provide some details on world of the heart, insofar as that was the defining characteristic of Idris (as).

Preparing for death and beyond should be man's most important duty and worry in this life. However, he cannot do so unless he knows the nature of the heart and ways of guiding it towards conduct that would steer it away from the dangers and evils that threaten it. This is a sound heart that is in fact also needed for happiness in this life.

Qalb, which is the Arabic term for heart, means to change color or convert something into its opposite. It is a fitting term, considering the heart constantly quivers between angelic and demonic tendencies, between good and evil.

The progress or demise of the heart is what determines the progress or demise of man, both individually and socially. Good morals and deeds burst from hearts overflowing with spirituality. That is what allows man to live up the reputation of having been created in the best of forms. (*ahsan-i taqwim*)

On the other hand, hearts dominated by the ego are lustful and delusional; and they give rise to evil conduct, including disbelief. These are cases where the heart has turned blind by having converted to the exact opposite reason of its existence. People whose hearts have this character slowly sink the person below the level of animals. The Qur'an states:

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا
يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ
كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ

“And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, eyes with which they do not see,

and ears with which they do not hear. Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless.” (Al-Araf, 7: 179)

Protecting the heart from the corrupting whispers of the ego and the devil is possible only through worshipping and remembering Allah, embodying good morals and attending spiritual circles. These give the heart *taqwa*; and that is the proper measure of superiority. Allah (jj) declares:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ

“Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you” (Al-Hujurat, 13)

But the state of *taqwa* also needs to be protected from the ever the risk of losing it. For that, a person needs to keep company with the righteous and attend their circles. These circles are very important in protecting the heart and giving it free reign to proceed on the spiritual path. Such circles virtually abound in inspirations from the prophets. Saints tell us that the very first spot to receive the inspiration Allah –the ultimate Inspirer- has provided his servants with, was the chest of the Prophet Muhammed (saw). From there, it was transferred to the righteous, from whom it is further transmitted to those who loved them and their company.

Even the modern science of social psychology accepts that human beings are open and exposed to external influences. Moods and traits are contagious and people constantly pick up habits from one another. This is never more so obvious than in the exchange of spiritual qualities. People who spend time with the righteous become like them. The Qur’an tells us that there is in fact a direct link between *taqwa* and accompanying righteous people.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“O you who have believed! Fear Allah and be with those who are righteous.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 119)

The most devastating loss and biggest crime is to be unable to protect the gem that is the heart. Those who let the devil steal their hearts will be snatched away to hellfire. The heart is the compass of truth. Without it, the ego loses direction and leads one astray. Whichever direction, good or bad, man inclines towards, is what defines his quality. The Prophet (saw) has said:

“Allah certainly does not look at your looks or wealth but at your hearts and deeds.” (Muslim, Birr, 34)

And according to their spiritual blend, hearts fall into five categories:

1. Hearts that are Stamped and Sealed

These hearts carry no spiritual quality whatsoever. They have sunk deep into an animalistic lifestyle and pleasures of the skin. They see life on earth as nothing other than eating, drinking and having fun. They are far removed from being able to discover the fine secrets Allah has etched into both man and the universe. They are the exact opposite of the hearts of prophets and saints. Bodies that cage these hearts up are no different to graves. Just as the flesh rots away in the grave, these hearts decay in the murky swamps of disbelief. A heart of this kind not only takes its holder but also those around him to a miserable end. The Qur'an says:

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Then do they not reflect upon the Qur'an, or are there locks upon their hearts?” (Muhammad, 47: 24)

People with such hearts are so ingrate and contradictory that they revel in disobeying Allah's commands, while relishing pleasures provided by no-One other than Allah. Allah (jj) describes them as:

صُمٌّ بُكْمٌ عُمِّي فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ

“Deaf, dumb and blind - so they will not return to the right path.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 18)

إِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمَعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تَسْمَعُ الصُّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا
وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ. وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَادِي الْعُمِّيِّ عَن ضَلَالَتِهِمْ إِنْ تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا
مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“Indeed, you will not make the dead hear, nor will you make the deaf hear the call when they have turned their backs. You cannot guide the blind away from their error. You will only make hear those who believe in Our verses; and it is those who are Muslims.” (Al-Naml, 27: 80-81)

Allah the Almighty further confirms that these hearts are stamped and sealed from being guided:

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى
أَبْصَارِهِمْ غَشَاوَةً وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

“Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil. And for them is a great punishment.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 7)

The above verse describes hearts that have been stamped and sealed from the truth and the good, for having severed all connections with human spirituality. Unsealing them is only up to Allah (jj) who they have long forgotten.

This contains a divine secret and wisdom that should send fear into all of us. Only Allah knows which hearts have been shut to salvation, not us. Allah (jj) guides whomever He wills, even if it be on the deathbed.

Although the Qur’an speaks of people whose hearts have been sealed, it is impossible to tell who these people may be, one by one. Regardless of the path a person may be travelling on at present, nobody can tell where he may end up. Take are the Pharaoh’s magicians who led a life on the wrong side before suddenly finding the truth. There are the likes of Korah and Balam ibn Baurah, who for almost a lifetime walked the path of the right only to end up on the wrong side. Muslims should therefore never misconstrue these verses and give up on people. They should instead be weary of slipping and be alert enough to always ask Allah to keep their hearts unshakably firm on the right path. Hearts that are neglected become harder to the truth than stone:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ
الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ
وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

“Then your hearts became hardened after that, like stones or even harder. For indeed, there are stones from which rivers burst forth, and there are some of them that split open and water comes out, and there are some that fall down for fear of Allah And Allah is not unaware of what you do!” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 74)

For that reason, Allah warns us to keep our hearts from becoming stamped and sealed to the truth:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

“And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient.” (Al-Hashr, 59: 19)

2. Hearts that are Diseased

These stand somewhere in between hearts that are healthy and hearts that are sealed. About them, the Qur’an says:

فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ

“In their hearts is disease, so Allah has increased their disease; and for them is a painful punishment because their lies.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 10)

People with diseased hearts are those who say they believe but do not lead a righteous life, as they are too weak to break the clutches of their ego. Faith in Allah has not settled properly in their hearts. They are like people writhing in agony due to an illness. They have neither a peace of mind nor a peace of heart. Their inner confusion reflects in a disorderly life; and the disorderliness of their lives ends up confusing them even more. Allah says:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا رَبَحَتِ تِجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ

“Those are the ones who have purchased error in exchange for guidance, so their transaction has brought no profit, nor were they guided.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 16)

Conceit, vanity, jealousy and the love of the world are among the flaws that prevent the heart from grasping the signs of the Lord. These are all diseases of the heart. People afflicted with these diseases can never take their share of unlocking the Qur’an’s mysteries and embody a conduct that Allah is pleased with, unless they undergo spiritual training to cleanse their egos. The Qur’an says it:

سَأَصْرِفُ عَنْ آيَاتِيَ الَّذِينَ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ

“I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant upon the earth without right.” (Al-Araf, 7: 146)

It is therefore clear that unlocking the secrets of the Qur’an, the cosmos and man are possible only if one sets out on the path of spiritual training. The Almighty states:

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا
أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن
تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

“So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts!” (Al-Hajj, 22: 46) This teaches us that reviving and curing hearts is done by gazing at the universe and the events

that unfold with the eye of the heart and taking lessons from the experiences of past people.

And these words of the Prophet (saw) awaken us to the need to keep our hearts healthy through a beautiful imagery:

“Be aware that the body has a piece of flesh. If it is well, so is the rest of the body; and if unwell, so is the rest. And that...is the heart.” (Al-Bukhari, Iman, 39)

Scholars have generally classified the diseases of the heart under the categories of faith or moral conduct. They have accordingly called deviances such as disbelief, hypocrisy, ignorance and doubt illnesses of faith, while referring to lust, desire to sin, cowardice, miserliness, showing off, conceit, jealousy and the love of the world as moral illnesses.

Essentially, the heart becomes ill as a result of following the desires of the ego, which itself stems from ignorance and weak faith. The more the sins there are, the more the illness grows; and this can ultimately lead to the heart becoming stamped and sealed.

A heart veiled by harmful thoughts and feelings becomes unable to see the truth; and even when it does, its vision is blurred. These negative emotions push the heart into doubt and make it blind. As a result, the heart loses the blood needed to believe and falls weak, while the body loses its capability to do good. A heart of this kind is not only unable to show love and respect for Allah (jj) and His Messenger (saw), it is also incapable of being a true servant.

Consequently, deeds that come out of diseased hearts lose their value in the sight of Allah. Hearts not enlightened by the ray of truth lose the awareness they need to detect the countless fine prints of divine majesty sprinkled throughout the universe.

3. Hearts that are Neglectful

One of the most serious diseases of the heart is neglect. It besieges the heart and holds it back from doing good. The Qur’an says the heart becomes infected by neglect as a result of forgetting the Lord:

وَلَا تُطِيعْ مَنْ أَغْمَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرْطًا

“And do not obey one whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his desire and whose affair is ever in neglect.” (Al-Kahf,

18: 28)

وَأَذْكُرُ رَبِّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ
بِالْعُدْوِ وَالْآصَالِ وَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

“And remember your Lord within yourself humbly and in fear without being too vocal, morning and night. And do not be among the heedless!” (Al-Araf, 7: 205)

The more the ignorance grows, the harder the heart becomes. Allah states:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

“Then woe to those whose hearts are hardened against remembering Allah. Those are in manifest error!” (Al-Zumar, 39: 22)

Elsewhere, the Qur’an warns that by forgetting the Lord, man becomes a plaything for Satan’s games, and gradually but recklessly loses the honor that makes him a human being:

وَإِخْوَانُهُمْ يَمُدُّونَهُمْ فِي الْغَيِّ ثُمَّ لَا يُقْصِرُونَ

“And the devils increase the error of their brothers; and do not hold back!”
(Al-Araf, 7: 202)

Deeds done with neglectful hearts are a waste and unaccepted by the Lord. These hearts have to undergo spiritual treatment. The cure lies in these:

a. Halal Food

It is only through the strength we have in our bodies that we are able to worship the Lord. While clean or halal food inspires the body, food that is doubtful or impermissible brings gloom. In developing the spirit, Sufi masters have stressed the importance of two things:

“Watch what goes inside your mouth when you eat, and what comes out of it when you speak”.

Abdulqadir Jilani also underlines the importance of a clean morsel in purifying the heart:

“Son...Eating what is *haram* kills the heart. There are morsels that enlighten your heart; and there are morsels that drown it in darkness. There are morsels that occupy you with the world; and there are morsels that engage you with the hereafter. There are morsels that make you a saint of both worlds and turn your heart to their Creator. Eating *haram* absorbs you in the world and makes sins appear charming. Eating *halal* makes the hereafter your sole concern and deeds of worship endearing. It takes your heart closer to your Lord. Only by knowing Allah can you know the

nature of food and its effects. The knowledge of Allah is written in the heart, not in books. The Creator reveals His knowledge to the heart. It is not something you can learn from the created. You may only learn once you affirm His Oneness and practice what He has taught.”

However, even when consuming *halal* food, one needs to avoid waste and observe a balance:

وَأْتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا.
إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا

“And give the relative his right, and also the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully. Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and Satan is ever ungrateful to his Lord.” (Al-Isra, 17: 26-27)

The Prophet (saw) also cautions:

إِنَّ مِنَ السَّرْفِ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ كُلَّ مَا اشْتَهَيْتَ

“It is surely waste for you to eat everything you feel like!” (Ibn Majah, Atimah, 51)

But offering generously to guests is advised and has been exempted from wastefulness.

b. Reflecting on the Qur’an

It is vital to reflect on the Qur’an, to think about the wisdoms behind its commands and bans, and take lessons from its stories. The purer our hearts, the more the Qur’an will inspire us. The Almighty says the Qur’an is the remedy for all spiritual illnesses that destroy the heart:

وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا

“And We send down of the Qur’an that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.” (al-Isra, 17: 82)

Abu Dharr (ra) recounts:

“I once asked the Messenger of Allah (saw) for some advice.

‘I advise you with *taqwa*’, he said, ‘for it is the first step of every action’. I then asked him for more advice, upon which he said:

“Keep on reading the Qur’an and remembering Allah. The Qur’an is a light for you on earth, and food for your travel to the skies”. (Ibn Hibban, II, 78)

On another occasion, the Prophet (saw) said:

“A person who reads and protects the Qur’an will be told in the hereafter, ‘Read and rise...read slowly and with poise as you did on earth...for your rank is as high as the last verse you recite’. (Abu Dawud, Witr, 20)

c. Worshipping with Concentration

To rid the heart of illnesses, it is essential to worship with focus and concentration (*khushuu*). Allah is uninterested in deeds that lack them:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ . الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

“So, shame on those who pray...but are heedless of their prayer.” (Al-Maun, 107: 4-5)

Scholar Elmalili Hamdi Yazir interprets the above as follows:

“The people mentioned are heedless to the importance of ritual prayer and do not take it as seriously as they should. This may mean a number of things:

- They do not care whether they pray or not.
- They do not observe the times of prayer; they delay it.
- They remain undisturbed by having stopped praying.
- They pray not with a sincere intent to seek the pleasure of the Lord but only to get ahead in the world.
- They pray in public but not in private. Even when they do, they are uncaring and far removed from the state of mind that makes one pray as if he is physically in God’s presence.” (*Hak Dini Kuran Dili*, IX, 6168)

The Qur’an also states:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ . الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

“The believers have certainly succeeded. They who are humbly focused during prayer.” (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 1-2)

Elsewhere, we are told how it is possible to pray with focus and concentration:

وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ .
الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

“And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, that is difficult except for those who are humbly focused...who are certain that they will meet their Lord and that they will return to Him.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 45-46)

Khushuu, which is the Arabic term for being focused while offering deeds of worship, has been defined as an inner action of the heart that is related to fear and shyness, as well as physical conduct where one finds peace by abandoning futile activity. Both are connected. *Khushuu* takes root inside the heart and transpires in bodily action. A person first becomes focused when, deep in the heart, he realizes that he is nothing in comparison to the majesty and might of Allah, and is overcome with feelings of reverence and respect. As a result, the body calms down, finds peace and stays put. While praying, the eyes do not wander around, but stare at the ground where the forehead is about to fall for the Lord in prostration.

A closer look shows that reaching that level of focus requires one to pray as if he is only moments away from dying and returning to Allah. Again, there must be total harmony between the heart and the body. Only a prayer of this sort can protect a person from evil and perversion.

Sufi Bahauddin Naqshbandi was once asked:

“How can a person find his focus while praying?”

“Through four things”, he answered. “Eating clean (*halal*) food, being mindful during ablution, awareness of being in Allah’s presence the moment the prayer begins and not forgetting Allah after the prayer ends.”

The Qur’an in fact says:

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ

“...those who are constant in their prayer” (Al-Ma’arij, 70: 23)

And elsewhere:

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ

“And those who give what they give with hearts that are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord.” (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 60)

أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ

“Do they not know that it is Allah who accepts repentance from His servants and receives charities?” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 104)

The verse tells us that just like ritual prayer, other deeds like charity must be offered with *khushuu* and without showing off. This fine point is also expressed in the hadith, ‘Do not let your left hand find out about what your right hand gives’. (Al-Bukhari, Adhan, 36)

d. Continuing Dhikr

The Qur’an mentions the word *dhikr* around 250 times. *Dhikr* is to constantly remember the Lord without forgetting Him for a single moment. We are commanded by the Qur’an to persistently remember our Lord day and night, while sitting down or lying in bed:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا. وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

“O you who have believed! Remember Allah with much remembrance. And exalt Him morning and afternoon” (Al-Ahzab, 33: 41-42)

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ

“...those who remember Allah while standing, sitting or lying on their sides...” (Al Imran, 3: 191)

The Prophet (saw) says that those ‘who remember Allah and shed tears in places out of sight’, will be shaded under the Lord’s Throne in the hereafter, on a day when there will be no other shade.⁴⁶

To purify the heart and raise its level, it is vital to continue doing *dhikr*. Believers will better appreciate its value in the afterlife. In fact, the Prophet (saw) tell us that:

لَمْ يَتَحَسَّرْ أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ سَاعَةٍ مَرَّتْ بِهِمْ لَمْ يَذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ تَعَالَىٰ فِيهَا

“The dwellers of paradise will never lament...except the times on earth that passed them by without them remembering Allah”. (Haythami, X, 73-74)

e. Reviving the Nights

The night is a dress of comfort tailored to the needs of life. It provides wonderful cover for those wishing to conceal themselves both physically and spiritually. The Almighty says:

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا

46. See, al-Bukhari, Adhan, 36; Muslim, Zakat, 91.

“And We made the night as clothing” (Al-Naba, 78: 10). The night is indeed a clothing man enshrouds himself in to turn to his inner world and drop the physical and mental stresses of the day. The day is unable to provide the spiritual and physical relief that night does. Those who do not appreciate the night can never understand the value of the day. Abusing the precious hours of the night with useless activities is nothing but to give up the peace that the morning otherwise brings.

For people of the heart, there is never a better time than the peace and quiet of night. It is necessary to spend a few hours of the night awake, to make the most of the inspirations it provides. On this, the Qur’an says:

تَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنِ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ. فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“They arise from their beds; implore their Lord in fear and aspiration, and spend from what We have provided them. And no soul can imagine the comforts what we have prepared for them...as reward for what they do.” (Al-Sajdah, 32: 16-17)

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَاسْجُدْ لَهُ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا

“And during the night, they prostrate to Him and exalt Him a long into the night.” (Al-Insan, 76: 26)

To gaze at the spiritual scenes which the night has to offer, one must put those hours to good use.

كَانُوا قَلِيلًا مِنَ اللَّيْلِ مَا يَهْجَعُونَ. وَبِالْأَسْحَارِ هُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ

“They used to sleep but little of the night. And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness.” (Al-Dhariyat, 51: 17-18)

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَكَ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا

“And also rise from sleep during the night. This is an additional prayer for you, so that perhaps your Lord will raise you to an honored position.” (al Isra, 79)

And with that above verse, the *tahajjud* or night prayer was made compulsory for the Prophet (saw), while highly recommended for his followers. It is a *sunnah*; and Allah praises those who keep it up:

وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَامًا

“And those who spend part of the night to their Lord prostrating and standing in prayer.” (Al-Furqan, 25: 64)

And elsewhere:

الَّذِي يَرَاكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ. وَتَقَلُّبِكَ فِي السَّاجِدِينَ

“It is He who sees you when you arise, and your movement among those who prostrate.” (Al-Shu'ara, 42: 218-219)

On that final verse, Qadi Baydawi says:

“When the five daily prayers were made compulsory and the night prayer advisory (*sunnah*), the Noble Prophet (saw) strolled out of his room and onto the streets to see how his companions were spending the night...only to hear their homes humming, like beehives, with the sounds of Qur'an and *dhikr*”. (*Anwar al-Tanzil*, IV, 111)

f. Keeping Company with the Righteous

This is vital not only to protect the heart but also to let it flourish on the spiritual path. The heart is prone to come under the influence of those it feels close to. That is when a transfer of character takes place. Those who are spiritually stronger affect the weaker others and become their source of inspiration. In other words, the kindness, compassion and finesse of righteous people are contagious and spread to those around. The reason as to why the companions were the best of all believers was no other than the fact they were privileged to be in the presence of the Prophet (saw) and be inspired by him. The Almighty says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“O you who have believed! fear Allah and be with those who are righteous.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 119)

The Prophet (saw) gives a wonderful analogy to stress the importance of company:

“The difference between a good and a bad friend is like that between a man carrying musk and another fanning bellows of smoke. The first will either offer you some musk or sell you some. As for the other, he will either burn you or your clothes...or at the very least, leave you stinking of soot.” (Al-Bukhari, Buyu', 38)

And he says that need does not end with death:

“Bury your dead with the righteous”. (Daylami, Musnad, I, 102)

Those who befriend the righteous, in time, become righteous themselves. Hanging around sinners, in turn, turns one into sinner. The heart is always exposed to the affects of the spiritual environment it is in. While each organ in the human

body has a will of its own, the heart has not. It cannot control its emotions and as a result, follows the direction of its surroundings.

Luqman's (as) advices to his son shed light on that:

"Son...keep company with scholars and try and not to leave their circles. For wisdom revives the heart, just as rain revives the soil". (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Zuhd, 551)

Female companions would warn their children when they neglected seeing the Prophet (saw) over a lengthy period of time. Huzayfa (ra) was told off by his mother for going just a few days without visiting the Prophet (saw) and attending his circle. Huzayfa (ra) recounts:

"My mum once asked me how long it had been since I last saw the Messenger of Allah (saw).

'A few days', I said. She became very angry and berated me. So, I said, 'Please, calm down. I will see the Messenger of Allah (saw) immediately, join him in prayer and ask him to pray for both you and me.'" (Al-Tirmidhi, Manaqib, 30; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, V, 391-2)

4. Hearts that Remember

Here, faith has seep deep inside the heart, allowing it to illuminate the body and the spirit to rein in the ego. The person begins to feel its joy. To get there, the Almighty encourages believers to continue with *dhikr*, which he calls the greatest of all deeds:

وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

"And the remembrance of Allah is far greater." (Al-Ankabut, 29:45)

وَأَذْكُرِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ وَتَبَتَّلْ إِلَيْهِ تَبْتِيلًا

"And remember the name of your Lord and devote yourself to Him with complete devotion." (Al-Muzzammil, 73: 8)

فَاذْكُرُونِي أَذْكُرْكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِي وَلَا تَكْفُرُونِ

"Remember Me and I will remember you. And be grateful to Me and do not deny Me." (Al-Baqarah, 2: 152)

Allah praises those who are able to arrive at the truth of *dhikr* and recognize it as being above all mortal pleasures. He commends them for not being fooled by the dazzle of the world and finding peace instead in remembering the Divine.

رَجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

“Men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah” (Al-Nur, 24: 37)

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Only in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort.” (Al-Ra'd, 13: 28)

Allah the Almighty compliment men and women engaged in *dhikr*, separately:

وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ

“Men who remember Allah often and women who do so.” (Al-Ahzab, 33: 35)

Repeated *dhikr* grows the flowers of divine love in the heart and turns it away from fleeting pleasures. The Prophet (saw) says:

“A sign of loving Allah is to love His remembrance”. (Suyuti, al-Jamiu's-Saghir, II, 52)

On the other hand, those who abstain from *dhikr* are in danger, as it is a sign of being remote from divine love.⁴⁷ The Qur'an warns:

وَمَنْ يَعِشْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ الرَّحْمَنِ نُقِيضْ لَهُ شَيْطَانًا فَهُوَ لَهُ قَرِينٌ.
وَأِنَّهُمْ لَيُضِدُّونَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ. حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَنَا
قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ بُعْدَ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ فَبِئْسَ الْقَرِينُ

“And whoever is blinded from remembrance of the Most Merciful, We appoint for him a devil and he is to him a companion. And indeed, the devils avert them from the way of guidance while they think that they are rightly guided. Until, when he comes to Us on the Day and says to his companion, “Oh, I wish there was between me and you the distance between the east and west - how wretched a companion.” (Al-Zukhruf, 43: 36-38)

We must therefore seize *dhikr* to protect ourselves from the devil, who tries to trip us over and drag us into the dark corridors of corruption. Good morals are possible only for those who fear and love Allah (jj) and constantly keep Him both on the mind and on the tongue.

Ali (kw) would say:

47. See, al-Zumar, 39: 22.

“What could be better than meetings that take place only to remember Allah (as) and His blessings? The Messenger of Allah (saw) would gather his companions in a circle and have them do *dhikr* altogether”.

Remembering Allah not only affects the spirit but also matter. As the Qur’an says:

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“So eat of that meat upon which the name of Allah has been mentioned, if you are believers in His verses.” (Al-An’am, 6: 118)



Dhikr comes in a number of forms. Allah does not command us to remember Him in one specific way or another. Each instance of *dhikr* bears a number of manifestations. Nevertheless, the best and most beautiful *dhikr* is the one called *ism-i azam*, which is also known as *lafzatullah* or Allah’s Name. It is believed that this is ‘Allah’. This Divine Name contains the essence of all names. It therefore has a special place among all ways of remembering Allah. For instance, if we were to remove the first letter ‘ا’, we get ‘للّٰه’, which means ‘for Allah’. Then, if we were to remove the first ‘ل’, we get ‘له’, which means ‘for Him’. If we were to remove the second ‘ل’, we get ‘ه’, which means ‘Him’. Each of these elements still refers to Allah.

Our Prophet (saw) states that even the wellbeing of the cosmos comes down to *dhikr*:

“The final hour will not come as long as there is a single person left on earth who says, ‘Allah, Allah.’” (Muslim, Iman, 234/148)

This is a *dhikr*, which distinguished people attach great importance to. The final hour will not strike, as long as there are people who continue with it. They are such exceptional people that the Almighty sustains the world through them. In whichever place they may be, that area becomes protected.

Another *dhikr* that the Prophet (saw) encourages us to say is *kalima-i tawhid* or ‘لا اله الا الله’, which means ‘there is no god but Allah’.

“Renew your faith by repeating *La ilaha ill’Allah*.” (Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, IV, 285/7657)

Despite having been given the entire world at his disposal, even Solomon (as) said:

“My kingdom is fleeting...but the kingdom that comes with repeating ‘there is no god but Allah’ is eternal”.

The above *dhikr* is a particularly important feature of *dhikr* circles, as indicated by Shaddad ibn Aws (ra):

“We were once with the Messenger of Allah (saw) when he asked, ‘*Are there any outsiders among us?*’. By outsiders, he meant Jews and Christians. We replied, ‘No, there are not’, to which he responded:

‘Then raise your hands and say, ‘La ilaha ill’Allah!’

We raised our hands and for a while repeated those words. The Messenger of Allah (as) then lowered his hands and prayed:

‘All thanks to You, My Lord. You sent me with those words, commanded me to do what is required by them....and promised me paradise in return. You never turn back on Your promise.’

The Messenger of Allah (saw) then turned to us and said:

‘Congratulations...for Allah has surely forgiven you all!’ (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, IV, 124)

In another hadith, the Prophet (saw) says:

“La ilaha ill’Allah are words that have great value in the sight of Allah. Whoever says them sincerely, will be placed in paradise. Whoever says them without meaning them, will have his life and property protected but will be called into account when he reunites with Allah”. (Haysami, Majmau’z-Zawaid, I, 26)

However, the Prophet (saw) underlines that the key to *dhikr* is to be constantly aware of being under Allah’s watch:

“Do not forget Allah and engage in futile talk...as chatting away without keeping Allah in mind hardens the heart. The person most distant from Allah is the hard-hearted.” (Al-Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 62)

Saying *kalima-i tawhid* is especially important in the moments before death.

“Whoever’s last words are La ilaha ill’Allah will enter paradise.” (Abu Dawud, Janaiz, 15-16/3116)

The Prophet (saw) would take into regard the spiritual levels of his companions when advising them with *dhikr*. His cousin, Umm Hani (ra), had once come to him and said, “I have become old and frail. Can you recommend me a deed of worship I can offer without having to get up?”

The Prophet (saw) told her, *“Say subhanallah, elhamdullillah and la ilaha ill’Allah a hundred times each”.* (Ibn Majah, Adab, 56; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, VI, 344).

In short, remembering Allah takes one out of the darkness of forgetfulness into love, which is the only means to reunite with the Lord. The quality of our reunion

with the Lord in the afterlife depends on the frequency in which we remembered Him here. We must therefore pay close attention to the splendor of the *dhikr* that Islam has commanded us with. The fruits of remembering Allah are reaped in the heart, which goes to explain why saints have approached their environments with great love. For them, each physical experience is a spiritual window that opens to Allah. After all, there are as many roads that lead to Allah as the number of breaths all creatures take.

5. Hearts that are Alive

These hearts belong to prophets and saints, in whom a number of Allah's attributes become manifest. Hearts are revived by becoming soaked in the Prophet's (as) morals as taught by the Qur'an.

Saint Najmaddin Kubra, who passed away during the 11th century, once attended the funeral of a righteous person. As he stood by his grave to pray for the deceased, he smiled. His students asked him why. At first, Najmaddin Kubra did not answer. However, when they insisted, he said:

“Normally, the alive prays for the dead. In this case, however, the man doing the praying has a weak heart, while the heart of the dead is well and truly alive. I was taken aback by noticing that and could not help but smile.”

A heart that remembers the Almighty comes under His protection. That is when it begins a journey towards the land of mystery. The truth of matter, the human being and the universe then slowly begins to unravel.

The Almighty declares:

وَمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ بِالَّتِي تُقَرِّبُكُمْ عِندَنَا زُلْفَىٰ إِلَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ
صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ جَزَاءُ الضَّعْفِ بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَهُمْ فِي الْغُرَفَاتِ آمِنُونَ

“And it is not your wealth or your children that bring you nearer to Us in position, but it is by being one who believes and does righteous deeds. For them there will be the double reward for what they did, and they will be in the upper chambers of paradise, safe and secure.” (Saba, 34: 37)

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, it is stated:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ. إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

“The Day when wealth or children will not benefit anyone. But except for he who comes to Allah with a sound heart” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 88-89)

Therefore, only a purified heart takes one closer to Allah. This is essential to all deeds of worship. As the Qur'an says:

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ

“Their meat will not reach Allah, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is your piety.” (Al-Hajj, 22: 37)

Divine treasures and secrets are there for human beings to take. Allah (jj) has wished to make Himself known through man. A person therefore becomes a human being in the truest sense only when he becomes aware of the dignity and honor he has been endowed with.

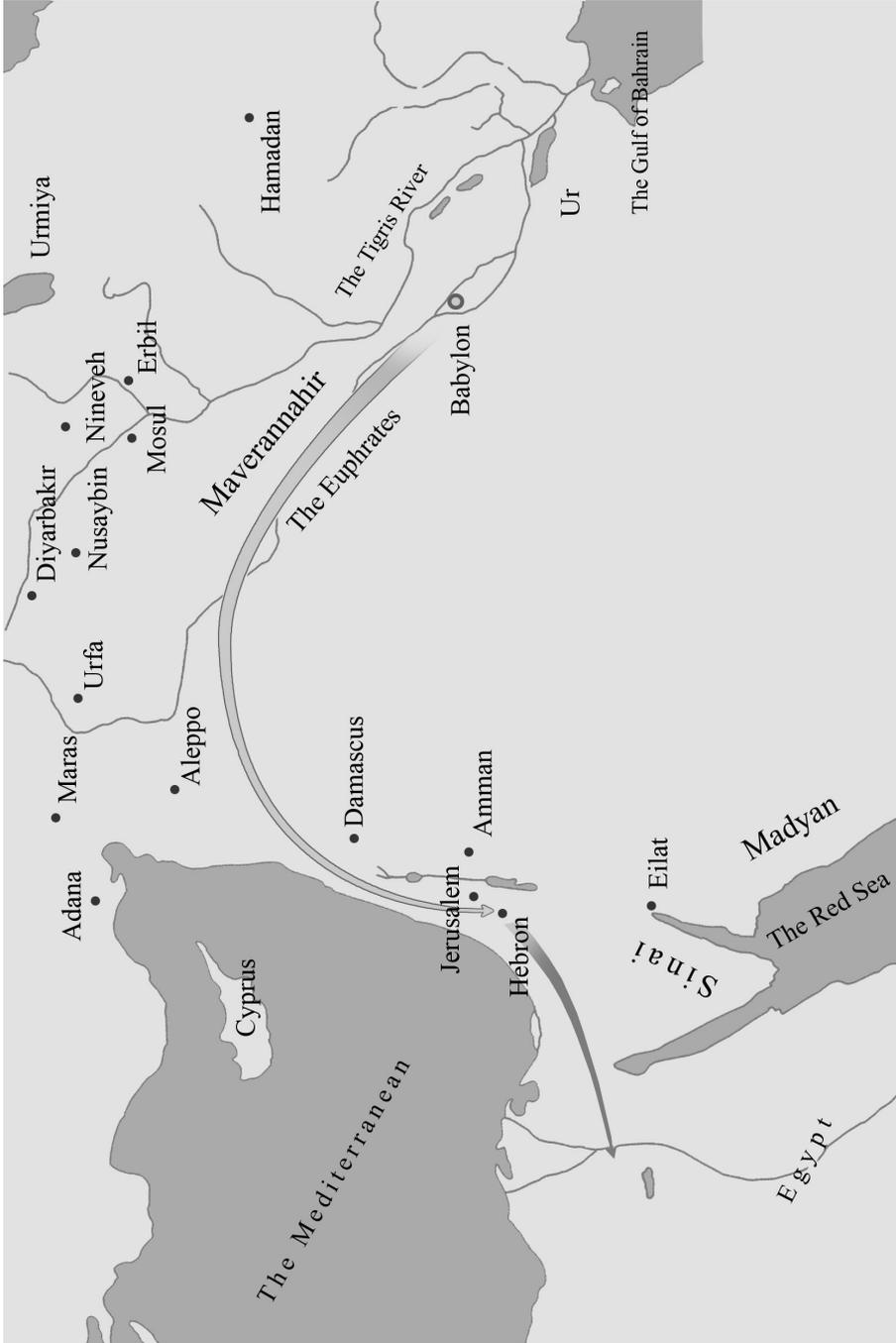
We need revived hearts to ensure we enjoy the real pleasures of life and give our final breaths with complete faith in the Lord.

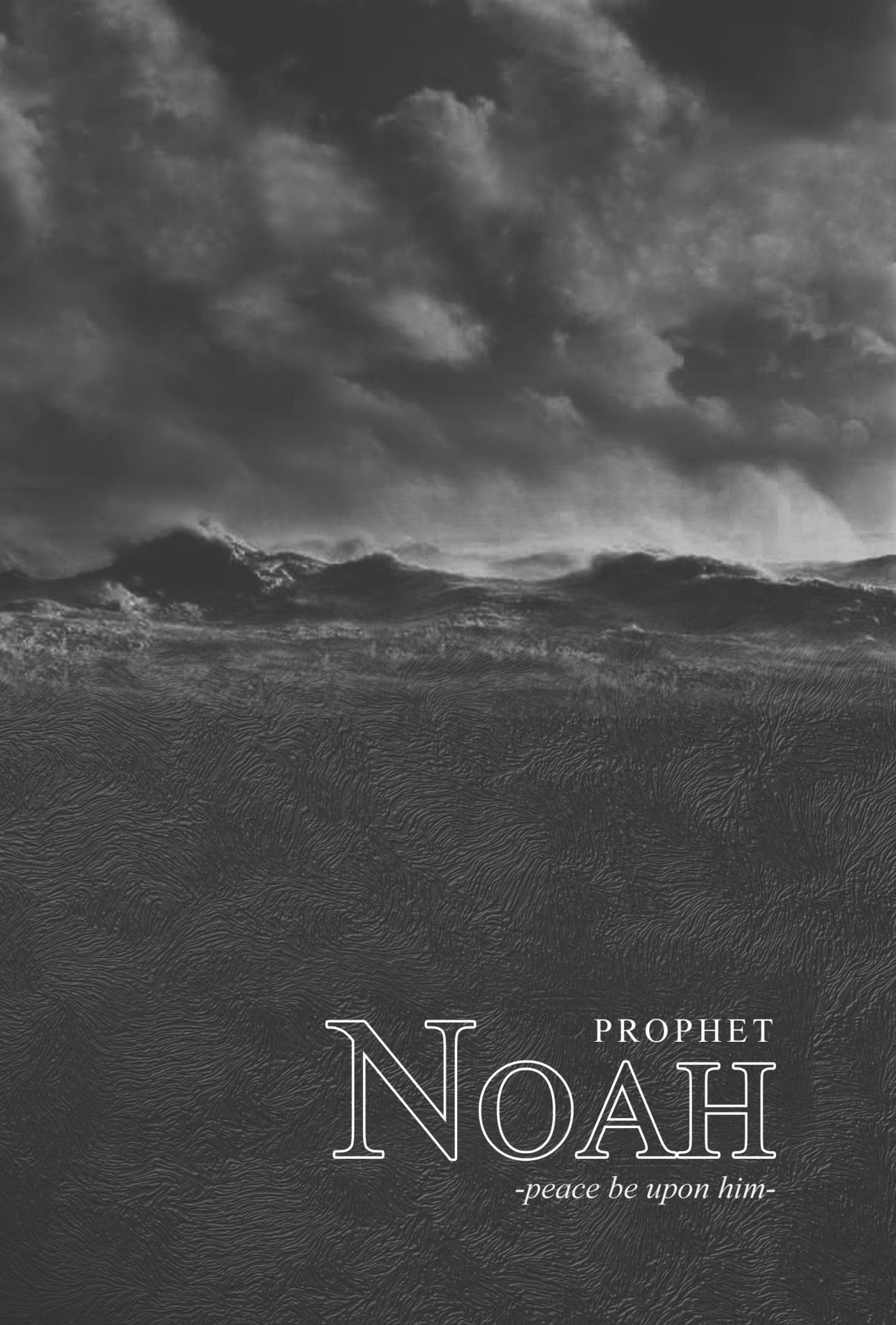
May Allah (jj) grant us all hearts of this kind before we die and fill it with His remembrance.

Amin.



Prophet Idris





PROPHET
NOAH

-peace be upon him-

The prophet whose flood washed the earth away of disbelief

NOAH

-peace be upon him-

Noah (as) features prominently both in the Qur'an and the Prophet's (saw) hadith. He is among the *ulu'l-azm* prophets.⁴⁸ The Qur'an mentions him exactly 43 times, while the 71st chapter is named after him. Due to the Great Flood, he is considered the 'Second Father' of humankind.

After Idris (as) was raised to the heavens, people lost their way and began worshipping idols and statues. Noah (as) was then sent as a prophet.

Reports suggest his name at birth may have been Yashkur, Sakin or Abdulghaffar. He is known as *Najiyullah*, the one Allah has saved, and *Sheikhu'l-Anbiya*, the prophet with the longest lifespan.

Idris (as) had a number of followers. Among them, Wadd, Suwa, Yagus, Yauq and Nasr continued to spread his message and were highly respected because of it. However, after they passed away, people yielded to the devil's whispers and made statues in their images to remember them. A short time later, they found themselves worshipping the statues. They believed the statues held some divine power.

Ibn Abbas (ra) explains:

"The idols that the people of Noah (as) worshipped were later picked up by the Arabs. The idol known as Wadd was at Dumatu'l-Jandal and belonged to the Kalb tribe. Suwa belonged to Huzayl. The Murad tribe had Yaghus until Banu Ghutayf seized it and installed it at a place called Jurf close to Saba. Yauq was in the possession of Hamadan, while Nasr was with Himyar. These idols were in fact named after righteous people. When they passed away, Satan enticed people to, '...make statutes in their loving memory'. People yielded. They did not worship the statues at first. However, in time, all was forgotten and ignorant masses began worshipping them".

(Al-Bukhari, Tafsir, 71/1)

Noah (as) was born to a clan near Kufa, which remained firm on the true path and kept its distance from paganism. He was both a shepherd and a trader. The chief of the people was a tyrant called Darmasil, who was a descendent of Cain. Each tribe

48. *Ulu'l Azm* are prophets of the highest rank: Prophet Muhammed Mustafa (saw), Abraham (as), Moses (as), Jesus, (as), Adam (as) and Noah (as).

had its own idol and each idol had a servant. Noah (as) found this practice laughable. Along with paganism, immorality had also become a problem.

The Characteristics of Noah's (as) People

1. They were pagans. The Qur'an says:

وَقَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلَا سُوَاعًا وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا

“And they said, ‘Never leave your gods and never leave Wadd or Suwa’ or Yaghuth and Ya’uq and Nasr!’” (Nuh, 71: 23)

Throughout history, idols and idolaters have always lead people astray. Statues once made to remember people have in time turned to objects of worship.



Making idols to represent the so-called deities men believe in and worship has its roots in anthropomorphism, which is to ascribe human traits to Allah. This belief leads people to worship their own products and eventually to paganism. Yet, religions based on *tawhid* stress that God transcends all images and representation. This belief takes a person away from physical matter into abstract meanings and encourages him to try and grasp the spiritual truth behind the appearance of things. However, lazy minds recoil from attempting to reach this higher plane and take the easy way out. They mistakenly try to imagine and represent God in the narrow confines of their physical thoughts. Invariably, this has turned people into pagans.

Islam eliminates this tendency in man by banning all attempts to liken God to anything physical. To prevent man from transforming the abstract into a tangible object and worshipping it, it does not condone images and statues. These come with another harm in that they limit imagination and blunt the ability to think about and grasp higher, abstract truths.

The Prophet (saw) had even banned people from visiting graves, as many of the practices of the time would veer people into the domain of grave worshipping. The ban was lifted only when the belief in the Oneness of Allah became well entrenched in people's hearts:

“I had forbidden you from visiting graves...but that is now no more”. (Muslim, Janaiz, 106)

“Visit graves if you wish...for it will remind you of the afterlife”. (Al-Tirmidhi, Janaiz, 60)

Thus, visiting graves has been recommended to the extent that it helps remind us of death and gives us opportunity to send presents to the deceased by reciting the Qur'an and donating its rewards to them.

But it must be borne in mind that when praying by the graves of spiritual elders, one must only ask Allah (jj). Asking from the people in the grave would otherwise take a person to idolatry. That was how it all began with the people of Noah (as).

As the Almighty does not resemble any created being, He transcends all shape and dimension. Islam refers to this attribute as *mukhalafatun'lil-hawadith*, the opposite of all things created. Sheikh Shibli says:

“The moment you think you have grasped the Lord and properly understood him, those thoughts are returned to you. That is because those thoughts are nothing but the whims you have fabricated. Like you, they are created.”

Here, Sheikh Shibli draws attention to the need to distinguish what is created from what is not; and that there is no other way to recognize Allah than through the qualities Allah has told human beings about. Putting aside revelation and trying to think of Allah as something tangible would only lead man to dismay.

Scholars have said:

كُلُّ مَا خَطَرَ بِبَالِكَ وَاللَّهُ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ

“Allah is beyond whatever thought of Him that crosses your mind”.

The human mind is created. It is impossible to picture the Creator through it. When Moses (as) spoke to Allah, he felt ecstatic and insisted to take it a step further by seeing Him. The Qur'an recounts:

قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنظُرْ إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَانِي وَلَكِنِ انظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ
فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَانِي

“He said, ‘My Lord, show me Yourself so I may look at You.’ Allah said, ‘You cannot see Me but look at the mountain: if it should remain in place, then you will see Me.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 143)

Only a portion of people who will enter paradise will be able to see Allah.

2. The Qur'an describes the people of Noah (as) as tyrants and transgressors:

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا هُمْ أَظْلَمَ وَأَطْغَى

“They were unjust and oppressing.” (Al-Najm, 53: 52)

3. They were sinners.

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ

“They were people who were defiantly disobedient.” (Al-Dhariyat, 51: 46)

4. They were depraved and wicked.

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ

“They were people of evil.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 77)

5. They had lost their moral compass and feelings of compassion.

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا عَمِينَ

“They were blind people.” (Al-Araf, 7: 64)

6. Noah’s (as) people were extremely stubborn. They had become so used to disbelief and evil that doggedness had become their principle. Remarkably, the Prophet (saw) tells us that they will continue to be stubborn even in the hereafter, when they will deny that a messenger had been sent to them:

“In the hereafter, Noah (as) and his people will come to the presence of Allah (jj)... and Allah (jj) will ask Noah (as):

‘Did you deliver the message?’

‘Yes, I did My Lord’, Noah (as) will reply.

Allah (jj) will then ask his people:

‘Did Noah deliver you the message?’

‘No’, they will say. ‘A prophet never came to us!’

Allah (jj) will then ask Noah (as):

‘Is there anyone who can testify for you?’

‘The Prophet Muhammed (saw) and his followers can’, he will say. They will testify for him”.

The person who narrated the above hadith adds:

“The Qur’an, in fact, tells us that the Prophet (saw) and his followers will testify for other prophets and their followers:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ
وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

“And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 143)

(Al-Bukhari, Tafsir, 2/13, Anbiya, 3; Al-Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 2/2965)

So, the Almighty sent Noah (as) to a people who were completely led astray.

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرْ قَوْمَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“Indeed, We sent Noah to his people, saying, ‘Warn your people before there comes to them a painful punishment.’” (Nuh, 71: 1)

The Long Struggle

Noah (as) was fifty years old, when Jibril (as) informed him of his duty.

“Go to Darmasil and his people...and set them back on the path of *tawhid*”, he said.

Noah (as) gave his oath that he would convey the message of Allah’s Oneness until the day he died. The Qur’an states:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُوحٍ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا

“And remember when We took from the prophets their covenant and from you and from Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus, the son of Mary; and We took from them a solemn covenant.” (Al-Ahzab, 33: 7)

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ. أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا
إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمِ أَلِيمٍ

“And We had certainly sent Noah to his people, saying, ‘Indeed, I am to you a clear warner. That you not worship except Allah. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a painful day.’” (Hud, 11: 25-26)

Noah (as) spread the message in secret at first and later, out in the open. Even though he had earned the love and respect of his people as a young man, things quickly changed once he became a prophet. That love turned to animosity and only a few people followed him.

It was not long before the king of the people, Darmasil, found out about Noah’s (as) mission.

“Who is this person?” he asked his men.

“He is one of us”, they said, “but he does not follow our ways. He is Noah, the son of Lamek. He used to be a smart man. But then he went insane. He thinks he is a prophet. Not only that, he is also against our idols!”

The outraged Darmasil summoned Noah (as).

“Shame on you! Are you denying our idols?” he exclaimed, before mocking Noah (as) for the fact that all his followers were poor men of little rank. The Qur’an quotes:

قَالُوا أَنْتُمْ مِنْ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْأَرْذَلُونَ

“They said, ‘Should we believe you while you are followed by the lowest class of people?’” (Al-Shu’ara, 42: 111)

They were a mob of tyrants, who took pride in looking down on the weak and poor. Nevertheless, Noah (as) defended them with the fervor in which he defended his mission. He said:

وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“I will not banish those who believe!” (Al-Shu’ara, 42: 14)

وَيَا قَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَالًا إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا
بِطَارِدِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ
وَيَا قَوْمِ مَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

“And O my people, I ask not of you for it any wealth. My reward is not but from Allah. And I am not one to drive away those who have believed. Indeed, they will meet their Lord, but I see that you are a people behaving ignorantly. And O my people, who would protect me from Allah if I drove them away? Will you not be reminded?” (Hud, 11: 29-30)

Darmasil eventually died and was succeeded by his son, Navlin, who turned out to be an even greater tyrant than his father. Noah (as) continued to convey his message. He was mocked, thrown dirt on and even beaten up. They once choked him until they thought he was dead. When Noah (as) regained consciousness, he (as) prayed:

“Forgive my people, my Lord...for they do not know what they are doing.” He picked himself up and returned to the people who attacked him; and once again, called them to the path of Allah. (Ibn Hanbal, az-Zuhd, p. 50; Ibn Asir, al-Kamil, I, 69).

Despite his ordeals, Noah (as) displayed tremendous patience. At times, as a blessing from Allah, Jibril (as) would personally treat his wounds. The pagans would call out:

“Shame on you, Noah! Will you still not give up even after our insults and beatings?”

“I am no fool”, Noah (as) would say. “Your forefathers are being punished now. Do not make the same mistake! And if you do, you will not be able to harm me!”

That is because people are scared of two things:

1. Being harmed by others
2. Losing their privileges.

In response to the first fear, Noah (as) would say:

“I do not fear any harm from you. I rely only on my Lord!”

And for the second, he would say:

“In return for what I call you to, I do not want any payment”.

The Qur’an states:

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى
رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ. فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

“And I do not ask you for it any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds. So fear Allah and obey me.” (Al-Shu’ara, 42: 109-110)

But only a handful of people took note of his call. His sons Sam, Ham and Yafes did but Kenan did not. Noah (as) suffered a lot of abuse and even torture at the hands of his people. He kept patient for a total of 950 years. When he felt he could do more, he pleaded to Allah for help.



There are a number of reasons as to why some communities resisted their prophets’ call to *tawhid*.

1. The religion sent by Allah comes with belief in the afterlife where all deeds, good and bad, will be judged. People are not allowed to do in this life as they wish. They have to regulate their activities in line with the divine order.

In fact, the first news that alarmed the pagans of Mecca was the afterlife. They called it the ‘great news’. It seriously unsettled them, as recounted by the Qur’an:

عَمَّ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ. عَنِ النَّبِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ. الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْتَلِفُونَ

“About what are they asking one another? About the great news...that over which they disagree.” (Al-Naba, 78: 1-3)

In pagan societies, the strong always oppress the weak and exploit them according to their personal desires. There is no law that defends the rights of the weak. All advantages are with the strong. They are not called into account in this life. They like to believe the same will hold after they are dead. Belief in the afterlife disturbs them.

2. The religion sent by Allah comes with a disciplined life of worship. Paganism does not have that. While pagans do worship idols, they do so only because they believe it will come with immediate benefits in this life. They think the idols will protect them. So, they resist a lifestyle woven around a disciplined line of worship that tells them to work for a hereafter they do not wish to believe in to begin with.

3. In the religion sent by Allah, the prophets set an example to society with their impeccable conduct. Pagans feel they do not need to follow an example. They rather act according to their changing desires.

Humans naturally feel the need to believe. However, when they cannot find the truth or feel it is too difficult to act in line with the truth, they lean towards the false. Faith then withdraws deep into the subconscious and the soul is overtaken by disbelief. Only revelation can pull that faith back to the surface.

4. Due to their lavish lifestyles, rich and prominent pagans look down on prophets and their followers, who lead simple lives. They think they will lose their status by joining them.

5. Another reason as to why some pagans have been blocked to the truth is that their hearts are blinded by the worldly riches and estates they possess. The Qur'an states:

زُيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ
مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ ذَلِكَ
مَتَاعُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَبَآءِ

“Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire - of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return.” (Al Imran, 3: 14)

Meanwhile, Noah (as) continued to expose the evil intentions of his tribesmen and challenge them to do all they could:

وَأْتَلْ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ نُوحٍ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِن كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَقَامِي
وَتَذْكَيرِي بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَعَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ فَأَجْمِعُوا أَمْرَكُمْ وَشُرَكَاءَكُمْ
ثُمَّ لَا يَكُنْ أَمْرَكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ غُمَّةً ثُمَّ اقْضُوا إِلَيَّ وَلَا تُنظِرُونِ

“And recite to them the news of Noah, when he said to his people, “O my people, if my stance and my reminding of the signs of Allah has become burdensome upon you, then I have relied upon Allah. So resolve upon your plan and call upon your associates. Do not conceal your plan. Carry it out and do not give me any respite.” (Yunus, 12: 71)

Those words showed just how much Noah (as) had placed his trust in the Almighty.

Pagans Call for Divine Punishment

Noah (as) had no other followers than those who joined him during the first years of his call. The torments dished out by the pagans had begun to take their toll. The pagans had in fact become so arrogant that they dared Noah (as) to bring on divine punishment:

قَالُوا يَا نُوحُ قَدْ جَادَلْتَنَا فَأَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“They said, ‘O Noah, you have disputed us and been frequent in your dispute. So bring us what you threaten us with, if you are a man of truth’” (Hud, 11: 32)

Noah (as) responded by reminding them of Allah’s will:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ إِنْ شَاءَ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ. وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي إِنْ أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أُنصَحَ لَكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُغْوِيَكُمْ هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

“He said, ‘Allah will only bring it to you if He wills, and you will not leave Him helpless. And my advice will not benefit you if Allah should intend to put you in error. He is your Lord, and to Him you will be returned.’” (Hud, 11: 33-34)

Allah consoled him:

لَنْ يُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ آمَنَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ

“And it was revealed to Noah that, ‘No one will believe from your people except those who have already believed, so do not be distressed by what they have been doing.’” (Hud, 11: 36)

The first signs of the coming punishment began to arrive. The pagans were left without rain for forty years. Their livestock perished. Their women became barren. So, they pleaded to Noah (as) to pray for it all to end.

He said, "I will pray for you if you turn back on your ways."

فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفَّارًا. يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ
عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا. وَيُمْدِدْكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَيَبْنِيَنَّ وَيَجْعَلَ
لَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَلَ لَكُمْ أَنْهَارًا

"And said, 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send rain from the sky upon you in showers. And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and rivers.'" (Nuh, 71: 10-12)

Muqatil ibn Sulayman says that "...it was after the revelation of those verses that it became common to repent while praying for rain".

Abdullah ibn Abbas (ra) says, "Allah (jj) will protect the repentant from all kinds of sorrow. He will be given a way out of all troubles and be fed from where he least expects". (Al-Suyutu, *Jami' al-Saghir*, II, 141)

Noah (as) continued advising and warning his people:

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُونَ لِلَّهِ وَقَارًا. وَقَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ أَطْوَارًا.
أَلَمْ تَرَوْا كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا. وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ
فِيهِنَّ نُورًا وَجَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا. وَاللَّهُ أَنْبَتَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ نَبَاتًا.
ثُمَّ يُعِيدُكُمْ فِيهَا وَيُخْرِجُكُمْ إِخْرَاجًا. وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ
بَسَاطًا. لَتَسْلُكُوا مِنْهَا سُبُلًا فِجَاجًا

““What is the matter with you that you do not attribute to Allah due grandeur? While He has created you in stages? Do you not consider how Allah has created seven heavens in layers? And made the moon therein a reflected light and made the sun a burning lamp? And Allah has caused you to grow from the earth a progressive growth. Then He will return you into it and extract you another extraction. And Allah has made for you the earth an expanse. That you may follow therein roads of passage.”” (Nuh, 71: 13-20)

However, the pagans had no time for wisdom. So, their prophet prayed:

قَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ إِنَّهُمْ عَصَوْنِي وَاتَّبَعُوا مَنْ لَمْ يَزِدْهُ مَالُهُ وَوَلَدُهُ إِلَّا خَسَارًا.
وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا كَبِيرًا. وَقَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلَا سُوَاعًا وَلَا
يَعُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا. وَقَدْ أَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا ضَلَالًا

“Noah said, ‘My Lord, indeed they have disobeyed me and followed him whose wealth and children will not increase him except in loss. And they conspired an immense conspiracy. And said, ‘Never leave your gods and never leave Wadd or Suwa’ or Yaghuth and Yauq and Nasr.’ And already they have misled many. And, my Lord, do not increase the wrongdoers except in error.” (Nuh, 71: 21-24)



One day, a man pointed at Noah (as) and told his son next to him, “...not to believe in what he is saying.” The son grabbed his father’s walking stick and struck Noah (as) across his head, leaving him bloodied and bruised. Noah (as) raised his hands to the sky and prayed, “Lord...guide them if You wish well for them. If not, give me patience until the day You deliver Your verdict. For You are the best of judges!”

However, when all options were exhausted and the assaults became unbearable, Noah (as) prayed:

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَغْلُوبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ

“So he called on his Lord... ‘I am defeated, so help me!’” (Al-Qamar, 54: 10)

Despite spending an incredible number of years calling his people to the truth, Noah (as) had only a few followers. On their deathbeds, the pagans would tell their sons and daughters not to yield to Noah (as), to fight him and his followers. The first thing fathers would command their adolescent children would be ‘not to believe in Noah for as long as you live!’ They had incurably become resistant to the truth. They were so ingrained in their ways that Noah (as) felt compelled to pray:

وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَيَّ الْأَرْضَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا. إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرَهُمْ
يُضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا. رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ
بَيْتِي مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًا

“My Lord, do not leave upon the earth from among the disbelievers an inhabitant. Indeed, if You leave them, they will mislead Your servants and not

beget except the wicked the disbeliever. My Lord, forgive me and my parents and whoever enters my house a believer and the believing men and women. And do not increase the wrongdoers except in destruction.” (Nuh, 71: 26-28)

After that prayer, Allah instructed him what to do:

وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبْنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ

“And construct the ship under Our observation and Our inspiration and do not address Me concerning those who have wronged. Indeed, they are to be drowned.” (Hud, 11: 37)

The pagans ridiculed Noah (as) as he began building the ship.

وَيَصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ وَكَلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ قَالَ إِنْ تَسَخَرُوا مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسَخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسَخَرُونَ. فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ
مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُقِيمٌ

“And he constructed the ship, and whenever an assembly of the eminent among his people passed by, they ridiculed him. He said, ‘If you ridicule us, then we will ridicule you just as you do. And you are going to know who will get a punishment disgraceful on earth and enduring in the hereafter.’” (Hud, 11: 38-39)

They even tried setting the ship on fire in the dark of night. They, of course, failed and blamed it on what they called ‘Noah’s magic!’. They would nonetheless pollute and vandalize the ship. However, they soon caught scabies and were forced to wipe dirt on their skin for cure. It was a divine warning for the worse to come. However, they would not pay attention.

The Great Flood

Noah (as) and his followers had built the ship from solid timber to weather rough seas. Reports say it was a three-decker steam ship that took two to four years to build. Ibn Abbas (ra) narrates that 80 people boarded the ship. The chest that Jibril (as) had given to Adam (as) was also loaded on the ship and placed between the men and women. (Ibn Sad, 38: I, 41)

The Qur’an says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ قُلْنَا احْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ
وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ آمَنَ وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ

“And when Our command came and the oven overflowed, We said, ‘Load upon the ship of each two mates of each creature and your family, except those on whom the verdict has been given, and board whoever has believed.’ But none had believed with him, except a few.” (Hud, 11: 40)

The word *tannur* in the verse means, among other things, an oven or a furnace. Some scholars have therefore interpreted that passage to suggest that the ship had some kind of boiler that allowed it to run on steam.

The Qur’an also gives us information about those who boarded the ship:

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعِ الْفُلَكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحَيْنَا فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا
وَفَارَ التَّوَرُّ فَاسْلُكْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ
عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تُحَاطِبْنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُغْرَقُونَ

“So We inspired to him, ‘Construct the ship under Our observation, and Our inspiration, and when Our command comes and the oven overflows, put into the ship two mates from each creature and your family, except those for whom the decree of destruction has proceeded. And do not address Me concerning those who have wronged; indeed, they are to be drowned.’” (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 27)



There were also animals onboard. It is narrated that at first, Noah (as) did not want to take in snakes and scorpions out of fear they may harm the passengers. However, they assured him they will not harm anyone who mentioned his name. It has since been said that whoever reads the verse:

سَلَامٌ عَلَى نُوْحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ

“Peace upon Noah among the worlds” (Al-Saffat, 37: 79) with sincere intent, will protect one a scorpion or snake attack.

Once preparations were complete and all the passengers were onboard, Noah (as) began to see the signs of the coming flood. The Qur’an describes the initial stages as:

فَفَتَحْنَا أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَاءٍ مُنْهَمِرٍ. وَفَجَّرْنَا الْأَرْضَ
عُيُونًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَاءُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ

“Then we opened the gates of heaven with pouring down rain; and caused the earth to burst with springs, and the waters flooded for an event predestined.”

(Al-Qamar, 54: 11-12)

Noah's (as) son Kenan did not board the ship. His father made one last call but he would not listen. The Qur'an recounts their exchange:

وَنَادَى نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزِلٍ يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَبْ مَعَنَا وَلَا تَكُنْ
مَعَ الْكَافِرِينَ. قَالَ سَأْوِي إِلَىٰ جَبَلٍ يَعْصُمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ قَالَ
لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ

“And it sailed with all of them, through waves like mountains, and Noah called out to his son who was apart. ‘Come aboard with us, son, and do not remain with the disbelievers’. But he said, ‘I will take refuge on a mountain to protect me from the water.’ Noah said, ‘There is no protector today from the decree of Allah except for whom He gives mercy.’ And the waves came between them, and he was among the drowned.” (Hud, 11: 42-43)

When it became apparent that Kenan was not coming, Noah (as) prayed:

وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي وَإِنَّ
وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنْتَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِينَ

“...My Lord, indeed my son is of my family and indeed, Your promise is true; and You are the most just of judges!” (Hud, 11: 45)

And that happened to be Noah's (as) blunder. He had prayed for his pagan son while ill-wishing for his pagan tribesmen. Allah (jj) had forbidden him to pray for tyrants; and the warning followed:

قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ
لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنِّي أَعِظُكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ. قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ
أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُنْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“He said, ‘O Noah, indeed he is not of your family, indeed, he is one whose work was other than righteous, so do not ask Me about that which you have no knowledge. I advise you, lest you be among the ignorant.’ Noah said, ‘My Lord, I seek refuge in You from asking that of which I have no knowledge. And unless You forgive me and have mercy upon me, I will be among the losers.” (Hud, 11:

46-47)

It is also narrated that he began to be called Noah (as) after he repented in tears over that blunder and was subsequently comforted by Allah.

Noah (as) immediately turned back on his minor mistake through repentance. However, his son did not; and in the end:

وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمَغْرِقِينَ

“The waves came between them, and he was among the drowned.” (Hud, 11: 43)

Only Noah (as), his followers and the animals that boarded the ship received divine amnesty. The ship crashed waves as high as mountains. The Almighty says:

وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ

“And it sailed with them through waves like mountains.” (Hud, 11: 42)

تَجْرِي بِأَعْيُنِنَا جَزَاءً لِمَنْ كَانَ كُفِرًا. وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَاهَا آيَةً
فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ. فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذْرٍ

“Sailing before Our eyes as reward for he who had been denied. And We left it as a sign, so is there any who will remember? And how severe was My punishment and warning!” (Al-Qamar, 54: 14-16)

The Waters Recede

As the ship sailed, Noah (as) continued making a prayer he had been taught before flood:

فَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي نَجَّانَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ.
وَقُلِ رَبِّ أَنْزِلْنِي مُنْزَلًا مُبَارَكًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ

“And when you have boarded the ship, you and those with you, then say, ‘Praise to Allah who has saved us from the wrongdoing people. And say, ‘My Lord, let me land at a blessed landing place, and You are the best to accommodate us.’” (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 28-29)

It is narrated that the flood began on the first day of Rajab and the ship remained on water for the next six months. Then, the Almighty commanded:

وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكِ وَيَا سَمَاءُ أَقْلِعِي

“And it was said, ‘O earth, swallow your water, and O sky, withhold!’” (Hud, 11: 44)

The waters receded and on the 10th of Muharram, the ship docked on top of Mount Judi. Allah then revealed:

قِيلَ يَا نُوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ أُمَّمٍ مِّمَّنْ
مَعَكَ وَأُمَّمٍ سَنُنَتِّعُهُمْ ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُمْ مِنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“It was said, “O Noah, disembark in security from Us and blessings upon you and upon nations descending from those with you. But as for others, We will grant them enjoyment; then there will touch them from Us a painful punishment.” (Hud, 11: 48)

Noah (as) and the believers were thus saved. The Qur’an says:

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ

“So We delivered him and those with him on a laden ark.” (Al-Shu’ara, 42: 119)

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ خَلَائِفَ وَأَعْرَفْنَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا
فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنذَرِينَ

“And they denied him, so We saved him and those with him in the ship and made them successors, and We drowned those who denied Our signs. Then see how the end was of those who were warned.” (Yunus, 12: 73)

It was a disaster in this world and a greater torment to come...

The Almighty informs of the fate awaiting wrongdoers:

مِمَّا خَطِيئَاتِهِمْ أُعْرِقُوا فَأُدْخِلُوا نَارًا فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْصَارًا

“Because of their sins, they were drowned and put into the Fire, and they found not for themselves besides Allah any helper.” (Nuh, 71: 25)

Tafsir-i Qurtubi mentions a hadith narrated by Huseyin (ra):

“Any believer who recites these verses upon stepping aboard a ship:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“In the name of Allah is its course and its anchorage. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful.” (Hud, 11: 41)

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ
مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

“They have not appraised Allah with true appraisal, while the earth entirely will be within His grip on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens will be folded in His right hand. Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him,” (al-Zumar, 39: 67), will be free from the risk of drowning.” (Al-Qurtubi, IX, 37)

When mounting his horse or camel, our Prophet (saw) would say *Allah-u Akbar* three times and then read the below verse:

لَتَسْتَوُوا عَلَى ظُهُورِهِ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ إِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُولُوا
سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ وَإِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ

“That you may settle yourselves upon their backs and then remember the favor of your Lord when you have settled upon them and say. ‘Exalted is He who has subjected this to us, and we could not have otherwise subdued it. And indeed to our Lord we will surely return.’” (Al-Zukhruf, 43: 13-14), and then pray:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَسْأَلُكَ فِي سَفَرِنَا هَذَا الْبِرَّ وَالتَّقْوَى وَمِنَ الْعَمَلِ مَا تَرْضَى.
اللَّهُمَّ هَوِّنْ عَلَيْنَا سَفَرَنَا هَذَا وَاطْوِ عَنَّا بُعْدَهُ. اللَّهُمَّ أَنْتَ الصَّاحِبُ
فِي السَّفَرِ وَالْخَلِيفَةُ فِي الْأَهْلِ. اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ وَعْثَاءِ السَّفَرِ
وَكَاثِبَةِ الْمَنْظَرِ وَسَوْءِ الْمُنْقَلَبِ فِي الْمَالِ وَالْأَهْلِ

“Allah...we wish from you on this journey goodness and piety, and to be taken to deeds You will be pleased with. Allah...make our voyage easy and render the distant near. You are My aid on this trip and the Protector of those who I have left behind. Allah...I seek refuge in You from the hardships of journey, from encountering things that cause sorrow and finding My family and home in a bad state when I return.”

Upon returning from the journey, our Prophet (saw) would say the same prayer and add:

آيُونَ تَائِبُونَ عَابِدُونَ لِرَبِّنَا حَامِدُونَ

“We are returners who repent, serve and thank our Lord”. (Muslim. Hajj, 425; Abu Dawud, Jihad, 72)



Scholars say the Great Flood covered the entire earth. In his *Mir'at-i Kainat*, Nişancızade Muhyiddin Mehmed writes:

“After the ship docked, eighty people founded the city *Madinatu's-Samanin*. It was also called *Suq-i Samanin*. It was from this eighty people that mankind descended and multiplied for the second time.

Noah's (as) oldest son Sam was an intelligent and upright man. He received his father's blessings and succeeded him in leadership. It is believed that many righteous people descended from him. He is the father of Arabs and Persians.

Indians, Ethiopians and Africans descended from Noah's (as) other son, Ham; while it is reported that Turks, Slavs, Asians as well as Native Americans, who are believed to have crossed to the Americas from Asia through the Bering Strait, descended from his third son, Yafes.”

Time went by and the truth was once again forgotten. People once more began worshipping the sun, stars and statues of sorts.

Scholar Fakhruddin Razi suggests that the Qur'an informed the Prophet (saw) how Noah (as) struggled against his people for a total of 950 years, only to console him. There was perhaps no better example for patience than Noah (as).

The Day of Ashura

The ship safely landed on Mount Judi on the 10th of Muharram. Noah (as) and the believers disembarked and fasted that day as a show of thanks. From the leftover provisions, they cooked what is now known as *ashurah* or Noah's pudding. It is therefore *sunnah* to fast, give charity and pass around sweets on the 10th of Muharram.

Abu Hurayrah (ra) narrates these words from the Prophet (saw)

“*The most rewarding fast after Ramadan is the fasting during Allah's month, Muharram.*” (Muslim, Siyam, 202)

And Ali (kw) recounts the following:

“A man once came to the Messenger of Allah (saw) and inquired about the best month to fast after Ramadan.

“*If you wish to fast after Ramadan*”, the Prophet (saw) said, “*then fast during Muharram, for it is a month that belongs to Allah. That month contains a day in which the Lord accepted the repentance of a people before you; and He will accept the repentance of other people on that same day.*” (Al-Tirmidhi, Sawm, 40/741)

The day mentioned is the day of Ashura; and the people are the Israelites during the time of Moses (as). Jews therefore celebrate that day as a holiday. Because Moses

(as) fasted on the day of Ashura to give thanks to the Lord, so did certain factions of Jews.

It was on the day of Ashura that:

Adam (as) was forgiven,
 Noah (as) and his people disembarked the ship,
 Abraham (as) was saved from the fire,
 Moses (as) received the Torah,
 Joseph (as) was released from prison,
 Jacob (as) regained his vision,
 Job (as) was cured of his illness,
 Jonah (as) was freed from the belly of the fish,
 The Red Sea parted for the Israelites,
 David (as) was forgiven,
 Solomon (as) was given kingship,

And Muhammed Mustafa (saw) was pardoned for his past and future sins.

Ibn Abbas (as) recounts:

“When the Messenger of Allah (saw) entered Medina, he saw that the Jews were fasting. He asked the reason and they replied, ‘Today is great day. It was on this day that the Lord saved Moses and the children of Israel from their enemies and drowned the Pharaoh and his army in the sea. Moses fasted on this day to show his thanks; and so do we.’

The Messenger of Allah (saw) responded:

‘We are far closer to Moses (as) and more worthy of following him. There is no difference in what we believe, and we accept both Moses (as) and what he brought to his people.’ He then proceeded to fast that day, and the rest of the Muslims followed.”
 (Al-Bukhari, Sawm, 69; Anbiya, 22; Muslim, Siyam, 127/1130)

But in order not to resemble the Jews, the Prophet (saw) has advised to fast for at least two days in succession; either on the 9th and the 10th of the month or on the 10th and 11th. This shows that Muslims must differ from non-Muslims in all aspects of life, even in acts of worship.

Our mother Aisha (rha) has said, “Mecca’s Quraysh used to observe fasting on the day of Ashura during the age of ignorance. The Messenger of Allah (saw) also fasted on that day before he became a prophet.” (Al-Bukhari, Sawm, 69, Manaqib al-Ansar, 26, Tafsir, 2/24)

The Ashura fast was closely observed in Medina up until the Ramadan fasting became compulsory. It then became a voluntary deed, left up to choice. However, it

is understood from both Bukhari and Muslim that before fasting on Ramadan was revealed, the Ashura fast was considered a somewhat compulsory deed (*wajib*).

Aisha (rha) says:

“Before Ramadan, we used to fast on Ashura. Afterward, those who wished to fast, did so, while others did not.” (Al-Bukhari, Sawm, 69, Muslim, Siyam, 115)

A hadith regarding the day of Ashura states:

“If you begin fasting that day, complete it”. (Al-Bukhari, Sawm, 69)

The Main Reasons Behind the Destruction of Noah’s (as) People

1. They were disbelievers. They denied resurrection and being called into account in the afterlife.

2. They worshipped idols and encouraged the practice.

3. They looked down on Noah (as) and tormented him.

4. They were arrogant; they called poor people ‘a disgrace’. They belittled those who were wise, and hated being seen together with the poor. This was in fact one of their worst characteristics.

5. Their women had no shame.

6. They reveled in the pleasures of the world.

7. They never thanked for what they had. The Almighty warns against being ungrateful and commands us to frequently thank Him for what He has given us. The Prophet (saw) says:

“Whoever has these two qualities, the Lord will register him as thankful and patient: To look up to and follow the wise who have greater knowledge in matters of religion...and to look after those who are less fortunate in matters relating to the world”.

(Al-Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 58)

The Almighty wants us to remember Noah (as) as the grateful servant he was:

إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا

“He was a thankful servant.” (Al-Isra, 3)

Noah (as) in fact frequently thanked Allah for everything he was given; from the food he ate to the clothes he wore. He would say Allah’s (jj) name before and after eating, as well as when wearing and removing his clothes. It was for that reason that the Almighty refers to him as a ‘thankful servant’. (Ibn Hanbal, az Zuhd, p. 50)

Shukr is to thank and express joy for the blessings one's been given; and in return, to serve the One who has provided them in both word and conduct. In other words, it is to recognize their true Provider.

Sariy al-Saqati says:

“A person who does not thank the Lord for something he has been given will end up having it taken away. That is based on the Lord’s own words:

لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

“And remember when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you are grateful, I will surely increase you in favor. But if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.’”

(Ibrahim, 14: 7)

Some Qualities of Noah (as)

1. He was a serving person.
2. He was the first man to take to the sea and benefit from it.
3. He was thankful and patient.
4. He repented a lot.

Noah (as) served 950 years as prophet until, like all mortals, he passed away. The moments before he breathed his last, he advised his sons waiting by his side to continue serving the Almighty. He then turned to Sam and said:

“Son...do not enter the grave with even a speck of disbelief in your heart...for a disbeliever will have no excuse when he meets his Lord.

Son...do not enter the grave with a speck of pride in your heart...for pride is a veil that belongs only to Allah; and Allah is furious with those who stake claim to what is exclusively His.

Son...do not enter the grave with a speck of despair in your heart...for only those who have completely lost their way lose hope in the mercy of the Lord.

Son...I command you to keep saying لا اله الا الله ...for if you were to place that one side of the scale, and the seven heavens and the earth on the other, the words will weigh heavier”. (Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, II, 170; az Zuhd, p. 51, Haythami, IV, 219)

It is narrated that as death drew closer, Noah (as) was asked about what impression the world had left on him.

“It is like a house with two doors”, he said. “I walked in from the front door and got out from the back”. (Ibn Esir, al-Kamil, I, 73)

Noah (as) had built himself a straw house. Someone commented, "...you should have built for yourself something more solid". He said, "Even this is too much for a person who sooner or later will be dead!" (Abu Nuaym, Hilya, VIII, 145)

After enduring 950 years of torment and tyranny from his people, Noah's (as) biggest legacy for the prophets and believers to follow, is patience.

Peace be upon him.



PATIENCE

Patience is to remain composed, poised and brave in the face of pain, keep calm during hardship and remain resilient as required by both reason and religion.

Patience contains every moral quality; and therefore, enjoys a special place in Islam. Patience itself is a sacred quality that attracts the pleasure of the Lord.

Patience is to remain tranquil and submit to Allah when confronted with situations that cause grief.

Imam Nawawi says:

“Patience is the force to do things with which one has been commanded. This is done through enduring the hardships of worship as well as the tribulations of life.”

Patience comes to the fore when we are forgiving, gentle, humble, content, compassionate, polite and tolerant. All these are spiritual qualities.

Patience is right at the center of beautiful conduct. It is one half of faith and the key to happiness, as well as the gateway to paradise. Because the road to all spiritual gains runs through it, all prophets, saints and scholars have taken up patience as their profession.

The Qur’an mentions patience over seventy times. Many verses encourage the Prophet (saw) and his followers to be patient. Some of them are:

وَاصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ

“And be patient...and your patience is not but through Allah. And do not grieve over them and do not be in distress over what they conspire.” (Al-Nahl, 16: 127)

وَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ

“And be patient, for the decision of your Lord, for indeed, you are in Our eyes. And exalt Your Lord with praise when you arise.” (Al-Tur, 52: 48)

وَاصْبِرْ حَتَّىٰ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ

“And follow what is revealed to you, and be patient until Allah will judge. And He is the best of judges.” (Yunus, 12: 109)

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ
وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ

“And they will be presented before your Lord in rows, and He will say, ‘You have certainly come to Us just as We created you the first time. But you claimed that We would never make for you an appointment.’” (Al-Kahf, 18: 28)

Prophets offer excellent examples of patience in forbearing the troubles they faced in their call to the truth. Noah (as) endured great torment for 950 years, which included being mocked and beaten. Moses (as) advised the children of Israel to:

اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاصْبِرُوا

“Seek help from Allah and be patient.” (Al-Araf, 7: 128)

Similarly, Job (as) received the compliments of the Almighty after suffering long years of illness:

إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ

“We indeed found him patient, an excellent servant...and one who constantly repented.” (Sad, 38: 44)

Luqman’s (as) famous advices to his son include:

يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ
ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

“O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, all that is of the matters requiring determination.” (Luqman, 31: 17)

The Prophet (saw) also remained steadfast and patient, especially against the hateful conducts of the people of both Mecca and Taif. A few years down the line, both communities ended up embracing Islam.

Both prophets and saints reached that level of patience through the help of Allah. It is exclusively them we should follow. While patience is a hard pill to swallow in this life, it brings the sweetest of pleasures in the hereafter. Those who endure the bitter taste of patience will receive rewards sweeter than they can ever imagine.

We are responsible with keeping away from the forbidden, no matter how enticing; and remaining patient in the face of troubles, no matter how difficult. We are responsible with patiently carrying out Allah's commands, no matter how hard.

The Prophet (saw) says:

“Patience comes in three types: patience in the face of troubles, patience in servanthood and patience in not sinning. Whoever remains patient against troubles until they go away, Allah (jj) will grant him 300 ranks. The distance between each rank is as great as the distance between the skies and the earth. Whoever keeps patient in servanthood, Allah (jj) will grant him 600 ranks. The distance between each is as great as the distance between the earth and the seven layers beneath it. Whoever is patient against sinning, Allah (jj) will grant him 900 ranks. The distance between each is as great as the distance between the earth and the Throne”. (Suyuti, *al-Jamiu’s-Saghir*, II, 42; Daylami, II, 416)

Patience is made easier by thinking about the wisdoms behind and rewards for complying with Allah's commands. We have no other choice than to carry the burden of hardship on our shoulders. Allah is the best and only healer. It is a waste of time moan, groan and complain. The wisest thing to do is to be patient and seek refuge in Allah, knowing that everything comes from Him and we are undergoing a trial with potentially enormous rewards in the end.

The world is a place of trial and it is impossible for man to get his hands on everything he wants. It is best to look upon things we cannot get, as well as distasteful experiences, as 'blessings in disguise'. This approach is most suited to our role as servants of Allah and one that will take us to greater spiritual heights.

Patience does not work when one forces it upon himself. It works when one submits to Allah willingly. Patience is the greatest virtue, when one has the power to take revenge but holds back from doing so.

So, the first condition is to show patience at the very first moment that trouble comes. There is little reward in showing patience when all is said and done.

In that respect, it is important for a person who has lost a child or a loved one to keep a brave face as soon as hearing the news.

Anas ibn Malik (ra) narrates how the Prophet (saw) once came across a woman wailing by her son's grave.

“Fear Allah and be patient”, the Prophet (saw) said.

“Go away”, said the woman. *“You do not know what it's like!”*

The woman was in such frenzy that she did not recognize who she was speaking to, until someone later told her. She then rushed to the Prophet's (saw) door and remorsefully apologized.

“I could not recognize you”, she lamented.

The Prophet (saw) then said:

إِنَّمَا الصَّبْرُ عِنْدَ الصَّدْمَةِ الْأُولَى

“True patience is at the first moment of trouble”. (Al-Bukhari, Janaiz, 32)



One of the names of Allah is *Sabur*, the Patient. Allah gives people time on earth and keeps patient until the end, feeding even those who rebel against Him. What would have become of the cosmos if Allah wished to instantly take revenge on sinners? We should spare that a moment of thought.

The Qur’an states:

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا مَا تَرَكَ عَلَى
ظَهْرِهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى

“And if Allah were to impose blame on the people for what they have earned, He would not leave upon the earth any creature. But He defers them for a specified term. And when their time comes, then indeed Allah has ever been, of His servants, Seeing.” (Fatir, 35: 45)

The divine name ‘the Patient’ transpires in moral conduct; and nowhere better than in prophets and saints. Patience in good times and bad is an integral part of their approach.

Patience when things are going well means not to yield to pride, conceit and the urge to take revenge; to defeat the desire to sin, to strike a balance between being wasteful and miserly and not to look down on the poor or hold back from helping them. The ego always wants to drag the person downhill. One needs patience to hold his ground.

One prime example here is Abraham (as). Despite being a man of means, he did not lean to anything worldly and conceived everything he had as a trust from Allah. He was given many riches but patiently reined his ego away from desire. In the end, Allah called him *Khalil*, the Friend.

Another example is Solomon (as). He was given a kingdom on earth but kept it out of his heart. He would frequently visit the poor and take great enjoyment out of spending time with them. He would say:

“No better place for a poor man than with the poor.” Beneath the wealth and power, Solomon (as) was the humblest of all men.

Patience when things are going tough involves abstaining from whining, jealousy, anger, holding grudges and taking all frustration out on family and friends. In times like this, it is important to keep bad thoughts out of the mind and evil out of action. To do so, it is essential to take stock from the manner in which prophets and saints conducted themselves in both good times and bad.

The Prophet (saw) advises believers to stay patient, keep away from despair and place complete trust in Allah when the going gets rough:

“If a Muslim going through a difficult time says these words:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ. اللَّهُمَّ أَجْزِنِي فِي مُصِيبَتِي
وَأَخْلِفْ لِي خَيْرًا مِنْهَا

‘We truly belong to Allah and to Him we will return. Allah...grant me rewards for what I am undergoing and give me something better in return’, then Allah (jj) will take his trouble away and give him something better’. (Muslim, Janaiz, 3)

We are compelled to be patient in good times and bad, if we want to rid our hearts from spiritual diseases and obtain the pleasure of Allah. The patience shown by Job (as) gives us a brilliant example to follow.

When his wife Rahimah told him to “...ask Allah to cure you from your illness. You are a prophet; your prayers are accepted...and you are struggling”, he replied:

“Allah gave me 80 years of good health. I have not yet been ill for that long...it has only been a few years. I would be embarrassed to ask Him!”

This great prophet eventually got back his health. However, it was only thanks to his patience.

The rich who remain patient are referred to as *aghniya-i shakirin*, the thankful wealthy. The poor who do the same are called *fuqara-i sabirin*, the patient poor. The rewards awaiting both are beyond anything imaginable.



Once, a feast was prepared for Abdurrahman ibn Awf (ra) for him to break his fast. For a moment, he stared at the meals and thought:

“Musab ibn Umayr was martyred in the Battle of Uhud. He was a better man than me. He was once wealthy but had nothing but an old coat at the time of his death. They used the coat as a shroud but it wasn’t even long enough to cover his body. After him, we were given all the riches of the world. What if we are being rewarded in this life instead of the next?”

He then began to weep, and left the table without eating. (Al-Bukhari, Janaiz, 27)

Another prominent companion Abu Dharr (ra) was poor. However, he was always grateful and would still give away plenty in charity. It was because the Prophet (saw) had advised him to:

“...add a little more water in your soup and share it with your neighbor.” (Muslim, Birr, 142)

Two companions...one rich, the other poor who had both filled their hearts with love for the Prophet (saw)! They shared the same state of mind and reflected a crystal clear patience in their lives in a genuine hope to attain the pleasure of Allah. We need to keep Allah in our minds, keep company with the righteous and sincerely pray for our hearts to be filled with similar emotions.

The Almighty says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا

“O you who have believed, be patient and surpass your enemies in patience...”

(Al Imran, 3: 200)

And elsewhere:

وَالْعَصْرِ. إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ. إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

“By time...mankind is in loss; except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience” (Al-Asr, 103: 1-3)

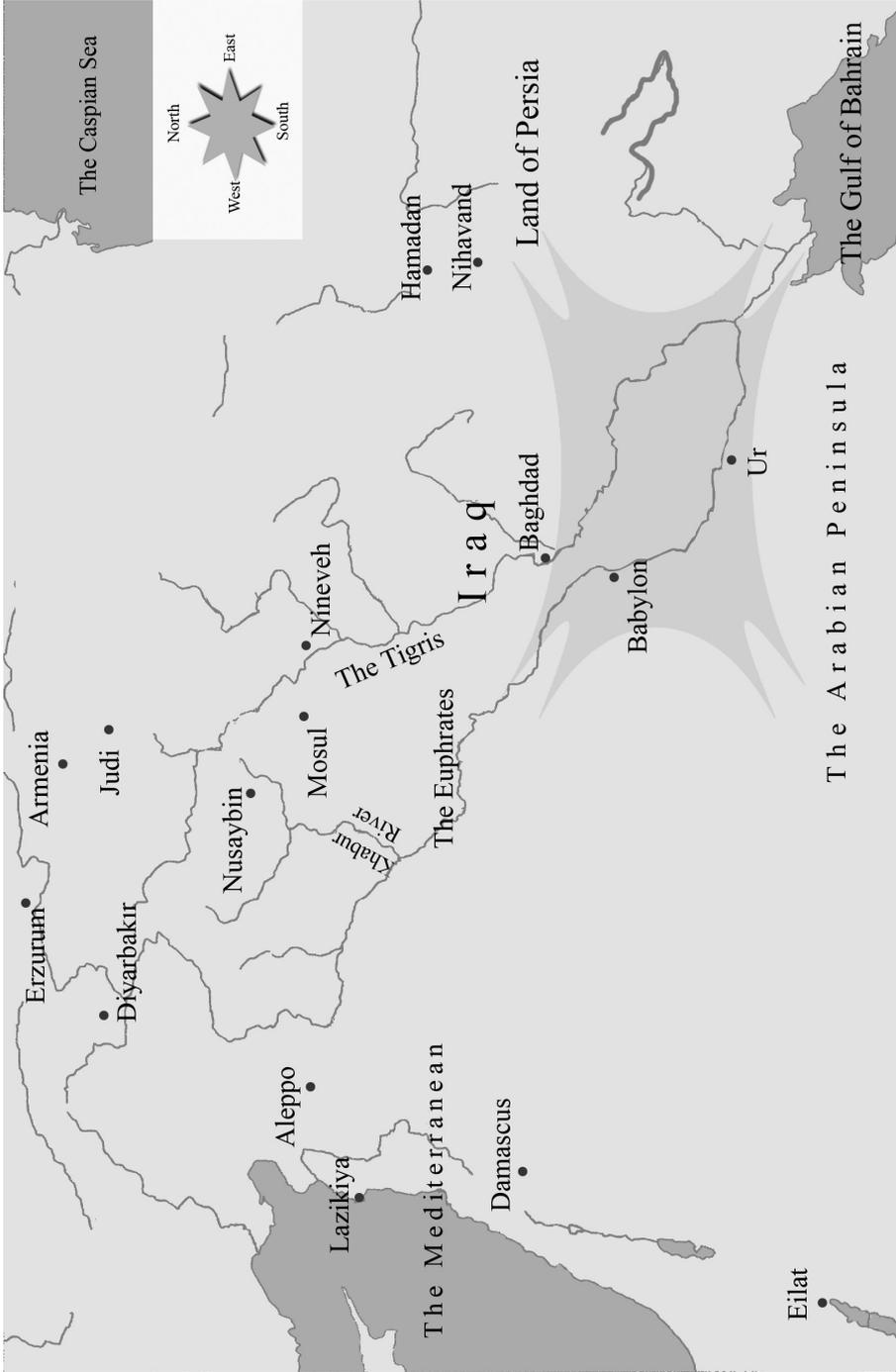
However, to advise others with truth and patience, we must first apply them in our own lives.

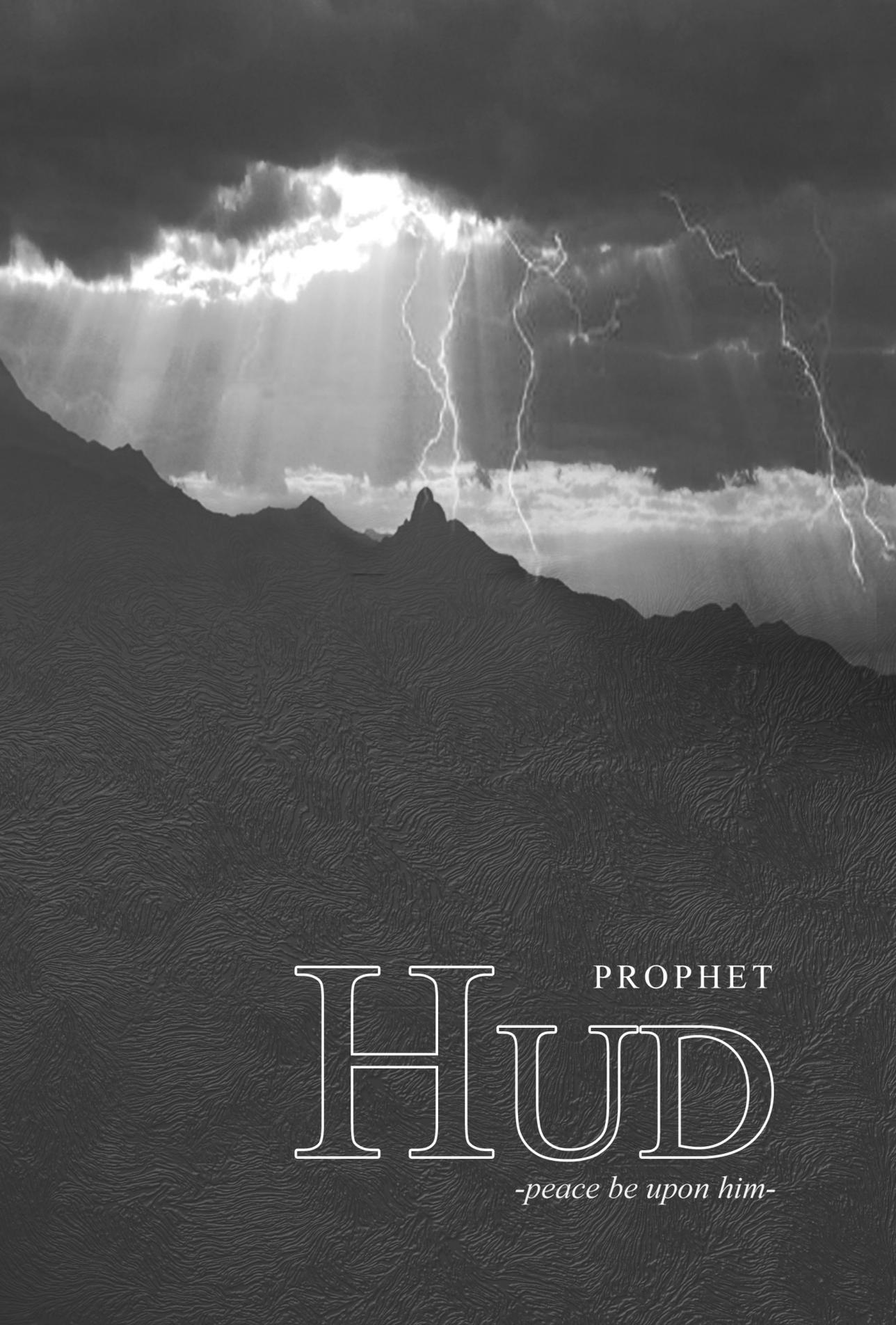
May Allah (jj) grant each us the patience we need. May He give us a share of the patience of prophets and saints and also preserve us from trials too great for us to bear!

Amin...



Prophet Noah





PROPHET

HUD

-peace be upon him-

The prophet of the people turned upside down by a hurricane

HUD

-peace be upon him-

Hud (as) was a descendent of Sam and sent as a prophet to the people of Aad.

The name Hud comes from the Arabic word *hawadah*, which means softness, calm, peace and any means that gives a person these qualities. Hud (as) was also known as Abir, as well as *Nabiyyullah*, Allah's prophet.

Hud (as) was born to a noble family in the land of Ahqaf. Before becoming a prophet, he was a merchant by profession. He was a swarthy, handsome and good-natured man of medium height. It was said he looked a lot like Adam (as).⁴⁹ He was also pious and took worshipping seriously. He was also a compassionate and generous man, who looked out for the poor.

The People of Aad

The Qur'an mentions the people of Aad in chapters Araf, Hud, Mu'minun, Shuara, Fussilat, Ahqaf, Dhariyat, Qamar, Haqqa and Fajr.

The Aad were an Arab people made up of 23 tribes. They had taken their name from a man by the name of Aad, who was a grandson of Noah (as). It is believed that the Aad people existed around 800 years after the Great Flood.

The land of Ahqaf, where the Aad lived and perished, is near Aden between Yemen and Oman. The Aad are also known as the first people to settle in Arabia. The land was very fertile, abounding in luscious greens and gardens, with livestock grazing all around. The Aad had even built mansions by the rivers that gushed through the land, as well as reservoirs.⁵⁰ The area was also known as Irem; and that is where expression 'Gardens of Irem' comes from. The Aad were strong and burly, and enjoyed long life spans. They built luxury homes often carved out of stone with lush gardens and nice pools. It was a dazzling city.

The Aad were the first people to return to paganism after the people of Noah (as). They had lost their way in the riches and pleasure of the world, and had forgotten the Lord. They failed to recall and reflect on the lessons of the Great Flood. They

49. See, Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, II, 614-616.

50. See, al-Shu'ara, 42: 129, 133, 134.

were arrogant and blinded by their wealth and power to what was to come. About them, the Almighty says:

فَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا
أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ

“As for Aad, they were arrogant upon the earth without right and said, ‘Who is greater than us in strength?’ Did they not consider that Allah who created them was greater than them in strength? But they were rejecting Our signs.” (Al-Fussilat, 41: 15)

The Aad worshipped idols that they had made, called Samad, Samud and Haba. The more they went in their ways, the more merciless they became. They would terrorize the poor and the weak. They would even throw them off high buildings and laugh over their scattered corpses. That was how hard their hearts had become. Tyranny was rife. They would raid weaker tribes and loot their possessions. They simply reveled in pomp and luxury. However, they subsequently became the first people after the time of Noah (as) to perish under divine wrath.

The only thing Hud (as) shared with the people of Aad was a common blood-line. His lifestyle was the stark opposite.



Once it became clear that the Aad were heading fast towards a point of no return, the Almighty commanded Hud (as) to:

“Go and warn them without fear. I have chosen you to deliver my message...and through you, I will show them a number of miracles”.

After receiving the revelation, Hud (as) went to the place where the leading members of Aad would normally gather. Their king, Haljan was also there, seated on his throne. Hud (as) began to speak in a deep tone:

“My people...only Allah alone deserves to be worshipped. Do not bow to idols. Remember that it was for no other reason that Noah’s (as) people were destroyed!”

The Qur’an recounts:

وَيَا قَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا
وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلَى قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِينَ

“O my people, ask forgiveness from your Lord, and repent to Him. He will release the sky pouring down upon you, and will add strength to your strength. And do not turn away and be wicked” (Hud, 11: 52)

Haljan was furious.

“Shame on you, Hud”, he shouted. “Do you think we will succumb to you, knowing how strong we are? You are just one, we are many. We increase a thousand by the day!”

Haljan and the people of Aad relented to their pride and ignored the words of Hud (as). The Qur’an says:

وَالِىٰ عَادِ اٰحَاہُمْ هُوْدًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُوْنَ.
قَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ اِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِى سَفَاہَةٍ وَاِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَٰذِبِيْنَ.
قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِى سَفَاہَةٌ وَّلٰكِيْنِ رَّسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

“And to Aad, their brother Hud. He said, ‘O my people! Worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. Will you not take heed?’ The elite of his people who disbelieved said, ‘We see foolishness in you, and we think that you are a liar.’ He said, ‘O my people! There is no foolishness in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds.” (Al-Araf, 7: 65-67)

The Qur’an further recounts their protests:

قَالُوْا يَا هُوْدُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ وَّمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِي الْاِلٰهِيْنَا عَنْ قَوْلِكَ
وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ. اِنْ نَقُوْلُ اِلَّا اَعْتَرَاكَ بَعْضُ الْاِلٰهِيْنَا بِسُوْءٍ قَالَ
اِنِّيْ اَشْهَدُ اللّٰهَ وَاَشْهَدُوْا اَنِّيْ بَرِيْءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ

“They said, ‘O Hud, you did not bring us any evidence, and we are not about to abandon our gods at your word, and we are not believers in you. We only say that some of our gods have possessed you with evil.’ He said, ‘I call God to witness, and you to witness, that I am innocent of what you associate.” (Hud, 11: 53-54)

Their arguments are no different from the arguments raised against prophets in general. In fact, they are pretty much the same as what deniers say today. More often than not, they are raised by the wealthy and the powerful, because they feel threatened and fear they will lose their authority over the community. The objections of Aad may be summarized as follows:

1. They were foolish to the point of accusing Hud (as) of being stupid:

إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

“The dignitaries among his people said, ‘We see that you are in obvious error.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 60)

إِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ

“The elite of his people who disbelieved said, ‘We see foolishness in you, and we think that you are a liar’” (Al-Araf, 7: 66)

2. They were conservative and stubborn to think that there was no better way to follow than the way of their ancestors:

قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِنَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَحْدَهُ وَنَذَرَ مَا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا

“They said, ‘Did you come to us to make us worship God alone, and abandon what our ancestors used to worship? Then bring us what you threaten us with, if you are truthful!’” (Al-Araf, 7: 70)

3. They kept on reminding Hud (as) that they were tough and impervious to whatever he could do to harm them:

فَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ
وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً

“But the people of Aad became arrogant without a right in the land, and they said, ‘Who is mightier in strength than us?’ Did they not see that Allah Who created them is mightier than they are, in strength? And they were denying our Verses knowingly, stubbornly.” (Fussilat, 41: 15)

4. They denied the hereafter, thinking that this life is the only life there is:

إِن هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ

“No life but our life of this world! We die and we live! And we shall not be raised again.” (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 37)

5. They developed habit of mocking and provoking Hud (as) and the believers:

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِلِقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ وَآتَرَفْنَاهُمْ
فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا
تَشْرَبُونَ. وَلَئِنِ أَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِثْلَكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لَخَاسِرُونَ

“And the leaders of his people who disbelieved and belied meeting Allah before death, whom We had given plenty to enjoy in this world’s life, said, ‘This is but a human being like yourselves, eating of what you eat from and drinking of what you drink. And if you obey a human like yourselves, then most surely you will be one of those who have fallen into Loss.’” (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 33-34)

Divine Warnings to Aad

Hud (as) was deeply saddened by his people’s reaction and made a sincere plea. To knock some sense into them, the Almighty made all their women barren for ten years.

After a while, they had no choice but to come to Hud (as). They wanted him to pray for the bane to be reversed. Hud (as) said he would pray but only if they believed in Allah. They responded by asking for another sign.

They then went a step further and scornfully asked for divine punishment:

قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا لِنَأْفِكَنَا عَنِ آلِهَتِنَا فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“They said, ‘Have you come to turn us away from our gods? Then bring us that with which you threaten us, if you are one of the truthful.’” (Al-Ahqaf, 46: 22)

Soon, the illustrious Gardens of Irem dried up, along with their springs. Those strong and burly men became desperate for a piece of bread.

Hud (as) once again gathered them around and advised them to repent:

قَالَ إِنِّي أَشْهَدُ اللَّهَ وَاشْهَدُوا أَنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ. مِنْ دُونِهِ
فَكَيْدُونِي جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنظِرُونَ. إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ مَا
مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَّتِهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ.

“Surely I call Allah to witness. And you bear witness too, that I am surely clear of what you associate with Allah. Besides Him, therefore scheme against me all together, then give me no respite. Surely I put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no moving creature but He holds it by its forelock. Surely my Lord is upon the straight path.” (Hud, 11: 54-56)

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ أَبْلَعْتُكُمْ مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ إِلَيْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ رَبِّي قَوْمًا
غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّونَهُ شَيْئًا إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ

“If you turn away, then remember, I have delivered to you the message I was sent with. My Lord will put other people in your place, and you will not be able to prevail against Him. Indeed my Lord keeps a watch over all things.”⁵¹ (Hud, 11: 57)

It is understood from the above verses that Hud (as) issues a clear challenge to his arrogant kinsmen and, in a sense, says:

“All of you come together and do whatever it is within your power to destroy me. Do not wait even for a second. I will not worry about what you might do to me...I would not even care to look at you. I only trust in Allah and rely on Him. No harm should come to a person who relies on Him. I do not care for anyone other than Him. I only depend on Allah and only worship Him.”

Those words alone are proof that Hud (as) was indeed a messenger of Allah (jj) and that those who went against him were in the wrong. Even though Hud (as) had laid down the people of Aad a rather belittling challenge, they could not do anything, despite all their physical strength. That shows that Hud (as) was truthful in his message.

Yet, these warnings were not enough to set the people of Aad straight. Despite suffering a major famine and a number of other hardships, they did not turn to Allah and repent. That was because their excess wealth and power had sapped their energy to serve the Lord. If they had listened to their prophet, they would no longer have been able to enjoy the vices and injustices that had become part of their lives. They felt that the religion of truth constricted them. They were too deep in an egoistic lifestyle to willingly succumb to limitations. However, in the end, they placed a far greater limitation on their eternal happiness.

The Hurricane that Turned Aad Upside Down

Allah then withheld rain from Aad for three years. They sent a group to where Mecca stands today to pray for rain. Before long, the clouds began gathering. Seeing the rainclouds cover the skies, the Aad were elated:

“The rains are here!” they exclaimed. Little did they know that the clouds had brought their destruction. With one last hope, Hud (as) urged:

“Believe, my people...these clouds are not what you think!”

“What do you mean?” they mocked. “This is rain!”

And so they remained blind and deaf to the last words of warning they would ever hear. The angels of destruction grouped the clouds together and encircled the people of Aad. By morning, the winds had picked up tremendously and began pluck-

51. In other words, God is correct in all his judgments and is free of injustice and error in all His decisions.

ing out trees by their roots. The storm became deafening and the weather chilling. The Qur'an describes the scene:

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي أَيَّامٍ نَحْسَاتٍ لِنُذِيقَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي
الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَخْزَىٰ وَهُمْ لَا يُنصَرُونَ

“So We let loose on them a violent wind for several days of distress to make them taste a most disgraceful punishment here in this world, and far more shameful will be the punishment in the Hereafter, and there will be no help for them.” (Fussilat, 41: 16)

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي يَوْمٍ نَحْسٍ مُّسْتَمِرٍّ

“We sent upon them a furious windstorm through certain time of enduring disaster.” (Al-Qamar, 54: 19)

وَفِي عَادٍ إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّيحَ الْعَقِيمَ .
مَا تَذُرُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَتَتْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا جَعَلَتْهُ كَالرَّمِيمِ

“In Aad is also a sign, when We sent a blasting wind against them...which turned everything it touched to ashes.” (Al-Dhariyat, 51: , 41-42)

The hurricane began hurling people up in the air like grasshoppers. To hold out, they tied their clothes to one another and stood in circles. However, it was of no use. Some tried making it to the safety of their homes after seeing men and livestock flying about with the force of the wind. However, the wind threw them out of their homes just the same. The Qur'an says:

تَنْزَعُ النَّاسَ كَأَنَّهُمْ أُعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُّنْقَعِرٍ

“It extracted the people as if they were trunks of palm trees uprooted.” (Al-Qamar, 54: 20)

The Almighty then ordered the winds to heap sand dunes on the people of Aad. That process continued for seven nights and eight days. The Aad had met a bitter end. The Qur'an describes it as:

سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَثَمَانِيَةَ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا
صَرْعَى كَأَنَّهُمْ أُعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ. فَهَلْ تَرَى لَهُمْ مِنْ بَاقِيَةٍ

“It was imposed upon them for seven nights and eight days in succession, so you would see the people there fallen as if they were hollow trunks of palm trees. Then do you see of them any remains?” (Al-Haqqa, 69: 7-8)

وَقَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بآيَاتِنَا وَمَا كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ

“So We saved him and those with him by mercy from Us. And We eliminated those who denied Our signs, and they were not at all believers.” (Al-Araf, 7: 72)

وَتِلْكَ عَادٌ جَحَدُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْا رُسُلَهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ
كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ. وَأَتَّبَعُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةَ وَيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ، أَلَا إِنَّ
عَادًا كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ أَلَا بُعْدًا لِعَادٍ قَوْمِ هُودٍ

“And that was Aad, who rejected the signs of their Lord and disobeyed His messengers and followed the order of every obstinate tyrant. And they were followed in this world with a curse and as well on the Day of Resurrection. Unquestionably, Aad denied their Lord; then away with Aad, the people of Hud.” (Hud, 11: 59-60)

With the mercy of Allah, Hud (as) and his followers were spared.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُودًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا
وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ

“And when Our command came, We saved Hud and those who believed with him, by mercy from Us; and We saved them from a harsh punishment.” (Hud, 11: 58)

Scholars have interpreted the expression ‘by mercy from Us’ as follows:

It was a direct consequence of Allah’s mercy that He protected and saved Hud (as) and the believers. It also means that the blessings Allah bestows on humans are not in return for their actions but are granted only through nothing other than His eternal mercy.

Aisha (rha) says that the Prophet (saw) would worry, whenever he felt a breeze or saw a black cloud appear in the sky. At times, he would stare at the cloud, while at others, he would return home. He would feel relief only when it began to rain. She recalls how she once asked him the reason. The Prophet (saw) explained:

“It might well be one of those clouds that rolled up over Aad. They had thought that a black cloud had come with mercy. However, it turned out it had come with wrath”. (Al-Bukhari, Tafsir, 46/2; Muslim, Istisqa, 14-16)

Aisha (rha) also says:

“Whenever the wind picked up, the Messenger of Allah (saw) would pray:

'Allah...I pray that this wind and what it carries from the things You have sent, are good for us. And I seek refuge in You from this wind and what it carries of the evils You send''. (Muslim, Al-Bukhari, 15)

Our Prophet (saw) has advised us to be in a similar state of awareness as his.

On his farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet (saw) had reached the Usfan Valley, where he stood and asked Abu Bakr (ra) whether he knew where they were.

“We are at the Usfan Valley”, he said. Then the Prophet (saw) informed him how Hud (as) had once passed through the same valley on his way to pilgrimage, with a woolen cloth wrapped around his waist and wearing an assorted colored shirt...on the back of a young, red camel, whose bridles were woven from date threads. (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, I, 232)

And after the hurricane, Hud (as) took the believers to Mecca, where he remained for the rest of his days.

The Miracles of Hud (as)

1. With the permission of Allah, Hud (as) was able to guide the winds to whichever direction he wanted.

The people of Aad had specifically called on Hud (as) to do that, when they asked him to show a miracle. It is ironic that the winds that they asked for would in the end be their downfall. The Qur'an calls those winds a howling hurricane (*rih-i sarsar*).

2. He could turn wool into shiny cloth.

3. The Aad were once caught in a thunderstorm while on a campaign and faced the danger of being swept away by the floods. Hud (as) prayed to Allah and shelters formed on the sides of the roads. People sought refuge in them until the sun came out.

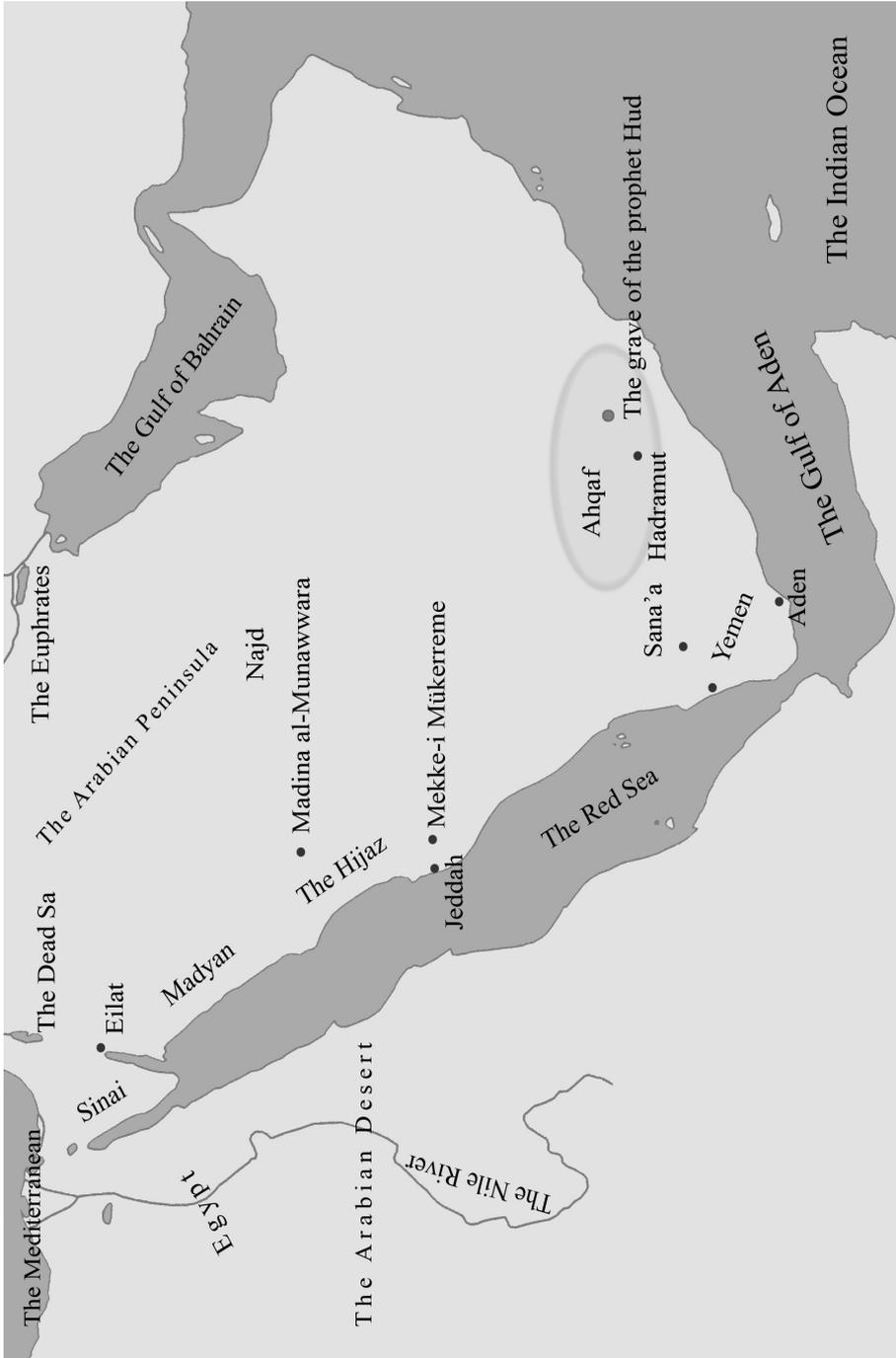


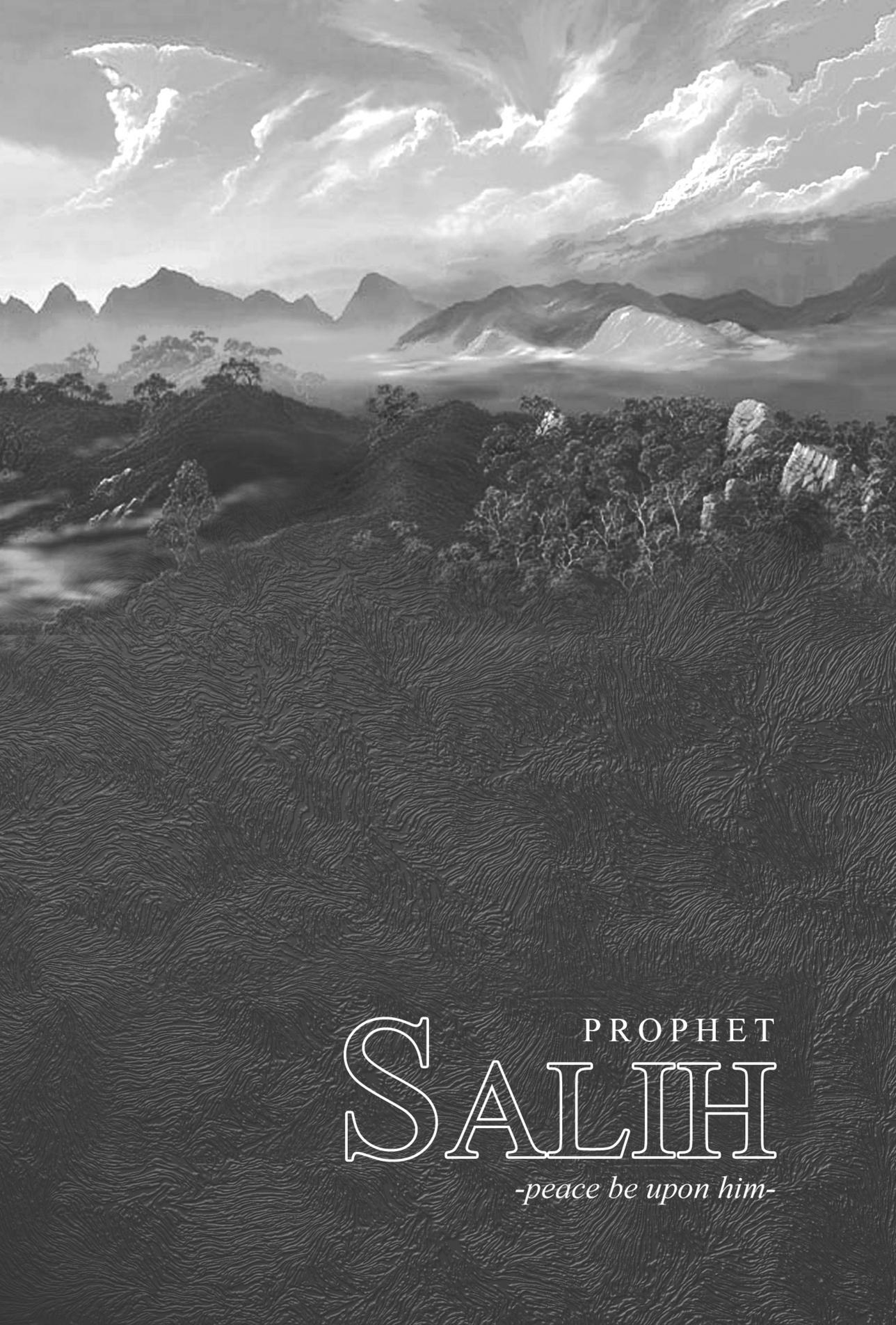
The Qur'an recounts the parables of the prophets and their people to teach believers valuable lessons. Each and every conduct of a prophet is, at the same time, a pathway for us to follow. Hud (as) offers us a number of them:

Hud (as) was a noble man, who relied only on Allah, and who measured his words before he spoke. For example, when his kinsmen accused him of being a fool, all he merely said was that he was not, and that he was only assigned by Allah to warn them. He said no more. Not only did he did not respond to their evil with evil, he remained gentle towards them. He reminded them of Allah's blessings and told to them they needed to thank Allah in return. He assured them that, for all his troubles, he did not ask for any payment.

Peace be upon him.

Prophet Hud





PROPHET
SALIH

-peace be upon him-

*The prophet of the people shaken out
of their land by an earthquake*

SALIH

-peace be upon him-

Salih (as) was the 19th-generation grandson of Adam (as) and was the prophet of the people of Thamud. One report says he is buried alongside the graves of Noah, Hud and Jethro (as) in Mecca, between the Zamzam springs and the Maqam Ibrahim.

The People of Thamud

The destruction of Thamud is legendary. The Qur'an mentions them on numerous occasions, along with their transgressions that led to their ruin.

The people took their name from their forefather, a man known as Thamud, who had descended from Noah's son (as) Sam. Following Hud's (as) death, Thamud's grandchildren settled in northern Arabia between Damascus and Hijaz, in an area known as Hijr. After that, they migrated again, this time to the land of Aad. Hence, they also came to be known as the Second Aad.

Thamud enjoyed the same pleasures as Aad but also fell into similar excess and ignorance. They well knew of the miserable end of Aad but explained it away through natural causes. They said:

"Aad perished because their buildings were poor. They were built on sand were not made to stand the storm. However, we have built our homes on sturdy rocks. No storm could ever damage them". So, they carved out palaces and mansions out of rocks, with elaborate designs and decorations. However, having long forgotten belief in the Oneness of Allah, they also used the same rocks to carve out idols.

The leader of Thamud was Janda. On his people's request, he ordered an idol be made unlike any other. The sculptors found a giant rock on a mountain top and chiseled into it shapes like an eye, a bull's chest and a horse's hooves and further adorned it with gold, silver and other gemstones. The people then began worshipping it.

Shortly afterwards, the people of Thamud built a temple and sculpted a number of other idols called Wadd, Jadd, Had, Shams, Manaf, Manat and Lat.

Salih (as) was a member of Thamud, who made his living through commerce. Due to his ability, honesty and overall character, he was much loved and respected

by his kinsmen. They expected a lot of great things from him. Some even believed he would become their next king. However, Allah (jj) had wished otherwise.

The Call Begins

Once Salih (as) reached the age of forty, Jibril (as) informed him he had been made a prophet. Salih (as) was at first tentative. However, Jibril (as) told him it was his duty to:

“...to call your people to the truth”, and that “you would witness things Noah and Hud did not”.

With those words, Jibril (as) disappeared to the skies.

Salih (as) first took the call to the people’s king, Janda, who responded with decency and understanding.

“Let me inform my people”, he said. Janda then brought the leading members of his people and told them about the oneness of Allah and Salih’s (as) prophethood. They demanded that Salih (as) come and tell them in person. The Qur’an recounts what unfolded next:

وَإِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ
إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا
ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُجِيبٌ

“And to Thamud, We sent their brother Salih. He said, ‘O my people, worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. He has produced you from the earth and settled you on it, so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive.’” (Hud, 11: 61)

Elsewhere, it is stated:

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ. إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ.
إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ. فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا. وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“Thamud denied the messengers. When their brother Salih said to them, ‘Will you not fear Allah? Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger. So fear Allah and obey me. And I do not ask you for it any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds.’” (Al-Shu’ara, 42: 141-145)

Thamud turned on Salih (as) the moment he began to make his call openly. Just like the prophets before him, only a handful of people accepted Salih's (as) invitation to believe that Allah is One. The rest continued their denial:

قَالُوا يَا صَالِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هَذَا أَتَنْهَانَا أَنْ نَعْبُدَ
مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكِّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ

“They said, ‘O Salih, you were among us a man of promise before this. Do you forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped? And indeed we are, about that to which you invite us, in disquieting doubt.’” (Hud, 11: 62)

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَآتَانِي مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً
فَمَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ فَمَا تَزِيدُونَنِي غَيْرَ تَخْسِيرٍ

“He said, ‘O my people, have you considered that if I am on clear evidence from my Lord and He has given me mercy from Himself, then who would protect me from Allah if I disobeyed Him? You would then not add anything to me except loss.’” (Hud, 11: 63)

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ لَوْلَا
تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“He said, ‘O my people, why are you impatient for evil instead of good? Why do you not seek forgiveness of Allah that you may receive mercy?’” (Al-Naml, 27: 46)

Despite the undeniable wisdom of Salih's (as) advices, Thamud went further to the point of calling him a liar who had been put under a spell:

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ

“They said, ‘You are only of those affected by magic!’” (Al-Shuara, 42: 153)

They said to one another:

فَقَالُوا أَبَشَرًا مِّمَّا وَاحِدًا نَّبَّعُهُ إِنَّا إِذَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ وَسُعُرٍ

“Are we supposed to follow a human being from among us? We would then indeed be in error and madness!” (Al-Qamar, 54: 24)

أَأَلْقَىٰ الذِّكْرَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُوَ كَذَّابٌ أَشِرٌّ

“Has the message been sent down upon him from among us? Rather, he is an insolent liar!” (Al-Qamar, 54: 25)

The Almighty responds to the senseless protests of Thamud with a warning:

سَيَعْلَمُونَ غَدًا مِنَ الْكَذَّابِ الْأَشْرِ

“They will know tomorrow who is the insolent liar!” (Al-Qamar, 54: 26)

قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ لَيُصْبِحُنَّ نَادِمِينَ

“Allah said, ‘After a little, they will surely become regretful!’” (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 40)



However, Salih (as) did not despair. Despite their attitudes, he patiently continued to try and steer his people away from idols through words of wisdom:

أَتُتْرَكُونَ فِي مَا هَاهُنَا آمِنِينَ. فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ. وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلَعُهَا هَضِيمٌ.
وَتَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا فَارِهِينَ. فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ
الْمُسْرِفِينَ. الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ

“Will you be left secure in that which you have here? In gardens and springs. And fields of crops and palm trees with softened fruit. And you carve houses out of mountains with great skill. So fear Allah, keep your duty to Him, and obey me. And follow not the command of criminals, who make mischief in the land and do not reform.” (Al-Shuara, 42: 146-152)

Thamud gave up on Salih (as), when they realized they could not turn him away from his path. They instead turned their attention on a few who had accepted Salih’s (as) call. Their aim was to isolate Salih (as) and leave him on his own. They asked the believers:

أَتَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ صَالِحًا مُرْسَلٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ

“Do you actually know that Salih is sent from his Lord?” (Al-Araf, 7: 75)

However, those people, who had now tasted the zest of faith, were unwavering:

إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلَ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ

“We without a doubt believe in what he was sent!” (Al-Araf, 7: 75)

The deniers, astounded with their unquestioning resolution, could only respond with mulishness:

إِنَّا بِالَّذِي آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ

“And we certainly deny what you believe in!” (Al-Araf, 7: 76)

Thamud then came up with a number of excuses to justify their denial. They accused Salih (as) of “...trying to seize our wealth and become our king”.

Using an elementary logic, they said:

“We have our idols that we can see and touch. Should we abandon them for a God we cannot see? How can a God, whom you cannot see, give you such a duty?”

If you are true to your word, then prove it by doing something no other human being can!”

مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا فَأْتِ بَآيَةٍ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“You are but a man like ourselves, so bring a sign, if you are truthful!”

(Al-Shu'ara, 42: 154)

The Miracle of the Camel

Salih (as) was deeply grieved at how stubborn and ignorant his people were. For a while, he left them on their own and kept to himself. However, when he returned, with the will of Allah, he appeared to them in an imposing form. Thamud felt an awe.

Salih (as) headed to the leader of Thamud, Janda, who said to him:

“We will test you to see if you really are telling the truth”. He then took him to a big rock in the outskirts, known as al-Katibah. He pointed to it and said:

“Ask your God to extract a pregnant, red camel out of this rock! And let the color of its calf be the same!”

Others nearby scornfully added:

“And let its milk be cool in summer and warm in winter! Let it cure all illnesses and make the poor rich!”

Thamud valued red camels more than anything.

As all of Thamud, young and old, gathered, Salih (as) stood to pray and pleaded the Almighty to grant their wish.

The rock then began to swell and let out sounds of birth pain. A red camel stepped out, saying the words:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ صَالِحُ نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ

“There is no god but Allah and Salih is His messenger”.

Janda kissed Salih (as) on the forehead and joined a hundred others in accepting his call. He then turned to Thamud and said:

“Enough with this blindness! I hereby believe in Allah, who has none like He and alone deserves to be worshipped...and I affirm that Salih is his messenger!”

However, the priest of the temple retorted:

“How easily are you fooled by magic? I will show you a greater trick!”

He then cast a spell on the people around, including Janda’s brother, and turned their hearts, which had begun to lean towards Salih (as), around. Afterward, he took the crown of Janda, placed it on the head of his brother and said:

“From now on, you are our king!”

As for Janda, he rushed home and destroyed every single idol he had. He also donated his wealth to the believers. He removed his elaborate clothes and wore another made of thick felt. He began to call others to the truth and became one of Salih’s (as) most prominent helpers.

Every time they saw Janda, the pagans would say:

“Shame on you for being fooled by Salih’s magic!” However, Janda took little notice and remained steadfast by the prophet’s side.

The Almighty revealed to Salih (as):

إِنَّا مُرْسِلُوا النَّاقَةَ فِتْنَةً لَهُمْ فَارْتَقِبْهُمْ وَاصْطَبِرْ

“Indeed, We are sending the camel as trial for them, so watch them and be patient.” (Al-Qamar, 54: 27)

...and informed him of the guidelines his tribe was to observe in treating the camel, which Salih (as) conveyed:

وَيَا قَوْمِ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ
وَلَا تَمْسُوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذْكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ

“And O my people, this is the camel of Allah - she is to you a sign. So let her feed upon Allah’s earth and do not touch her with harm, or you will be taken by an impending punishment.” (Hud, 11: 64)

قَالَ هَذِهِ نَاقَةٌ لَهَا شِرْبٌ وَلَكُمْ شِرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ.
وَلَا تَمْسُوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

“He said, ‘This is a camel. For her is a time of drink, and for you is a time of drink, each on a known day. And do not touch her with harm, lest you be seized by the punishment of a terrible day.’” (Al-Shu’ara, 42: 155-156)

The camel would graze the land with its calf and glorify the Lord. Its majesty would scare the other animals away and they would not dare approach it. The believers would drink from its milk, finding cure both physically and spiritually.

Ingratitude

The pagans, who suddenly felt useless and despondent in the face of the miracle, began plotting to kill the camel but were holding back out of fear of divine retribution. However, there were two women, who kept provoking the Thamud men to go ahead with the killing, alleging that the camel was harming their livestock. One of them was an old woman called Unayza bint Ghanam, who had beautiful daughters. The other was Muhayya, who had both wealth and beauty.

Both women had herds; and when Salih’s (as) camel drank from the town’s water, their livestock could not. The animals had to take turns. The camel and its calf would drink on one day, while the other livestock would drink on the other.

Muhayya called her cousin, Mista, and said, “If you kill the camel, I will marry you and give you everything I have!”

Mista agreed. Nevertheless, he needed the help of another; so he convinced another pagan by the name of Qitar, who was offered one of Unayza’s daughters.

The two men ended up gathering seven others to help them. The nine men then persuaded the rest of Thamud that the camel had to be killed. The Almighty says:

وَكَانَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ

“And there were in the city nine heads causing corruption in the land and not amending its affairs.” (Al-Naml, 27: 48)

The nine men lied in ambush. Mista shot an arrow and wounded the camel. Qitar and the others then lunged at it:

فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ

“So they killed the camel and violated the command of their Lord.” (Al-Araf, 7: 77)

The calf got scared and fled to the mountain. One report suggests they slaughtered it, too, and consumed its meat. After hearing what had happened, a distraught Salih (as) went next to the camel and wept. Despite everything, he still prayed for his kinsmen to be guided. However, they called out to him, saying:

وَقَالُوا يَا صَالِحُ ائْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“...‘O Salih, bring us what you promise us, if you are of the messengers.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 77)

فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رَسُولَ رَبِّي
وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُحِبُّونَ النَّاصِحِينَ

“And Salih turned away from them and said, ‘O my people, I had certainly conveyed to you the message of my Lord and advised you, but you do not like advisors!’” (Al-Araf, 7: 79)

قَالُوا اطَّيَّرْنَا بِكَ وَبِمَنْ مَعَكَ قَالَ طَائِرُكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ

“They said, ‘We consider you a bad omen, you and those with you.’ He said, “Your omen is with Allah. Rather, you are a people being tested.” (Al-Naml, 27: 47)



By saying, “...but you do not like advisers”, Salih (as) was letting Thamud know how much they had let him down. They evoke the words of the Prophet (saw), who three days after the Battle of Badr, stood by the pits where the slain leaders of Quraysh had been buried, and said:

“Tell me, people of the qalib!⁵² Do you now see that the things that your Lord promised you, are real? For I have today seen that they indeed are!”

He continued:

“How bad your attitudes were to your prophet! You denied me when others accepted me. You banished me from my hometown, when others embraced me with open arms. You warred with me, when others helped me. How bad your attitudes were!”

52. Qalib means a well or a ditch.

Umar (ra) who was nearby, asked:

“Messenger of Allah (as)...are you calling out to rotten corpses in the hope they will hear?”

“I promise by Allah, in whose Hand my life is”, he replied, “they hear me better than you all do; it is just that they cannot talk back!” (Muslim, Janaiz, 26/932; Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Musnad, III, 104)

Once, while passing through the area of Hijr, the Prophet (saw) said:

“Do not ask for a miracle. Salih’s (as) tribe did and their wish was granted. The camel would come from that direction over there towards the water and return from that direction. However, they transgressed and slaughtered it. The camel would drink from their water for one day, while they would drink from its milk on the other. However, they slaughtered it. Then, a loud noise caught them and they were all destroyed except for one person who happened to be in the Ka’bah at the time.”

“Who was he?” the companions asked.

“A man by the name of Abu Righal. However, the loud noise got him, the moment he stepped out.” (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, III, 296; Waqidi, Maghazi, III, 1007-1008)

The Terrifying Shriek and Quake that Seized the Transgressors

Salih’s (as) efforts to guide Thamud and steer them away from misery only ended up increasing their stubborn denial. Naturally, they brought upon their own demise. They were finally told they had only three more days left:

فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوا فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ وَعَدُّ غَيْرِ مَكْذُوبٍ

“He said, ‘Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three more days. That is a promise not to be denied.’” (Hud, 11: 65)

It is narrated that those days were Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. On the first their faces would turn yellow, on the second red, on the third black and on the fourth, they would be annihilated. On the first morning, strange things started to happen. Blood began to spurt out of the spots that the camel had stepped on. Leaves turned crimson. Drinking water turned red like blood. The people of Thamud watched their own faces turn yellow. The nine men who had killed the camel began to say, “Salih has cast a spell on us. Let us kill him and his family!” The Qur’an recounts their plot:

قَالُوا تَقَاسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَنَّ لِوَلِيِّهِ
مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ أَهْلِهِ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ

“They said, ‘Take a mutual oath by Allah that we will kill him by night, he and his family. Then we will say to his executor, ‘We did not witness the destruction of his family, and indeed, we are truthful!’” (Al-Naml, 27: 49)

The Almighty informed Salih (as) of their plan; and with his family and believers by his side, he migrated. The nine men had surrounded Salih’s (as) home that night waiting for the right moment to attack. When they did, there was no one inside. Once they stepped back out, with the will of the Lord, Jibril (as) pelted them to death with rocks:

وَمَكَرُوا مَكْرًا وَمَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“And they planned a plan, and We planned a plan, while they perceived not.” (Al-Naml, 27: 50)

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ

“So the quake seized them, and they became within their home corpses fallen prone.” (Al-Araf, 7: 78)

The city of Thamud suddenly resembled a ghost town. Salih (as) and his believers, who numbered around 4,000 people, had long departed.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صَالِحًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا
وَمِن خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ

“So when Our command came, We saved Salih and those who believed with him, by mercy from Us, and saved them from the disgrace of that day. Indeed, it is your Lord who is the Powerful, the Exalted in Might.” (Hud, 11: 66)

وَأَنْجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

“And We saved those who believed and feared Allah.” (Al-Naml, 27: 53)

On the second day, after the believers left the city, the pagans’ faces turned red as had been warned and black on the third. By now, they were terrified. They were looking left and right to see where their destruction would come from. The Almighty commanded Jibril (as) to turn their homes, which they took so much pride in and thought to be invincible, upside down. In a matter of moments, their city was no more. The Qur’an says:

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةً بِمَا ظَلَمُوا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

“So those are their houses, desolate because of the wrong they had done. Indeed, in that is a sign for people who know.” (Al-Naml, 27: 52)

What destroyed Thamud was a piercingly loud blast, a shriek, which according to Fakhruddin Razi, petrified and instantly killed them. The Qur’an describes it in a number of places:

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ غُتَاءً فَبُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

“So the shriek seized them in truth, and We made them as a plant stubble. Then away with the wrongdoing people!” (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 41)

وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ

“And the shriek seized those who had wronged, and they became within their homes corpses fallen prone.” (Hud, 11: 67)

Thamud were confident that their wealth and solid homes would save them from catastrophe. However, they could not estimate the power of divine wrath:

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُصْبِحِينَ. فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

“But the shriek seized them at early morning. So nothing availed them from what they used to earn.” (Al-Hijr, 83-84)

Because they did not take lessons from the past, they became a lesson for the future.

فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ.
وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

“And the punishment seized them. Indeed, in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers. And indeed, your Lord - He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.” (Al-Shu’ara, 42: 158-159)



The Qur’an tells us that a number of peoples were destroyed with a *sayhah*, a shriek. Thamud is one of them. Their blast sounded from the bottom of the earth. Another is Aykah, the people of Jethro (as), who were eradicated with a blast from the sky. The people of the town mentioned in Chapter Yasin also perished in a similar manner.

The Qur'an also informs us that judgment day will also be sounded with a single blast (*sayhatan wahidah*). Thus, the destructions mentioned are, in a sense, rehearsals of the final hour.



Shortly after the destruction of Thamud, Salih (as) advised his followers to "...leave this land immediately, for it is a place where Allah manifested His wrath. Seek refuge near the Ka'bah".

The believers then set out on camelback and offered pilgrimage. Soon, they returned to see the ruins of Thamud to ponder on the consequences of disbelief and give thanks to the Lord for saving them. Afterwards, they returned to near Mecca, where they remained for the rest of their lives.

The Reasons Behind the Destruction of People of Thamud

1. They insisted on denial and made fun of their prophet.
2. They yielded to conceit and their rampant egos.
3. They held their opinions above the religion and turned a deaf ear to their prophet's call.
4. They did not listen to advice.
5. They took the side of the nine killers.
6. They followed the caprices of wicked women and acted on their command.
7. They were jealous of righteous people. They would say to Salih (as) "...we never had any troubles until the day you said you were a prophet."
8. They were dazzled and fooled by the riches of the world.
9. They turned back on their word. It was them who had requested the camel and promised they would believe if they saw the miracle.
10. They betrayed their trust by killing the camel they had promised to leave alone.
11. They were complicit with criminals. They did not prevent the nine men from slaying the camel.
12. The camel belonged to no one. It belonged to Allah (jj). It was like a trust and its milk was free for all to drink. Again, they violated that trust.
13. Those nine men had gone too far in their misdemeanors. They would seize people's properties and had become loathed by all. However, their kinsmen, did not bring them to justice.

THE DESTRUCTION OF PEOPLES

The world is a trial and one must observe each moment with eyes wide open. However, unfortunately, most people live in a deep state of sleep. It is a sleep that in the past has dragged people to the most nightmarish of ends. For them, the world proved to be nothing but a bed of deception.

Whether rocky or smooth, every street on this land called life leads to the grave. The important thing is to reach that final stop with a sound heart filled with belief. However, thoughtlessness, ignorance, negligence, lust, reveling in the pleasures of the world, immorality and materialism often surrender the heart to the ego.

History is dotted with examples of transgressors struck by divine wrath. The arrogant men of Aad and Thamud, the Pharaoh who could not prevent a handful of the Red Sea's waters from filling his lungs despite his claim to be god, the likeminded Nimrod who could not defend himself against a tiny fly or Sodom and Gomorrah, who lived worse than beasts. They are now long gone along with their tyranny and rebellion, and if it was not for the Qur'an, would have also been long forgotten.

The Book says:

أَلَمْ يَأْتِهِمْ نَبَأُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ
وَقَوْمِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَأَصْحَابِ مَدْيَنَ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَاتِ أَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانَ
اللَّهُ لِيظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

“Has there not reached them the news of those before them, the people of Noah, Aad and Thamud; and the people of Abraham, the companions of Madyan and the towns overturned? Their messengers came to them with clear proofs. And Allah would never have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 70)

History is an arena where denial, rebellion and injustice has many a time been met with divine vengeance. Sooner or later, those who oppose the path shown by prophets inescapably encounter Allah's tremendous might. This is an unchanging divine law.

Allah sent prophets to heal the social wounds inflicted by selfish desires. Yet, many were too enamored by the dazzle of the world to accept treatment. They parted from the paths shown by prophets, only to end up being pieces in a rubble made up of others they dragged to demolition. They mistook their misery for joy; and unable to grasp the reason as to why they were created, they imitated animals, but ended up far lower.

The Qur'an declares:

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ هَلْ نُحِسُّ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا

“And how many generations have We destroyed before them? Do you see of them anyone or hear from them a sound?” (Maryam, 19: 98)

أَوْلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَانُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارُوا الْأَرْضِ وَعَمَرُوهَا أَكْثَرَ مِمَّا عَمَرُوهَا وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

“Have they not traveled through the earth and observed how was the end of those before them? They were greater than them in power, and they plowed the earth and built it up more than they have built it up, and their messengers came to them with clear evidences. And Allah would not ever have wronged them, but they were wronging themselves.” (Al-Rum, 30: 9)

The verses advise us to throw a thoughtful eye at the relics of the once great peoples of Aad and Thamud, who built splendid cities by tilling the land, pumping out water and mining precious metals and gems out of it, but lost it all to their denial.



Man searches for food to stay alive. And He searches Allah in times of duress because of the need to keep his spirit alive. When Nimrod had Abraham (as) thrown into the fire only to watch him come out unscathed, he told him, “I will not stop claiming I am god but I will sacrifice 4,000 cattle for yours”. Similarly, the Pharaoh exclaimed, “I believe in the God of Israel”, when he realized he would inescapably perish in the sea. These show that man has a deep-seated need for religion and inevitably turns to his inner world on his deathbed, when he feels genuinely vulnerable, unprotected and alone. However, for people who have spent their entire lives in denial, the final remorse holds no value.

It is a pity that those who have laid waste to their lives in ignorance wait until the very last moment to come to their senses. However, it is all too late. Their torment begins with the angel of death asking, “Where have you been all this time?”

Death cancels out every pleasure experienced in the world and brings an abrupt end to all passing trades.

The wise and righteous therefore seek to get closer to the truth by making their every breath count. They slip away from mortality by making their bodies rehearse death before it comes knocking. While everyone else sleeps, they remain awake.

It is unreasonable to flee death as if it is an ultimate end. None of us fears the approaching night as if the sun will never rise again. When night comes, we let ourselves go into the arms of sleep without the least fear, for we know that the morning will come by the time we reopen our eyes. In like manner, there is nothing more natural than to believe that death only signals a reawakening in the land of truth.

The Almighty says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَ
لَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ

“O mankind, indeed the promise of Allah is truth, so let not the worldly life delude you and let not the deceiver deceive you about Allah!” (Fatir, 35: 5)

What a shame it is to chase after the world like there is no tomorrow and tire oneself in reveling in its pleasures until the last breath. Islam commands us to gaze at the world with an eye of wisdom and live a conscious life on a straight, unwavering path. Allah states:

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ.
فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ

“Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned? So exalted is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth; there is no deity except Him, Lord of the Noble Throne.” (Al-Mu’minun, 23: 115-116)

أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ.
وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا
وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ. أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ
أَنْ يَسْبِقُونَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

“Do the people think that they will be left to say, ‘We believe’ and not be tried? 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. Or do those who do evil deeds think they can outrun Us? Evil is what they judge.”

(Al-Ankabut, 29: 2-4)

Islam regulates man’s life from the cradle to the grave and prepares him for the mysteries and the truth of the afterlife. What a waste it is for man to live without a purpose, without understanding the relation between the cradle and the coffin, with-

out grasping his position and role in the cosmos, and without making sense of the wisdom that underlies his steady journey to the grave! What legacy can he otherwise possibly leave behind other than a pile of sad memories?



Once prophets become powerless, divine help comes to their rescue and Allah's wrath and vengeance descends on their enemies. After 950 years, Noah (as) had run out of patience and prayed:

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَغْلُوبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ

“So he invoked his Lord, ‘Indeed, I am overpowered, so help!’” (Al-Qamar, 54: 10)

Manifestations of divine wrath, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, famine, floods, invasions and plagues, are the most feared events in life. Although these are often explained away as natural disasters, they are not arbitrary and occur due to a number of reasons. They happen because of man's rebellion and sins, which call upon the disasters to arrive.

Of course, the Almighty is not a tyrant. These disasters happen only when humans deserve it. Divine torment meets those who rally against the divine order.

The Qur'an tells us that even a leaf falls off a tree according to Allah's destiny. Had it been otherwise, anarchy would have prevailed throughout the cosmos. Each physical event contains thousands of mysteries known only to prophets and people of the heart.

The Qur'an includes many verses about the destruction of peoples and the reasons that underlie it. Allah does not oppress His servants and would never do them injustice. Those are traits that belong to human beings:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا وَلَكِنَّ النَّاسَ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

“Indeed, Allah does not wrong the people at all, but it is the people who are wronging themselves.” (Yunus, 12: 44)

With His infinite mercy, calm and patience, Allah only strikes when people pass beyond a point of no return in their evil and oppression. They are then turned into cases in point for those who come after them:

إِنَّ أَخْذَهُ أَلِيمٌ شَدِيدٌ

“His seizure is painful and severe.” (Hud, 11: 102)

Allah catches and destroys them with an intensity from which they cannot recover.

وَحَرَامٌ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ

“And there is prohibition upon the people of a city which We have destroyed that they will never return.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 95)

When recounting the destruction of past nations, the Qur’an also lays emphasis on the reasons behind it, so it could serve as a warning for those who are still alive. The biggest reasons of destruction are major sins such as being ungrateful to Allah’s blessings, becoming spoilt instead of thankful and going overboard in oppression and injustice. The Qur’an declares:

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ بَطَرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا فَتِلْكَ مَسَاكِينُهُمْ لَمْ تَسْكُنْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوَارِثِينَ

“And how many a city have We destroyed that was insolent in its way of living, and those are their dwellings which have not been inhabited after them except briefly. And it is We who were the inheritors.” (Al-Hajj, 28: 58)

وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَىٰ إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ

“And how many a city have We destroyed that was insolent in its way of living.” (Al-Hajj, 28: 59)

فَكَأَيُّنَ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا وَبِئْرٍ مُعَطَّلَةٍ وَقَصْرٍ مَشِيدٍ

“And how many a city did We destroy while it was committing wrong - so it is now fallen into ruin - and how many an abandoned well and a lofty palace.” (Al-Hajj, 22: 45)

Allah (jj) informs that every misfortune that finds man both in this life and in the hereafter is because of his own doing.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

“Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of what they have done that perhaps they will turn back.” (Al-Rum, 30: 41)

As understood from the above verse, the disorder and ruin that appear in both nature and society is brought upon my man following the desires of his ego. It is then that he denies Allah and basks in immorality and injustice. Allah dishes out some of that punishment in this life, so that man can come to his senses, repent and get back on the straight path. However, if he does not take heed, he will taste the worst of his punishment in the hereafter, which is the land of real punishment. The Qur'an says:

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُوا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ

“And whatever strikes you of disaster - it is for what your hands have earned; but He pardons much.” (Al-Shura, 42: 30)

Allah does in fact defer many of man's penalties to the afterlife.

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ

“And if Allah were to impose blame on the people for their wrongdoing, He would not have left upon the earth any creature.” (Al-Nahl, 16: 61)

The troubles man faces in return for his sins are only warnings for him to wake up.

However, Allah's law regarding true believers is a little different. The troubles and misfortunes they undergo compensate for their sins and shortcomings. Our Prophet (saw) has in fact said:

“Allah (jj) makes everything a Muslim undergoes from exhaustion, illness and sorrow to even a thorn in his heels...a means to forgive his sins”. (Al-Bukhari, Marda, 1, 3; Muslim, Birr, 49)

The troubles man undergoes while working for the sake of Allah (jj) not only compensate for his sins but also serve to lift his spiritual standing.

The Almighty tells us He has recounted the stories of destroyed peoples over and over again so that people will draw lessons and come back on the true path:

وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا مَا حَوْلَكُمْ مِنَ الْقُرَىٰ وَصَرَّفْنَا الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

“And We have already destroyed what surrounds you of those cities, and We have diversified the signs or verses that perhaps they might return from disbelief.” (Al-Ahqaf, 46: 27)

وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَاهَا آيَةً فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

“And We left it as a sign, so is there any who will remember?” (Al-Qamar, 54: 15)

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ هُمْ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ بَطْشًا فَنَقَّبُوا فِي الْبِلَادِ هَلْ مِنْ مَحِيصٍ. إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ

“And how many a generation before them did We destroy who were greater than them in power and had explored throughout the lands. Is there any place of escape? Indeed, in that is a reminder for whoever has a heart or who listens while he is present in mind.” (Qaf, 50: 36-37)

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ

“So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts.” (Al-Hajj, 22: 46)

Because the heart is the center of all emotions, as well as intellectual and moral qualities, the verse alludes the fact that a heart blinded by mulish denial deafens a person to the truth and keeps him away from sensible behavior.



Allah has devastating power. It turned the flames of Nimrod into lush gardens for Abraham (as). It smashed the kingship of the Pharaoh on its head for Moses (as). It crushed the army of Abraha with pebbles thrown by birds and turned Mecca into a cemetery for the war elephants he had brought to destroy the Ka'bah. It aided the Prophet (saw) with invisible soldiers such as angels, winds and fear and opened for him the horizons of victory.

Places where divine wrath became manifest carry the traces of those catastrophes until the end of time. During his farewell pilgrimage, the Prophet (saw) sped up while passing through Muhassir Valley between Mina and Muzdalifah. When his companions asked him why, he said:

“It was here that the Almighty laid waste to the army of Abraha. I sped up not to bring upon myself any share of that wrath.”⁵³

Again, as the army was passing through the land of Thamud during the Tabuk Campaign, the Prophet (saw) advised his companions to:

“Pass through these houses of stone with grief. And do not pick up anything from here...for it was here that a group of wrongdoers met divine punishment!”

53. See, Muslim, Hajj, 147; al-Nawawi, *Sharhu Sahihi Muslim*, VIII, 190.

The companions said, "But we have filled our bottles with water from here...we have even made dough with it."

The Prophet (saw) then told them to:

"Empty out your bottles and leave your dough!" (Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 17)

These places of sin and rebellion continue to bear the wrath that the Almighty once made manifest. To avoid receiving a reflection of that, it is best to avoid going to these places altogether. If one has no other way than to go, he must pass through as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, the Ka'bah, the grave of our Prophet (saw) and the graves of other prophets, mosques, as well as the company of righteous people, are places that receive a constant influx of spiritual inspiration. These are place where divine mercy rains on hearts.

Since the time of Adam (as), Allah sent prophets and revealed books to guide people out of the darkness of denial and immorality. This is a major gift and blessing from our Lord. The final and most complete instance of that is Prophet Muhammed (saw). He is the eternal teacher of humanity, a light reflected on a desert that has taken eternity in its shade.



Islam invites man to act responsibly, constantly reminding him of the day he will be called before Allah to give an account of his entire life. For that reason, a believer must refrain from futile activities, gossip and empty pursuits that lower his moral standards. He must avoid mingling with ignorant people or delve into pointless and vain adventures. He must keep away from the backstreets of deviant philosophies.

Living life without concern for the hereafter is as bizarre as enjoying the day without thinking about the evening. Life on earth passes by as quickly as a cloud in summer. Rumi says:

"Do not feed your flesh in excess...for it will eventually be sacrificed to earth! Look to fill your heart from the fountains of inspiration. It is the heart that will be honored and reach lofty heights.

Give your body only little of the oily and sweet stuff...for those who feed their flesh in excess fall into desire and end up lost.

Feed your spirit with maturity and finesse so that it goes where it will go full of strength!"

May Allah protect us all from a pitiful end....and grant us entry to the gardens of paradise!

Amin...

Prophet Salih





P R O P H E T
ABRAHAM

-peace be upon him-

*The prophet who challenged the tyranny and threats of Nimrod and
turned blazing flames into gardens of rose*

ABRAHAM
-peace be upon him-

Abraham (as) was born in the east of Babylon, in an area between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates. One report has it that his father was a sincere believer by the name of Taruh. After Taruh passed away, Abraham's (as) mother married his pagan brother Azer, who became Abraham's (as) stepdad. Nevertheless, according to another report, Taruh was what Azer was called before he turned pagan. However, in any case, based on a report from Ibn Abbas (ra), Imam Suyuti confirms that Azer was Abraham's (as) uncle and not his father.

Abraham (as) was a Chaldean. After Prophet Muhammed (saw), he is considered the best of all humankind. He has been honored by Allah as *Khalil*, a friend, and is therefore also known as *Khalil'ur-Rahman*.⁵⁴

Abraham (as) received a divine revelation of ten pages. Abu Dharr (ra) narrates from the Prophet (saw) that these pages contained these wisdoms:

"O king, who has lost the trial with kingship and power! I did not send you to the world to pile up gold and silver but to make sure that the oppressed never feel the need to call upon My help...for I never turn back a call from the oppressed, even if he may be a disbeliever!

An intelligent person must divide his time....

A portion of it to pray to and worship the Lord

...another to contemplate on the art and might of the Lord

...another to call himself into account for past deeds and reflect on how he will conduct himself in the future

...and another to make a clean and honest living." (Abu Nuaym, Hilyah, I, 167; Ibn Esir, alKamil, I, 124)

54. Due to his legendary submission and trust in God and his status as *Khalilullah*, or the friend of Allah, prophet Abraham (as) has earned the love of people far and wide and many have since named their sons *Khalil Ibrahim* in his honor.

Abraham (as) is also called *Abu'l-Anbiya*, the Father of Prophets. That is because Prophet Muhammed (saw) is a descendant of Abraham's son, Ismail (as), while all the Israelite prophets descend from his other son, Isaac (as).

The Qur'an mentions Abraham (as) exactly 69 times across 25 chapters; and praises him with a number of names:

Awwah, he who prays and appeals a lot,

Halim, he who is soft, kindhearted,

Munib, he who turns to Allah from the bottom of the heart,

Hanif, he who holds tight on the religion of *tawhid* and keeps away from error and denial,

Qanit, he who serves Allah alone,

Shakir, he who thanks Allah in spades.

Abraham (as) made his living selling clothes and fabric; and took up farming after his migration from the land of Chaldea.

Nimrod

Nimrod was the king of the Chaldeans. During the first years of his rule, he was just and fair. The Chaldeans worshipped idols, as well as the stars. However, after expanding his reign and power, pride took hold of Nimrod and he ordered statues of himself to be made. He then said to his people:

"I, too, am a god. Worship me also!"

It is narrated that Nimrod saw a dream, where a light shining from the sky snuffed out the light of the sun and the moon. Another report says, he once dreamt of a man pulling him off his throne and throwing him to the ground. He woke up in sweat and summoned his soothsayers for an interpretation.

"There will come a new religion", they said. "And the man who brings that religion will destroy your throne. Take action from now!"

Nimrod thereupon consulted his advisors and ordered every newborn male to be killed. Around a hundred thousand babies were slain.

It was at that point that his mother was about to give birth to Abraham (as). She asked Azer to, "...go to the temple and pray for me! If I have a son, I will bring him to you...and you can personally take him to Nimrod. He will kill the boy and you will gain Nimrod's favor!"

Nevertheless, this was just a ploy. Not long after Azer left, she gave birth to Abraham (as) and secretly took him (as) to a cave, where he placed him. When Azer returned, she told him it was a stillbirth.

From that point on, whenever Azer left home, she would go to the cave to feed and take care of her son. She would sometimes notice Abraham (as) sucking his fingers. That was because Jibril (as) would make milk and honey flow from his fingertips.

It is said that Abraham (as) spent his early childhood in the cave and began spreading the message of Allah's oneness, the moment he came out of it as an adolescent.

The Qur'an says:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ

“And We had certainly given Abraham his sound judgement before, and We were of him Knowing.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 51)

Rushd is to find the true path, to separate right from wrong, to keep patient on the way of truth and to proceed on it without wavering.

Nevertheless, every time Abraham (as) said, “There is no god but Allah. He is my Lord and the Lord of all things else”, his mother would weep, fearing what Nimrod might do to him if he found out. She would warn Abraham (as) not to say such things but he would assure her:

“Do not fear what Nimrod might do to me. My Lord, who protected me as a child, will also protect me as a grown up”. (Ibn Ilyas, Badayiu'z-Zuhur, p. 84)

My Lord is Allah

Azer was a sculptor, who made his living from making and selling idols. His elder sons would take them to the market and heap praise on the idols to attract buyers. However, Abraham (as) would tie a rope around the idol's neck and drag it across the market, shouting:

“Is anyone interested in buying an idol that has no power to do itself good or harm?”

He would sometimes dip the idol's head in the water, talking out loud, “Have some water...you must be thirsty by now!”

Thanks to the *rushd* Allah had given him, Abraham (as) was able to gain insight into many divine mysteries, without anyone's tutelage. The Qur'an praises the way in

which he recognized Allah and called on his people to do the same at such a young age:

فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ اللَّيْلُ رَأَى كَوْكَبًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَا أُحِبُّ الْآفِلِينَ.
 فَلَمَّا رَأَى الْقَمَرَ بَازِعًا قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي فَلَمَّا أَفَلَ قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِي رَبِّي لَأَكُونَنَّ
 مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّالِّينَ. فَلَمَّا رَأَى الشَّمْسَ بَازِعَةً قَالَ هَذَا رَبِّي هَذَا أَكْبَرُ فَلَمَّا
 أَفَلَتْ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ. إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ
 السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“So when the night covered him with darkness, he saw a star. He said, ‘This is my lord.’ But when it set, he said, ‘I like not those that disappear.’ And when he saw the moon rising, he said, ‘This is my lord.’ But when it set, he said, ‘Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray.’ And when he saw the sun rising, he said, ‘This is my lord; this is greater.’ But when it set, he said, “O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah. Indeed, I have turned my face toward He who created the heavens and the earth, as a *hanif*,⁵⁵ and I am not of those who associate others with Allah.” (Al-An’am, 6: 76-79)

The above verses speak about how Abraham (as) clearly demonstrates to his people the error behind worshipping any being other than Allah. He sees a star and remarks, ‘That’s my Lord? As if!’ First, he suggests how ridiculous it is to accept a star as god. Then once the star sets, he delivers the punchline: ‘I have no love for things that disappear!’ This carries two messages. Firstly, love is central to both divinity and servanthood and secondly, to disappear is not a sign of being the Creator but suggests being created; for things that disappear, cannot be god, or what is the same, God cannot disappear. Thus, it was a grave error to mistake creation for the Creator, insofar God had to be a creative force that, unlike a star, would never set.

This also shows that any intelligent human being can reach the knowledge of Allah’s oneness and existence through contemplation. A number of scholars have therefore said that people are still responsible in believing in the existence and oneness of Allah even if they never get to hear about Islam. They are obliged to believe

55. A *hanif* is a person who cleanses himself of superstitious beliefs, mistaken thoughts and bad morals, turns to the good and the truth, and as a monotheist, prays only to God and expects rewards only from Him. This is a distinctive quality that sets Islam apart in belief, ethics as well as social interaction. Although *hanif* is a quality of Abraham’s (as) religion and people, as the total opposite of polytheism, it is the uniting feature of the teachings of all prophets and the defining aspect of monotheism, the religion of *tawhid*. A *hanif* is a Muslim who steers away from the false, believes in *tawhid* and adheres to the religion of prophets, who have been tasked with spreading the message that belief is exclusively to be directed to God and God alone is to be worshipped.

in that, even though they will not be responsible for the deeds of worship Islam commands.

The Call to Tawhid

Abraham (as) had digested the divine truths and found Allah through an insight given to none other. He began his call by first inviting his stepfather, Azer:

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا. يَا
أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا. يَا
أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا. يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ
يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا

“When he said to his father, ‘O my father, why do you worship that which does not hear, does not see and will not benefit you at all? O my father, indeed there has come to me of knowledge that which has not come to you, so follow me; I will guide you to an even path. My father, do not worship Satan. Indeed, Satan has ever been, to the Most Merciful, disobedient. O my father, indeed I fear that there will touch you a punishment from the Most Merciful so you would be to Satan a companion in hellfire.’” (Maryam, 19: 42-45)

Azer hit back with anger:

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ أَنْتَ عَنِ الْهَيْتِي يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَئِنْ لَمْ
تَنْتَهَ لِأَرْجُمَنَّكَ وَاهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا

“Have you no desire for my gods, Abraham? If you do not refrain, I will surely stone you, so stay out of my sight for some time.” (Maryam, 19: 46)

However, Abraham (as) remained soft spoken:

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا

“Peace will be upon you. I will ask forgiveness for you of my Lord. Indeed, He is ever gracious to me.” (Maryam, 19: 47)

He prayed that Azer be forgiven. However, his prayer was not accepted as Azer was an enemy of Allah. The moment Abraham (as) truly understood that, he stopped praying for him. One can only pray for the disbelievers to be guided, not forgiven. The Qur’an declares:

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولِي قُرْبَىٰ مِنْ
بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ. وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ
مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَّهَا إِيَّاهُ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ

“It is not for the Prophet and those who have believed to ask forgiveness for pagans, even if they were relatives, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of hellfire. And the request of forgiveness of Abraham for his father was only because of a promise he had made to him. But when it became apparent to Abraham that his father was an enemy to Allah, he disassociated himself from him. Indeed, was Abraham compassionate and patient.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 113-114)

The Qur’an makes repeated mention of Abraham’s (as) struggle against both his stepfather and his people, and the manner in which he invited them to *tawhid* through reason and logic. The dialogue below is one example:

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا هَذِهِ التَّمَاثِيلُ الَّتِي أَنْتُمْ لَهَا عَاكِفُونَ. قَالُوا
وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا لَهَا عَابِدِينَ. قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ.
قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنْتَ مِنَ اللَّاعِبِينَ. قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَلِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

“And when he said to his father and his people, ‘What are these statues to which you are devoted?’. They said, ‘We found our fathers worship them. ‘He said, ‘You were certainly, you and your fathers, in manifest error’. They said, ‘Have you come to us with truth, or are you of those who jest?’ He said, ‘No, rather, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth who created them, and I, to that, am of those who testify.’” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 52-56)

Abraham (as) Breaks the Idols

The Chaldeans used to gather once a year for a festival. Azer told Abraham (as) to come along but Abraham (as) turned back on the way there, citing his illness as an excuse. Instead of returning home, he headed straight to the temple. It was lined with idols made of silver, bronze and wood. In front of the idols were plates full of food, which the pagans had put there for blessings. The biggest idol, draped in silk and wearing a crown, was placed on a golden throne.

Abraham (as) grabbed an axe and broke every single one of the idols except for the big one. He then hung the axe around its neck and walked out.

Once the sun set, the festival ended and the pagans began returning to the temple to the scene of a great shock. Some of them exclaimed, "Only Abraham would dare do such a thing!" So, they called Abraham (as) and asked whether it was him.

Abraham said, "That big idol over there wanted people only to worship him and so he was angry with the other idols. It is possible that he mowed them all down and then hung the axe around its neck. I say let us ask him for an explanation!"

"Idols do not speak", they said.

"Then how can these mute things, which cannot even help themselves, protect you? When will you come to your senses?"

The Qur'an explains the incident as follows:

فَرَاغَ إِلَىٰ آلِهِتِهِمْ فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ.
مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْطِقُونَ. فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ

"Then he turned to their gods and said, 'Do you not eat? What is wrong with you that you do not speak?' And he struck them a blow with his right hand."

(Al-Saffat, 37: 91-93)

فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذَاذًا إِلَّا كَبِيرًا لَهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ يَرْجِعُونَ. قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ. قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذُكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ. قَالُوا فَأْتُوا بِهِ عَلَىٰ أَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ. قَالُوا أَأَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ. قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ. فَرَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ. ثُمَّ نَكِسُوا عَلَىٰ رُؤُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ. قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ. أَفِ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ.

"So he crushed them into fragments, except a large one among them, that they might return to it and question. They said, 'Who has done this to our gods? Indeed, he is of the wrongdoers!'. They said, 'We heard a young man speak ill of them who is called Abraham'. They said, 'Then bring him before the eyes of the people that they may testify'. They said, 'Have you done this to our gods, Abraham?' He said, 'Rather, this, the largest of them, did it, so ask it, if it should be able to speak'. So they returned to blaming themselves and said to each other,

‘Indeed, you are the wrongdoers!’⁵⁶ Then they back flipped and said, ‘You already know that these do not speak!’ He said, ‘Then do you worship instead of Allah that which does not benefit you at all or harm you? Woe to you and to what you worship instead of Allah! Will you not use reason?’” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 58-67)

However, the pagans would not come to their senses. They were only certain Abraham (as) was the culprit. They could not take what had happened; and instead of facing up to their foolishness and turning to Allah, decided to burn Abraham (as) alive:

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ

“They said, ‘Burn him and support your gods, if you are to act!’” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 68)

The Trial by Fire

The pagans quickly delivered the news to Nimrod, who called Abraham (as) to his palace.

It was custom to prostrate to Nimrod when entering his court. However, Abraham (as) just walked straight up. An infuriated and at the same time curious Nimrod asked him why.

“I only prostrate to He who has created both you and I”, he said.

“Who is your Lord?” Nimrod asked.

“My Lord -and yours- is Allah, who gives and takes life.”

“I”, said Nimrod, “give and take life”. He then summoned two prisoners from the dungeon. He killed one and set the other free. He then turned to Abraham (as) and remarked, “See...I can do that, too!”

Little did Nimrod know that to give life was to give spirit and to kill someone was to remove it. Abraham (as) then offered a challenge:

“My Lord rises the sun from the east. Make it rise from the west, if you can!”

The Qur’an recounts the exchange:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ حَاجَّ إِبرَاهِيمَ فِي رَبِّهِ أَنْ آتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ إِذْ قَالَ إِبرَاهِيمُ رَبِّي
الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ قَالَ أَنَا أُحْيِي وَأُمِيتُ قَالَ إِبرَاهِيمُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْتِي بِالشَّمْسِ

56. This has also been taken to mean that the pagans got into a verbal argument and started blaming each other, calling one another ‘tyrants’ for going to celebrate while leaving their idols vulnerable and unprotected.

مِنَ الْمَشْرِقِ فَأْتِ بِهَا مِنَ الْمَغْرِبِ فَبُهِتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

“Have you not considered the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord merely because Allah had given him kingship? When Abraham said, ‘My Lord is the one who gives life and causes death,’ he said, ‘I give life and cause death.’ Abraham said, ‘Indeed, Allah brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up from the west.’ So the disbeliever was overwhelmed, and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 258)

The verse gives us a hint of the level of Nimrod’s aggression and his declaration of war on the Almighty. Imam Baydawi says that Nimrod was the first man to claim he was god. Instead of thanking the Lord for the wealth and kingdom he was given, he had opted for ingratitude and denial.

There are two reports regarding the backstory of Abraham’s (as) meeting with Nimrod.

1. Abraham (as) was imprisoned after he demolished the idols; and was brought to Nimrod just before he was going to be thrown into the fire.

2. A famine had gripped the land of Chaldea for a year and Nimrod was handing out food to people. Before he would give the food, he would ask a person, “Who is your lord?” and they would be compelled to say ‘Nimrod’. However, when it was Abraham’s (as) turn, he said, “My Lord is He who gives life and takes it away!”

Nimrod became angry and called on his council to advise him of a proper punishment. A wicked man by the name of Hanun⁵⁷ said:

“Let’s burn him!”

Nimrod accepted the proposal and ordered a grand fire to be lit. People carried wood for it for a month. The ignorant public enthusiastically volunteered to carry the wood, thinking, ‘...the man has offended our idols!’ The fire was lit. It was a like mountain of flames that reached the skies. Birds could not even fly near it from the heat.

The preparations were over and people had gathered around fire. Abraham (as) was brought shackled and handcuffed. However, despite facing death, the great prophet was resigned. There was not a speck of fear or doubt in his heart.

For a bit, Nimrod and his advisors discussed what the best way to throw him into the fire would be. They decided to use a catapult.

57. Hanun would later be sunk to the bottom of the earth.

The angels on earth and in the heavens implored:

“Oh Lord...Abraham is going to burn. He is a prophet who does not forget you for even a second. Please grant us permission to help him...”

Allah did.

One angel came to Abraham (as) said, “All winds are under my command. Say the word and I will blow the flames away!”

Another one came and said, “All waters are under my command. Say the word and I will put out the fire in a second!”

Another said, “The soil is under my command. Say the word and I will sink the fire to the ground”.

However, Abraham (as) said to them all:

“Do not come in between a friend and a friend! I am happy with whatever my Lord wills! If He saves me, it is from His grace. If he burns me, it is because of my sins. I hope I will keep patient!”

When placed on the catapult, he prayed:

حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

“Allah is enough for us...and what a Trustee He is!”

Abdullah ibn Abbas (ra) narrates that Abraham (as) made that prayer midair, as he was being shot into the fire.

The Prophet (saw) and his companions repeated the same prayer, when they were told after the Battle of Uhud that “...the pagan army has regathered and are out to finish you off!” (Bukhai, Tafsir, 3/13)

Moments before being thrown, Jibril (as) came down and asked Abraham (as) if he had a wish.

“Yes”, he said, “...but not from you!”

“Why don’t you ask Allah to save you?” an astonished Jibril (as) asked. Abraham (as) replied:

“He knows my situation. With whose command does the fire burn? And who is the One who burns?”

That response is the inspiration behind the poem, “Once one understands the score, questions fly out the door...”

The Almighty was pleased with Abraham (as) bypassing even the angels and turning entirely to Him. He praises Abraham (as) as:

وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّى

“And Abraham, who was loyal.” (Al-Najm, 53: 37)

And again:

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْنَا قَالَ أَسَلَّمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“When his Lord said to him, ‘Submit’, he said ‘I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds.’” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 131)

The Fire Turns into a Garden

Due to Abraham’s (as) supreme submission, before he ever landed in the fire, Allah commanded:

يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

“O fire, be cool and peaceful for Abraham!” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 69)

With that order, Abraham (as) landed into what had now become a garden roses. A sweet spring also began to burst near him. It is also narrated that a shirt was sent from paradise, which Abraham (as) wore. The shirt was later passed onto Isaac (as), and from him to Jacob (as) and Joseph (as). This is the same shirt that Joseph (as) sent back to his father Jacob (as) to cure his eyesight.

It is reported that once Allah commanded the flames to be cool and calm, for a while, every single fire burning on earth turned cool.

Nimrod could not believe what he just saw. He exclaimed:

“How great a Lord you have Abraham! How great is His power to save you from harm! You have a glorious Lord...and I will sacrifice four thousand cattle for Him!”

Abraham (as) said, “Your sacrifices will mean nothing unless you turn back from your ways!”

“I will make those sacrifices”, Nimrod said. “But I cannot abandon my kingdom and wealth!”

Abraham (as), who survived the fire without even a blister, turned to the onlookers and said:

وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا مَوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ
فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ وَيَلْعَنُ
بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا وَمَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

“You have only taken, other than Allah, idols as a bond of affection among you in worldly life. Then on the Day of Resurrection you will deny one another and curse one another, and your refuge will be the Fire, and you will not have any helpers.” (Al-Ankabut, 29: 25)

Abraham’s (as) Migration

After the incident, Allah (jj) ordered Abraham (as) and his followers to leave the land, so they could freely live their religion and avoid the punishment that would befall Nimrod and the Chaldeans. They obeyed the command without question. The Almighty praises their submission:

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا
لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَءُؤَا مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا
بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدَهُ

“There has already been for you an excellent example in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, ‘Indeed, we are disassociated from you and from whatever you worship other than Allah. We have denied you, and there has appeared between us and you, animosity and hatred forever, until you believe in Allah alone.’” (Al-Mumtahinah, 60: 4)

Thus, Allah the Almighty delivered His Khalil and the believers to safer ground. The Qur’an further says:

فَأَمَّنَ لَهُ لُوطٌ وَقَالَ إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

“And Lot believed him. Abraham said, ‘Indeed, I will emigrate to my Lord. Indeed, He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.’” (Al-Ankabut, 29: 26)

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ

“And We delivered him and Lot to the land which We had blessed for the worlds.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 71)

Lot (as) was Abraham's (as) nephew. Considering Lot (as) is a prophet, it is unthinkable for him to have been a disbeliever at any stage in his life. Thus, the above verse should be taken as to mean Lot (as) was the first person to confirm the truth of Abraham's (as) call.



Abraham (as) first went to Babylon and from there, to the town of Harran⁵⁸ south of Urfa, accompanied by the believers including Lot (as) and his cousin, Sarah.

In line with Allah's command, Abraham (as) married Sarah, a righteous and upright woman, devoted to her husband.

Abraham (as) and Sarah then continued onto Damascus and Egypt. As for Lot (as), he went as prophet to the land of Sodom and Gomorrah. That is where the Dead Sea is today and the Qur'an refers to it as the land that was 'turned upside down' (*mutafike*), in reference to what it would later become.

Egypt was under the rule of a pharaoh and his family. They were conceited and oppressive. Whenever a foreign and beautiful woman crossed the border, the Pharaoh would be informed. If she was married, her husband would be killed. However, if she was accompanied by his brother, they would ask him for her. When Sarah crossed the border with her husband, the news quickly reached the palace.

Abraham (as) was questioned and he told them that Sarah is his sister; though what he meant was she was his sister in religion. So, they left Abraham (as) alone but took Sarah to the palace. A hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari reports:

"Once Sarah entered the palace, she took ablution and stood for prayer. Afterwards, she pleaded, 'My Lord...if I am a chaste woman, who has truly believed in You and your prophet, protect me from the evils of this pagan!'" (Al-Bukhari, Buyu', 100)

The Pharaoh did try to make a move on Sarah. However, he suddenly lost his breath and became paralyzed. Out of fear, he set Sarah free and gave her Hagar as a maid and helper. When asked by his advisors as to why he did that, he said:

*"This woman is a witch! If she stayed with me for a bit longer, I would have been dead. I gave her Hagar to protect myself from her spell!"*⁵⁹

The Almighty advises us to seek His help through prayer, patience and the good deeds we have done in the past:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ

58. Harran takes its name from Abraham's (as) brother Harran, who founded the ancient city.

59. See, Muslim, Fada'il, 154.

“O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 153)

Sarah was saved by exactly doing that.

The Pharaoh’s daughter, Hurya, had very much liked Sarah and gave her some jewelry as present. However, Sarah returned them after Abraham (as) saw them and said:

“Take them back...we do not need them”. Hurya told his father about it, who became astonished and remarked:

“They surely must be people of honor, with a clean and noble lineage!”

Abraham (as), accompanied by Sarah and Hagar, soon left Egypt and arrived in Palestine. They stopped over at a quiet and desolate place called Sab. Abraham (as) dug up a well and extracted some clean water. Not long after, they ran out of food, so Abraham (as) set out for the nearest town. However, he stopped on the way and decided to return as he had no money. However, thinking Sarah and Hagar might despair, he returned carrying a sack filled with sand and stones. He was exhausted. He dropped the sack and fell asleep.

Sarah asked Hagar to “Open the sack!” And she did.

However, the sand and stones had turned into wheat. The pair quickly grinded the grains and made bread out of the flour. Abraham (as) woke up to a surprise and thanked his Lord.

With Allah’s grace, Sab soon became a place thriving with natural resources; and those passing by began settling there for good. Nevertheless, after a while, they became ingrate to the point of even banning Abraham (as) from accessing the well he himself had dug up. Abraham (as) was hurt and as a result, the well dried up. Seeing that, the settlers regretted what they had done and begged Abraham (as) to forgive them and pray to the Almighty on their behalf. Abraham (as) was a very kindhearted prophet. He accepted their apologies and prayed to the Lord. In no time, the waters once again began to burst.

The Destruction of Nimrod and His People

After Abraham (as) migrated to Babylon, Nimrod and the Chaldeans, who were too overtaken by pride and conceit to submit to Allah, were struck by a swarm of mosquitos. They sucked the lifeblood out of the pagans, who met their end withered and consumed. One mosquito flew right through Nimrod’s nose into his brain. The proud Nimrod would have his head beaten with a mallet just to relieve the ache. Eventually, a powerful strike of the mallet ended up smashing his skull into pieces.

The Qur’an says:

وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ

“And they intended for him harm, but We made them the greatest losers.”

(Al-Anbiya, 21: 70)⁶⁰

To serve as a lesson for those to come, Nimrod and his cohorts, intoxicated by their power, perished in the attack of the smallest of all insects.

Birds Come to Life

Abraham (as) prayed to Allah to see, with his own two eyes, “...how Your infinite power works in bringing the dead back to life”.

The Qur’an recounts the incident:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى قَالَ أُولِمَ تُوْمِنُ قَالَ بَلَىٰ
وَلَكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ
كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِيَنَّكَ سَعْيًا وَاعْلَمَنَّ أَنَّهُ اللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

“And when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead.’ Allah said, ‘Have you not believed?’ He said, ‘Yes, but I ask only that my heart may be satisfied.’ Allah said, ‘Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then after slaughtering them put on each hill a portion of them; then call them: they will come flying to you in haste. And know that Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 260)

Abraham (as) was curious to see how a dead being would come back to life and asked the Almighty to show him. However, while Allah showed him how the process physically takes place, He did not disclose the nature of rebirth. That is because the human mind lacks the capacity to understand the true nature of being revived after death. As the Qur’an mentions elsewhere, examples of the kind shown to prophets are considered miracles. What is important is to have complete belief in the fact that when the time comes, Allah will certainly revive all beings, especially humans, and call them into account.

Yet, while it is the infinitely powerful God who kills and revives as He wills, He may sometime complete the action through human beings. The case of Abraham (as) is an example.

رَبِّي الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ

60. Also see, al-Saffat, 37: 98.

“My Lord gives life and takes it away” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 258). This is Abraham (as) talking. When he says ‘My Lord’, he means, ‘My Lord who can give and take away life’. Thus, when he asks Allah to show him how He brings the dead back to life, he implies, ‘Yes, I certainly know You can bring the dead alive but I am curious as to whether Your action can take place through me as a medium’. When Allah asks, ‘Is it because you do not fully believe?’, Abraham replies, ‘I certainly and fully believe You can put life back in the dead whenever You wish...but I only ask for a peace of mind, for my heart to proceed from faith to certitude by witnessing the act with my very own eyes’. So, all Abraham (as) wanted was a heart free of all deficiencies and in doing so, reach the spiritual state of *hullah*, which is the level of friendship based on love deep from within the heart; and thereby remain the *khalil*, the friend of Allah, for eternity.

The first duty of the human mind is to believe in Allah (jj). However, the mind always looks for a source, a beginning point, a basis. It is therefore necessary to submit the mind to the glory of the Almighty and take hold of the unshakable wisdom it holds out.

There are few other reports surrounding Abraham’s (as) wish to see how Allah revives the dead. Said ibn Jubayr narrates that once Allah declared Abraham (as) His beloved friend -*khalil*-, Jibril (as) brought the news. Abraham (as) asked, “What is the sign of that?”

Jibril (as) replied, “The Almighty will accept your prayers and through them, will bring the dead back to life.”

It was at that moment he asked, “My Lord...show me how You revive the dead!”

Tafsir-i Hazin also provides the following:

Abraham (as) had seen a carcass by the side of river, being dragged in and out of the waters by the waves, with both land and sea animals feeding off from it. Its flesh had been ripped apart and its bones were visible. For a split second, he reflected on how these scattered lumps of flesh and bone would be regathered for life after death. It was then that the above incident took place.

Ebussuud Effendi offers the information below:

Nimrod had asked Abraham (as) whether he had seen, with his own eyes, how the spirit is instated and withdrawn in the process of life and death. Abraham (as) remained silent; and the incident took place shortly afterward.

As instructed by Allah, Abraham (as) took a peacock, a crow, a pigeon and a rooster. He slaughtered them all and mixed their parts together. He divided that mixture into four and placed each chunk on a separate hilltop. He then called each of them. They all flew back to him.

Similarly, Ubayy ibn Khalaf, who rejected life after death, once brought a decayed bone to the Prophet (as); and after crumbling it to dust in his hands, said, “Do you really believe that Allah will bring these decayed bones to life?”

“Yes”, replied the Prophet (as). “Allah will bring you back to life and put you in hell!” (Al-Qurtubi, al-Jami, XV, 58; al-Wahidi, p. 379)

Allah the Almighty revealed the following:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ
وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ
قُلْ يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنْشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ

“Does man not consider that We created him from a mere drop of sperm; then at once he is a clear adversary? And he presents for Us an example and forgets his own creation. He says, ‘Who will give life to bones while they are disintegrated?’ Say, ‘He will give them life who produced them the first time; and He is, of all creation, Knowing.’” (Ya Sin, 36: 77-79)

Qadi Baydawi suggests there is also good reason as to why those four species of birds were chosen:

The peacock was chosen to signal the need to reduce love for the dazzle and pleasures of the world and to defeat the ego’s lust. To bridle anger, which leads to aggression and rage, the rooster was chosen; as it is an animal that acts mostly with that instinct. The crow was taken as a symbol of jealousy and ignominy and to illustrate the need to rid oneself of these impulses. The pigeon was sacrificed to show the need to quell worldly ambition. Thus, the story teaches us that a person wishing for eternal revival must first train himself to curb the desires of his ego and channel them to what is good and what is in the line with the pleasure of Allah.

Abraham’s (as) Marriage to Hagar

Abraham (as) and Sarah were getting old but had no kids. Sarah decided to set Hagar free and have her married to Abraham (as). From that marriage, Ismail (as) was born and the Mohammedan Light passed onto him. Sarah had previously thought the she would be the one to pass on that light. So, she became upset and asked Abraham (as) to take Hagar away. With the command of Allah, Abraham (as) took Hagar and their son, Ismail (as) to the barren and remote land of Mecca. Jibril (as) led the way as their guide. When they reached Mecca, he said:

“This is the place where you will settle your family!”

Abraham (as) said, “But this land is not good for farming or herding”.

“Certainly not”, said Jibril (as). “But it is here that the Unlettered Prophet will be born from your son’s lineage...and the highest word (*kalimatu’-l-ulya*) will be completed through him!” (Ibn Sad, 38: I, 164)

Bukhari mentions the following, which Ibn Abbas (as) narrates from the Prophet (saw):

“Abraham (as) took our mother Hagar and Ismail (as), who still being breastfed at the time, to Mecca. He left both of them under a tree, beneath of which the zamzam water would later spring...and placed a basket of dates and a pitcher full of water by their side. He then turned back. As he was walking away, Hagar called out to him:

‘Did Allah command you to leave us here?’

‘Yes’, responded Abraham (as).

‘Then Allah will protect us. He will not let us to go to waste’, Hagar said with confidence.

Once Hagar and Ismail (as) were no longer in sight, Abraham (as) raised his hands and prayed:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ
رَبَّنَا لِتُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ فَاجْعَلْ أَفْتِدَاءَ مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ
وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ

“Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may establish prayer. So make hearts among the people incline toward them and provide for them from the fruits that they might be grateful.” (Ibrahim, 14: 37) (Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 9)

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ
مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمْتِعْهُ
قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

“And when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits, whoever of them believes in Allah and the Last Day.’ Allah said, ‘And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a little; then I will force him to the punishment of the Fire, and wretched is the destination.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 126)

The Almighty also provides for disbelievers in this life and gives them every opportunity to make the most of what the world has to offer. Being rich therefore

does not depend on being religious. That is something given to both non-Muslims and Muslims alike. However, wealth and power are not necessarily good. It all depends on what they result in. If they become means for better service to the Lord, they are reasons for happiness in both worlds. Yet, if they lead one astray, they lay waste to eternity and bring, not pleasure, but misery.

Allah (jj) granted Abraham's wish. It is because of that prayer that Muslims, who offer pilgrimage, feel a deep love for Mecca and find peace in visiting it. After that prayer, the barren Mecca also turned into a land fertile with dates and a variety of other fruits.

However, perhaps most famously, Abraham's (as) prayer burst forth the zamzam water.

The water Abraham (as) had left in the pitcher had quickly run out. In panic and under scorching heat, Hagar ran back and forth between the hills Safa and Marwa in search of water. The distance between each hill is roughly 400 meters. As she kept running, she had one eye out for the little Ismail (as). There was not a bird in the sky, let alone a human being anywhere near. There was no sign of life. However, as she was on the Marwa Hill, she heard a voice:

"Stop and listen", it said. It was the voice of Jibril (as). Hagar look towards where the voice was coming from. Jibril (as) continued:

"You have been entrusted with He, who has power over everything. Do not fear you will perish! Over there is the spot for the House of Allah. That kid and his father will build it. Allah (jj) will not forsake the builders of His house!"

Hagar then ran back to her son to see a spring of water bursting beneath his foot. She elatedly thanked Allah. Fearing the water would flow for only a bit, she dug up the sand and made a pool to collect it. However, it just kept gushing out. She then had to say, 'zam, zam', which means 'stop, stop'.

The Prophet (saw) says:

"May Allah have mercy on Ismail's mother, Hagar. If she had left the zamzam alone and not enclosed it, it would certainly have become a fountain that flowed non-stop". (Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 9)

This water, which sprung forth from nothing other than submission and reliance on the Lord, will continue to offer healing to believers until the end of time.

The depth of Abraham and Hagar's submission to the Lord resulted in an enormous blessing. Another aspect of this blessing is that at each pilgrimage, believers replicate our mother Hagar's run between the hills Safa and Marwah. The practice is a necessary part of both hajj and umrah, as a tribute to Hagar's toil.

Days followed one another, as the mother and her son began their new lives in a parched and barren land. One day, men from the tribe of Jurhum passed by and noticed a bird hover above that area. They took it as a sign of life and sent two men to inspect. The men returned with the news that there was fresh water. The tribe then asked Hagar for permission to settle.

She said, “Yes...only on the condition you do not stake claim to the well”. The Jurhumites agreed and thus became the first tribe to settle in Mecca.

The Trial of Sacrifice

While journeying from Babylon to Damascus, Abraham (as) had prayed:

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ. رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“I will go to my Lord; He will guide me. My Lord, grant me a child from among the righteous.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 99-100)⁶¹

This indicates that, at bottom, this was a spiritual journey from the inner world to the highest and to the greatest of ‘friends.’ The verses that follow speak about how Abraham (as) was given the news of the birth of Ismail (as) and how he was later tested by being asked to sacrifice him:

فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ. فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ. فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ. وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ. قَدْ صَدَّقَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ. إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُحِينُ. وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ. وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ. سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ. كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ. إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“So We gave him good tidings of a forbearing boy. And when he reached the age of exertion, he said, ‘My son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I must sacrifice you, so see what you think.’ He said, ‘My father, do as you are commanded.

61. Here, Abraham (as) is saying he wants to take the road towards God. And the below verse suggests that the Prophet (saw) was personally taken to God:

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

“Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing” (Al-Isra, 17: 1).

You will find me, if Allah wills, of the steadfast. And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead, We called to him, ‘O Abraham, you have fulfilled the vision’ Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good. This was the clear trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. And We left for him favorable mention among later generations. Peace upon Abraham. Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 101-111)



After leaving Hagar and Ismail, Abraham (as) returned to Sarah but he would visit them from time to time. He was again in Mecca one day when he had a dream where, as indicated by the verse, he was putting Ismail (as) to the knife. Upon waking up, Abraham (as) for a moment doubted whether the devil was simply playing mind games. However, he saw the same dream for the next three days, which coincided with the days of *tawriyah*, *arafah* and the first day of *eid*.

According to another report, Abraham (as) had made a promise that if the Lord gave him a son, he would sacrifice him. That was the reason why he was tested.

When Abraham (as) realized that it was a divine command, he told Hagar to give Ismail (as) a bath and put some nice perfumes on him. He said he was taking his son to a ‘friend’, and asked Ismail (as) to bring a rope and a knife.

He said, “Son, I am going to offer a sacrifice for the sake of Allah (jj)”.

The father and son started walking towards Mount Arafat, where pilgrims today stand for *waqfah*. Satan then appeared to Hagar in the form of a human being and asked:

“Do you know where Abraham is taking your son?”

“To a friend”, she said.

“No!”, he retorted. “He is going to cut his throat!”

Hagar responded, “It can’t be. He loves his son too much!”

“Well”, said Satan, “it is apparently an order of Allah”.

“If that is the case, it must be a good thing. We have full trust in Allah”, replied Hagar.

After failing to trick Hagar, Satan immediately went to Ismail (as).

“Have you any idea where your father is taking you?” he asked.

“To visit a friend”, said Ismail (as).

“You have got it wrong”, said Satan. “He is going to slit your throat. He thinks it is a command from Allah”.

“Well, if that is the case, we will wholeheartedly follow that order”, said Ismail (as), before pelting Satan with stones and telling him to go away.

In a last ditch attempt, Satan went to Abraham (as).

“Where do you think you are taking your son, old man? The devil has played games with you. That dream cannot be from Allah!”

“No”, said Abraham (as). “You are the devil and you are trying to trick us right now. Get away from us!” He then threw seven stones each at the devil in three different places. That is how stoning the devil during pilgrimage began. Believers have been ordered to replicate those actions in remembrance of their trust and submission to the Almighty.

As Abraham (as) continued walking with his son from Mina to Arafat, the angels in the sky became anxious. They said to one another:

“*Subhanallah*...one prophet is taking another for sacrifice!”

Abraham (as) eventually turned to Ismail (as) and said, “Son...I have been commanded in a dream to sacrifice you!”

“Did Allah give you that order, dad?” asked Ismail (as).

“Yes”, Abraham (as) replied.

“Do what you have been told, dad. Allah willing, you will see just how patient I am”, Ismail (as) assured him. After seeing his father breathe a sigh of relief, he continued:

“My dear father! You remained patient when Nimrod threw you in the fire. Allah (jj) liked your attitude. I, too, am resigned to what is to come. I will be separated from you and the world but I will return to my Lord and enter paradise. I am only worried about you. You are never going to be able get over the pain of having sacrificed your son with your own two hands. I only wished you had told me earlier so I could have said farewell to my mother!”

“I was worried she might disapprove”, explained Abraham (as).

One report says Ismail (as) was only seven years old at the time. According to another, he was thirteen.⁶²

It is narrated that:

“When Abraham (as) was shown the secrets of the heavens and earth, he saw someone in rebellion against Allah. He asked Allah to destroy him; and he was destroyed. Abraham (as) then saw another rebel and prayed that he be destroyed, too.”

62. See, Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, II, 605-606; al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, I, 263-278.

His prayer was, again, accepted. He then saw another, and a few more and made similar requests for them. Each prayer was accepted.

The Almighty thereupon said to him, ‘You are a servant whose prayers are accepted. Do not pray for the destruction of my servants. Consider three things:

- 1. My servant may repent for his sins and I will accept it.*
- 2. There may come devout sons and daughters from his lineage.*
- 3. Or I may still forgive my servant on the day of judgment”.*

It is said that the one of the reasons why Abraham (as) was asked to sacrifice his son was to increase his compassion for sinners.

There is also another report. As alluded to by the verse:

وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ

“And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain in faith.” (Al-An‘am, 6: 75), Abraham (as) would be raised to the heavens each night. On one of those nights, he saw a sinner, engaging in illicit activity, and said:

“My Lord. This person eats what You give him, walks on Your earth...but still does not do what You command. Destroy him!” His prayer was accepted. He then saw another sinner, who was destroyed, after he made the same prayer. Allah then said:

“Stop praying for the destruction of my servants! Give them time and act with discretion. For I see what all of them do but I still do not destroy them!”

Abraham (as) saw the dream when he came back down.

The time had come. Abraham (as) grabbed the knife and prayed:

“My Lord! This is my son. He is the fruit of my heart and the most beloved of all...” But a voice said:

“Do you remember the night when you wished for the destruction of my servants one after another? Don’t you know that I am as compassionate towards My servants as you are to your son? That night, you asked Me to destroy them. Now, I want you to slaughter your son!” (Ramazanoglu M. Sami, Ibrahim -aleyhisselam-, p. 44-46)

Ismail (as) then looked to his father and said, “Dad...I have a few requests.

1. Tie my hands and feet so I do not struggle and do something wrong in the heat of pain.

2. Keep your clothes out of the way, so that my blood does not stain them.

3. Make sure your knife is sharp. It will help me die quicker and make your job easier.

4. When you pull out the knife, do not look at my face. Your fatherly love might make you show mercy and delay executing Allah's command.

5. Take my shirt to my mum, so she can console herself. Tell her, 'Your son has gone to Allah as an intercessor'.

Abraham (as) listened with tears rolling down his cheeks. He then began to weep.

"My dearest", he said. "You have been a great aide in helping me execute Allah's command!" He then raised his hands and prayed:

"My Lord! Give me patience and the power to go through with this!"

Ismail (as) then said, "Look, dad, the gates of heaven have just opened and the angels are prostrating to Allah, praying, 'Our Lord...one prophet is about to slit the throat of another just for Your sake...Have mercy on them!'"

After a pause, he added:

"Love is not to delay the command. Go on, dad, do what you have been told!"

Abraham (as) laid Ismail (as) down and said, "So long, my son, until the final day. We will see each other then."

He then placed the knife on his son's throat. At that point, the Almighty told Jibril (as) to "...turn the knife on its blunt side!" In a flash, Jibril (as) descended from the highest heaven and flipped the knife around. Try as he may, the knife just would not cut.

The Almighty then declared:

"Abraham (as) has certainly been true to his word!"

With the command of Allah, Jibril (as) returned this time with a ram from heaven, shouting:

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Abraham (as) echoed the words with:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

Ismail (as) added:

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ الْحَمْدُ

And so did the *tashriq takbir*, which we today recite from the eve of *eid* until the fourth day, came to be.

The father and son returned home with feelings of gratitude. Hagar gave Ismail (as) the warmest of all hugs and Abraham (as) returned to Sarah.



Abraham (as) had now been tested with his life by being thrown in the fire and with his son with the command to sacrifice him. He had passed both tests through sheer trust and submission. Now, he was about to be tested with his wealth. It is reported that he owned herds of around 12,000 livestock with a very protective dog guarding them. To scorn people who were infatuated with the riches of the world, Abraham (as) had put a golden collar around the dog's neck.

One day, Jibril (as) arrived in the guise of a stranger and asked, "Who owns this flock?"

"My Lord does", replied Abraham (as). "I am only minding them!"

"Would you sell them to me?" asked Jibril (as).

"If you say the name of my Lord once, I will give you a third of them. Say it three times and you can have them all", he said.

Jibril (as) then said:

سُبُّوحٌ قُدُّوسٌ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ

"Go on, take them all", Abraham (as) told him.

"But I cannot", Jibril (as) responded. "I am an angel!"

"If you are an angel", said Abraham (as), "I happen to be a *khalil*. I cannot possibly take back what I have given!"

With no way out, Abraham (as) eventually decided to sell the flock and bought a vast land with the money. He then donated the land for the needs of Muslims and in doing so founded the tradition of *waqf*.⁶³

Abraham (as) had passed another test and proven he was a 'true friend' by donating his entire wealth for the sake of Allah in the blink of an eye. The Qur'an praises him:

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ

63. A *waqf* is the notion of 'loving the created for the sake of the Creator' come to life in an institution. It is forbidden to buy or sell a *waqf* as to buy and sell something presupposes ownership; and ownership is seen as a power that belongs exclusively to God.

“And mention when Abraham was tried by his Lord with commands and he fulfilled them.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 124)

The Birth of Isaac (as)

Because Abraham (as) was true to his word in being prepared to sacrifice his own son, the Almighty gifted him another, despite his old age. The Qur’an says:

وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ. وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى
إِسْحَاقَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ

“And We gave him good tidings of Isaac, a prophet from among the righteous. And We blessed him and Isaac. But among their descendants are doers of good and those clearly unjust to themselves.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 112-113)

At the time, Abraham (as) was 120 years old, while Sarah was 90 or 99.

Ibn Abbas (ra) reports that a group of angels personally delivered the news of the baby, before proceeding to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.

The angels had come to the home of Abraham (as) as guests in human form. Abraham (as) had a feast of roasted calf prepared for them. However, after seeing none of them touch the meat, he quickly realised they were angels. He first felt a little apprehensive.

“Is there something Allah is angry with?” he thought. “Have they come to destroy my people?” Just to make sure they indeed were angels, he asked them once again.

“Will you not eat?”

“We do not eat for free”, they said.

Abraham (as) then said *bismillah* and *elhamdulillah*.

“You are a true friend of Allah”, they said. “Do not fear! We are on our way to destroy the tribe of Lot (as).”

So the reason of their visit had become clear.

Once Abraham’s (as) fears were dispelled, the angels gave him the glad tidings of Isaac (as) and his son to come, Jacob (as).

Sarah was eavesdropping on the conversation from behind the curtain. After hearing the news of a son, she placed her hands on her face and reacted with astonishment, given she was now an elderly woman.

“Are you amazed at the power and command of Allah?” the angels asked.

While Abraham (as) was happy to hear the news, he was also sad about the impending destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, as he had not yet been told that the believers would be spared. He wanted to pray that Allah would not annihilate the town. However, the angels told him it would be of no benefit and that only the disbelieving sinners would perish. Abraham (as) felt another relief.

The Qur'an recount the incident:

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى قَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ
سَلَامٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ أَنْ جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيذٍ

“And certainly did Our messengers come to Abraham with good tidings; they said, ‘Peace.’ He said, ‘Peace,’ and did not delay in bringing them a roasted calf.” (Hud, 11: 69)

Ibn Abbas relays from the Prophet (saw) that the three angels were the archangels were Jibril, Mikail and Israfil.

فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا
تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمِ لُوطٍ. وَامْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَبَشَّرْنَاهَا
بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ. قَالَتْ يَا وَيْلَتَى أَأَلِدُ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ
وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ. قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ
رَحِمْتُ اللَّهُ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ. فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ
عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبُشْرَى يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ

“But when he saw their hands not reaching for it, he distrusted them and felt apprehensive. They said, ‘Fear not! We have been sent to the people of Lot.’ And his wife was standing, and she smiled, when We gave her good tidings of Isaac and after Isaac, Jacob. She said, ‘Woe to me! Will I give birth while I am an old woman and this, my husband, is an old man? This is an amazing thing!’ They said, ‘Are you amazed at the decree of Allah? May the mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you, people of the house. Indeed, He is Praiseworthy and Honorable.’ And when the fright had left Abraham and the good tidings had reached him, he began to argue with Us concerning the people of Lot.” (Hud, 11: 70-74)

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ

“Abraham was indeed forbearing, tenderhearted and completely devoted to the Lord.” (Hud, 11: 75)

The above verse lists three important qualities of Abraham (as).

Hilm is to be extremely patient and delay, even abstain, from taking revenge on wrongdoers.

Awwah is to worry on behalf of sinners about the outcome that awaits them.

Munib is to turn and return to Allah from the heart. In all his dealings, Abraham (as) would turn to the Almighty and rest all his hope and trust in Him.

Abraham’s (as) heart had filled with mercy after receiving the divine warning not to be haste in wishing for the destruction of sinners. For that reason, he was now praying to Allah to lift the punishment off Sodom and Gomorrah. However, those people had turned their backs on divine mercy so completely that punishment had now become unavoidable. They had in fact wished for divine wrath to come, and had sped up the process by continuing to revel in sin. They were even telling ‘clean people’ to get out of their town. So, the angels told him:

يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ أَمْرٌ رَبِّكَ
وَإِنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ

“Give up this plea, Abraham. The command of your Lord has come, and there will reach them a punishment that cannot be repelled.” (Hud, 11: 76)

Due to its importance, chapter al-Dhariyat recounts the same dialogue in a different choice of words.

Another great quality of Abraham (as) was that he was a man of great hospitality. He would feed anyone who came past, regardless of who he was. He is therefore also known as *Abu'l-Adyaf*, the father of guests. (Ibn Sad, 38: Tabaqat, I, 47)

He was so generous and kind that on days when he received no guests, he would go out on the streets to find people to bring back home.

Hospitality is a quality of the prophets. Even though moderation is advised in eating and drinking, there is no such thing as waste when it comes to feeding guests. However, it is also necessary that the offerings are made not for any worldly gain but only for the sake of Allah (jj).

Abraham (as) Visits Ismail (as)

Ismail (as) had married a Jurhumite woman. He was much loved and respected by the people. He learnt Arabic from them. His mother, Hagar passed away at the age of 99. She was buried in the Hijr area near the Ka'bah.

Our Prophet (saw) explains:

“After Ismail (as) married, Abraham (as) paid him a visit. Ismail (as) was not at home, so he asked about his whereabouts:

‘He has gone to earn bread for us’, said his wife. Abraham (as) then asked, ‘How are you getting by?’

She said, ‘We are in fierce poverty. Our situation is very bad’.

He said, ‘When your husband returns, give him my greetings and tell him to replace his threshold!’

Ismail (as) returned and quickly realised from the beautiful smell in the air that his father had come and gone.

‘Has anyone come over in my absence?’ he nonetheless asked.

‘Yes, an old man. He inquired about you and asked how we were getting by. I told him we are in need’, his wife said.

‘Did he say anything else?’ asked Ismail (as).

‘He sent his greetings and advised you to replace your threshold.’

Ismail (as) knew exactly what that meant.

‘That old man is my father’, he said. ‘He has told me to divorce you. You may now return to your family!’. He then left home and married another Jurhumite woman not long after.

After a while, Abraham (as) returned and once again, Ismail (as) was not home. He asked his new wife where he was.

‘He has gone to earn a bread for us’, she said.

‘Are you getting by?’ he asked.

‘Thank Allah’, she said. ‘We are in bliss and abundance’.

‘What do you have to eat and drink?’ Abraham (as) inquired.

‘Meat and water’, she replied. Abraham (as) then prayed, ‘My Lord...make their meat and water sacred...and shower them in abundance!’”

He then added, 'Give my greetings to your husband and tell him to take good care of his threshold!'

When Ismail (as) returned, he again knew that his father had come and gone. He asked his wife, 'Did anyone come while I was away?'

'Yes', she said. 'An elderly man with a comforting appearance. He asked about you and I told him that you had gone to earn a crust. He asked how we were doing and I said we were doing great.'

'Did he give any advice?' Ismail (as) asked.

'Yes, he sent you his greetings and advised you to take good care of your threshold!'

'That elderly man is my dad', Ismail (as) said, '...and you are the threshold of our lovely home. My dad has told me to keep you happy and take good care of you.'

(Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 9)

This incident makes it clear that being thankful increases one's lot. Complaining, which is sign of being ungrateful, causes it to decrease and leads to deprivation.

The Construction of the Ka'bah

Years later, Abraham (as) returned to Mecca and told his son, Ismail (as), "My Lord has given me an order. I am going to build a house...and you will help me!"

Ismail (as), as well as Jibril (as), carried the stones, while Abraham (as) put up the walls. The marble which can be seen today at Maqam Ibrahim –and which bears Abraham's (as) footprint- served as an elevator.

The Qur'an says:

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ
مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

"And when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and with him Ismail, saying, 'Our Lord, accept this from us. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing.'" (Al-Baqarah, 2: 127)

It has been narrated that after Adam (as) and Eve were removed from paradise, they reunited at Arafat and together walked west towards where the Ka'bah stands today. As a show of thanks, Adam (as) wanted to worship the Lord and asked Him to send him the pillar made of light, which he used to circumambulate in paradise. His wish was granted, and he walked around it to worship the Lord. The pillar was all but lost around the time of Seth (as), except for a piece of it that had now turned black. Seth (as) constructed a rectangular building in its place and positioned the

black stone in one of its corners. This is stone known today as *Hajaru'l-Aswad*, which means the Black Stone. Following the Great Flood, the building remained buried under sand, until Abraham (as) dug up its foundations with the help of his son, Ismail (as) and built the structure known today as the Ka'bah. That is what the Qur'an means when it says, 'and he raised the foundations of the House'.

As a sign for people to start circumambulating the Ka'bah, Abraham (as) placed the Black Stone on its corner. It is said that the stone came out paradise whiter than snow but became darkened from people's sins. (Ibn Hanbal, I, 307)

Soots from fires both before and after the time of the Prophet (saw) have also made the stone darker.

After the Ka'bah was rebuilt, both Abraham (as) and Ismail (as) prayed:

رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ
عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ. رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ
آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

“Our Lord, and make us Muslims in submission to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation in submission to You. And show us our rites and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are Accepting of repentance, the Merciful. Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 128-129)

Regarding the prayer mentioned in the verse, the Prophet (saw) has said:

“I am the prayer of my father Abraham, the good news of my brother Jesus and the dream of my mother Aminah.” (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, V, 262; Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, II, 453)

The noble lineage of our Prophet (as) runs as follows:

1. The Prophet Muhammed (saw)
2. Abdullah
3. Abdulmuttalib (also called Shaybat al-Hamd)
4. Hashim
5. Abd-i Manaf (his real name was Mughirah)
6. Qusayy (also known as Zayd)
7. Hakim
8. Murrah
9. Qab
10. Luayy
11. Ghalib

12. Fihri (Quraysh)
13. Malik
14. Nadr
15. Qinanah
16. Huzaymah
17. Mudrikah
18. Ilyas
19. Mudar
20. Nizar
21. Maad
22. Adnan

Our Prophet's (saw) honourable lineage can be counted all the way up to Adnan. Adnan is from the line of Ismail (as), though the number of years that separates the two is not known for certain.

The number of prophets, including the Light of Being, Muhammed Mustafa (saw), who have come from his lineage, show just how important a prophet Abraham (as) is in history.

Both the Ka'bah and the rituals of pilgrimage are full of memories Abraham (as) has left behind and which will continue to be remembered and re-enacted until the final hour. Millions of Muslims around the world also send their salutations to him, as well as our Prophet (as), multiple times a day during prayer.

Abu Muhammed Qab ibn Ujrah (ra) explains:

“One day, when the Messenger of Allah (saw) was next to us, we asked him, ‘We know how to greet (*salam*) you but how do we send our blessings (*salawat*) to you?’ He told us to say:

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى (إِبْرَاهِيمَ)
وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ. اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ
مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى (إِبْرَاهِيمَ) وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ

“Allah...Grace Muhammed, his family and true followers, just as you graced Abraham, his family and true followers. You indeed are praiseworthy and glorious. Allah...Bless Muhammed, his family and true followers, just as you blessed Abraham, his family and true followers. You indeed are praiseworthy and glorious”. (Al-Bukhari, Deawat, 32; Al-Tirmidhi, Witr, 20; Ibn Majah, Iqamah, 25)

The First Pilgrimage

Once the construction was complete, Jibril (as) advised Abraham (as) to, “Circumambulate the Ka’bah!”

The father and son walked around the House of Allah, greeting the Black Stone in each lap.⁶⁴ After offering a two-rakat prayer behind the Maqam Ibrahim, they completed the other parts of the pilgrimage under the personal guidance of Jibril (as), who then told Abraham (as) to invite people far and wide to come to pilgrimage. Abraham (as) asked how and Jibril (as) replied, ‘Say, ‘People! Accept the invitation of your Lord, three times!’

Abraham (as) then asked the Almighty, “My Lord...how can I get my voice heard to people?”

The Almighty declared, “Call it out. It is for Me to make your voice heard!”

The Qur’an recounts those words as:

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ

“**And proclaim to the people the hajj pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass.**” (Al-Hajj, 22: 27)

From that time on, Abraham (as) began to come to Mecca every year to make pilgrimage. The prophets who came after him, as well as their followers, have done the same. Also, the prophets, whose people were destroyed, would spend their final years in Mecca. It has been reported that 99 prophets passed away in Mecca and are buried in the area between Maqam Ibrahim and the Zamzam Springs, while another 70 have offered prayer at the mosque in Mina.

The Prayers and Pleas of Abraham (as)

The Qur’an quotes the prayers of Abraham (as) more than any other prophet. He would plead to Allah from the bottom of his heart at every opportunity. Among plenty of others, the Qur’an conveys the following prayers he made:

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي وَمَا نُعْلِنُ وَمَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ

“**Our Lord, indeed You know what we conceal and what we declare, and nothing is hidden from Allah on the earth or in the heaven.**” (Ibrahim, 14: 38)

64. One lap around the Ka’bah, beginning and ending at the Black Stone, is called a *shawt*.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي وَهَبَ لِي عَلَى الْكِبَرِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِنَّ رَبِّي لَسَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ

“Praise to Allah, who has granted to me in old age Ismail and Isaac. Indeed, my Lord is the Hearer of supplication.” (Ibrahim, 14: 39)

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ

“My Lord, make me an establisher of prayer, and from my descendants. Our Lord, and accept my supplication.” (Ibrahim, 14: 40)

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ

“Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers the day the account is established.” (Ibrahim, 14: 41)

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ. وَاجْعَلْ لِي لِسَانَ
صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ. وَاجْعَلْنِي مِنْ وَرَثَةِ جَنَّةِ النَّعِيمِ. وَاعْفِرْ لِأَبِي
إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ. وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ. يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ
وَلَا بَنُونَ. إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

“My Lord, grant me authority and join me with the righteous. And grant me a reputation of honor among later generations. And place me among the inheritors of the Garden of Pleasure. And forgive my father. Indeed, he has been of those astray. And do not disgrace me on the Day they are all resurrected. The Day when there will not benefit anyone wealth or children. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.” (Al-Shu'ara, 42: 83-89)

Returning to the Lord with a sound heart is made possible by spending in the path of good, teaching one's children the truth, protecting the heart from the corrupting influences of wealth and children, safeguarding oneself from ignorance in matters of religion, and abstaining from immorality and all other bad qualities.

Abu'l Qasim al-Hakim says the heart of a person is sound if:

1. He does not hurt anyone physically or emotionally,
2. He is not hurt by anyone,
3. And he does not expect anyone to return his favours.

If one does not hurt others, he returns to the Lord with piety. If he does not allow himself to get hurt or offended by others, he returns with loyalty. If he does not expect a reward for the good things he does, he returns with sincerity.

Abraham's (as) Advices

The Almighty revealed the following to Abraham (as):

“You are truly My friend and I am yours. I know what is inside your heart, so do not ever let anyone else in there other than Me. I will otherwise cut off your love for Me. For I have chosen such a person for My love that even if I burn him in flames, his heart will not turn to or be occupied with anyone other than Me. When he becomes like that for Me, I place My love in his heart. I continue to grace and bless him...and I bring him close to Me.”

Abraham (as) offered the following words to those who wanted advice from him:

“When you see people preoccupied with the world, occupy yourselves with the hereafter. Should they spend time on improving their looks, spend time improving your hearts. If they spend their days renovating their palaces and gardens, spend yours renovating the graveyards. If you see them focus on each other's faults, focus on your own faults.”



Abraham (as) is a prophet of such enormous honour that he is acknowledged and respected by the followers of all the major religions. Despite denying the Qur'an, even the Arab pagans would accept his eminence by proudly claiming him as their ancestor. He is highly revered and esteemed by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. Until Abraham (as), no prophet had been privileged with the love and respect of most people on earth. However, while many people may claim Abraham (as) as their own, the Qur'an sets things straight by telling us who exactly he was:

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا
وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ. إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ
وَهَذَا النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

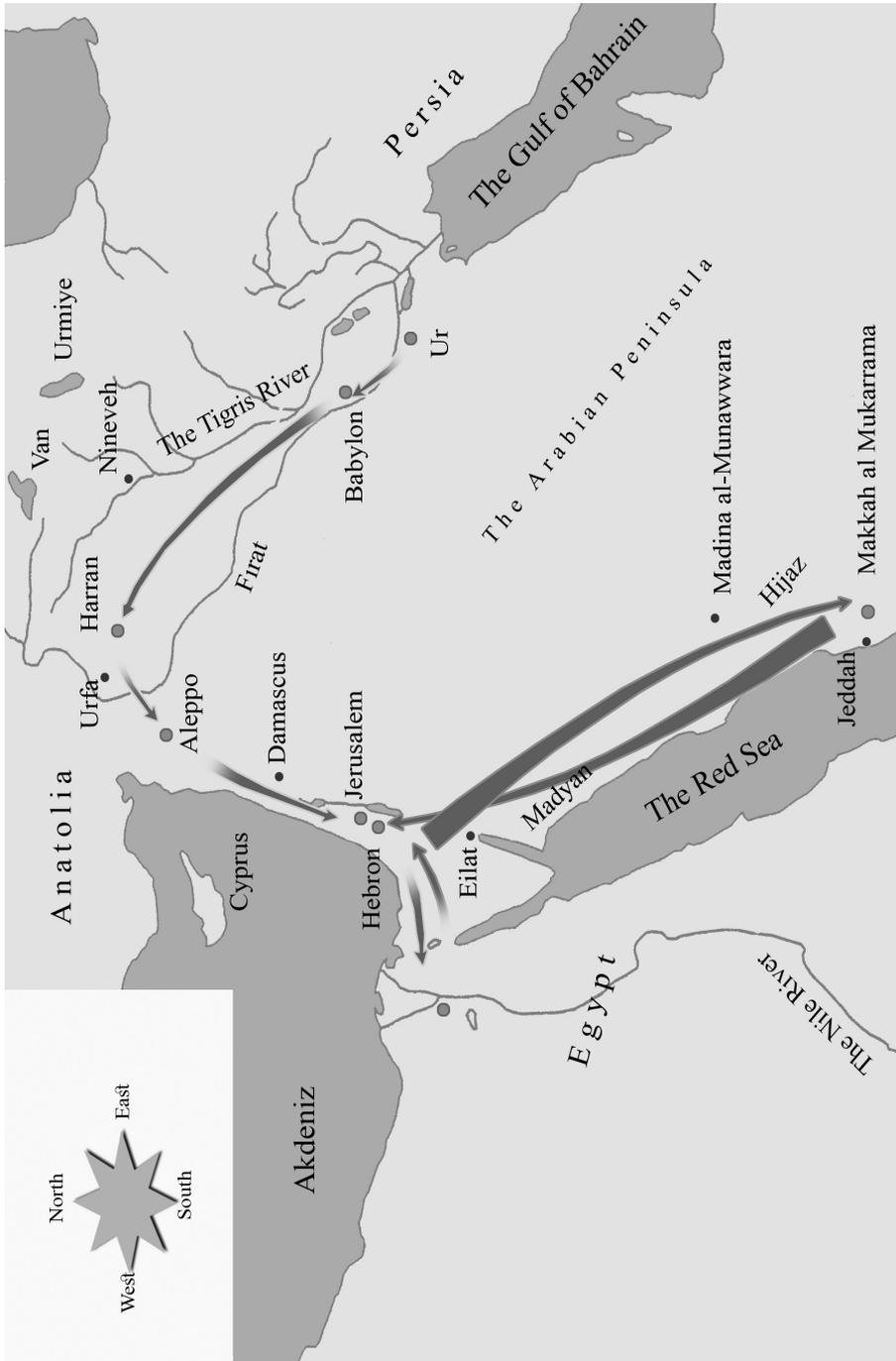
“Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a *hanif* and Muslim. And he was not of the pagans. Indeed, the worthiest of Abraham among the people are those who followed him in submission to Allah and this prophet, and those who believe in his message. And Allah is the ally of the believers.” (Al Imran, 3: 67-68)

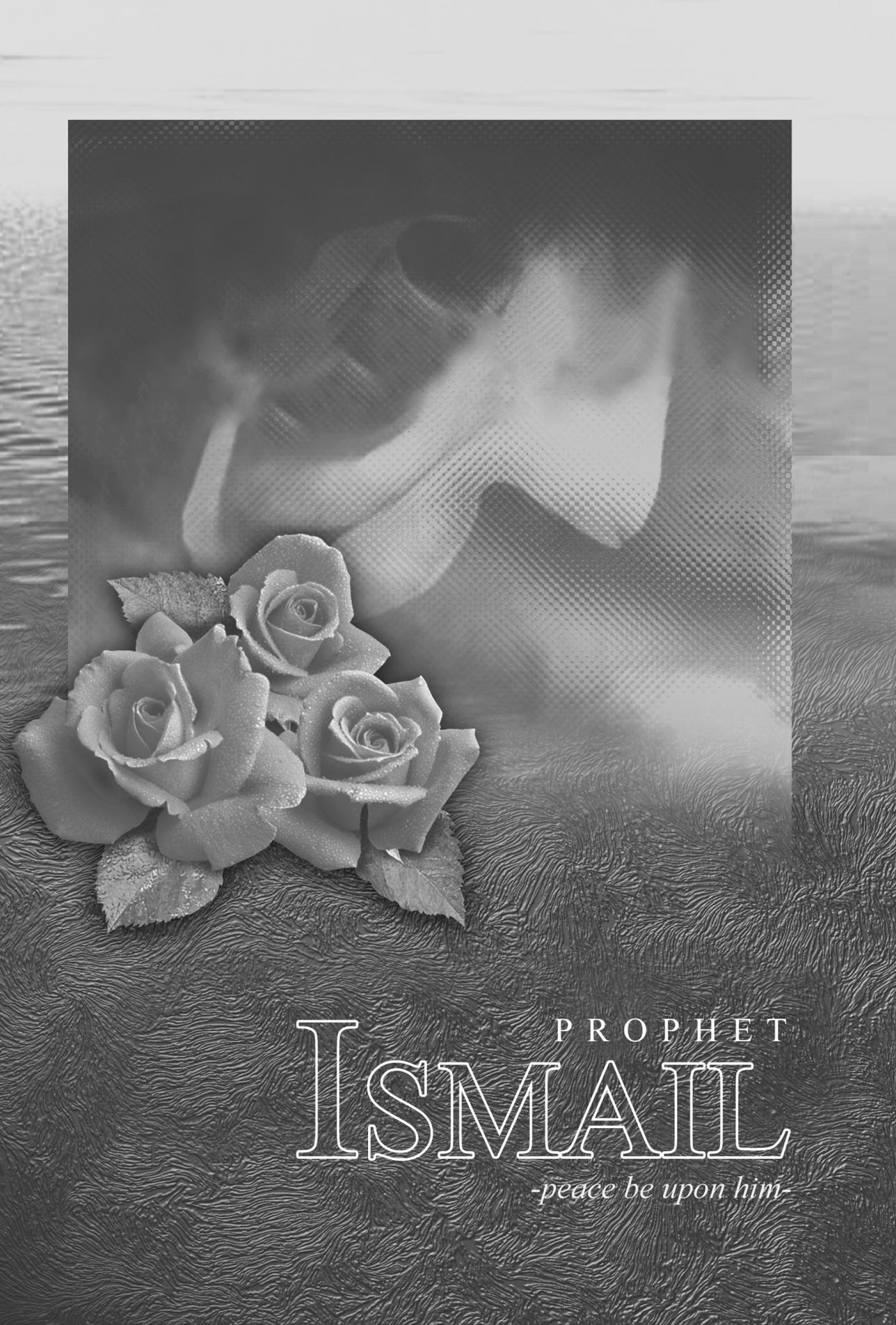
Anas (ra) explains:

“A man once addressed the Messenger of Allah (saw) as the best of creation. The Messenger (saw) said:

‘What you say is the attribute of Abraham.’” (Muslim, Fada'il, 150)

Prophet Abraham





PROPHET
ISMAIL

-peace be upon him-

The prophet who became a symbol of loyalty, trust and submission

ISMAIL

-peace be upon him-

Ismail (as) is a prophet mentioned in the Qur'an. He was also known as *Dhabihullah*, the sacrifice of Allah. He was a messenger to the Jurhumites, who had migrated to Mecca from Yemen. His name means 'one who obeys Allah.' In Hebrew, he is called Yishmael.

Ismail (as) grew up with the Jurhumite children. He learned to use a bow and arrow from them and became a renowned archer in his youth. The Prophet (saw) once saw a group of men from the tribe of Aslam holding an archery competition. He went up to them and said:

"Shoot your arrows, sons of Ismail! For your forefather was also a skilled archer!"

(Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 9)

After his father's passing, Ismail (as) kept up the maintenance of the Ka'bah and services related to pilgrimage. He was the first person to drape the Ka'bah in a cloth. When the Almighty declared him a prophet, he took the message not only to the Jurhumites, but also the Amalekites nearby, as well the tribes of Yemen in Marib and Hadhramaut. Ismail (as) spent fifty years calling them to Islam. Only a few people believed him. However, Ismail (as) persevered regardless. The Qur'an says:

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"And mention Ismail, Idris and Dhul Kifl (Ezekiel), all were of the patient."

(Al-Anbiya, 21: 85)

Ismail (as) was true to his word, who encouraged prayer and alms and who Allah (jj) was much pleased with. Another verse says:

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا. وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا

"And mention in the Book, Ismail. He was true to his promise, and he was a messenger and a prophet. And he used to enjoin on his people prayer and alms and was to his Lord pleasing." (Maryam, 19: 54-55)

Ismail's (as) Miracles

1. Through prayer, he was able to turn dry shrubs into greenery,
2. ...get milk from barren sheep,
3. ...and silky soft fur from their felt.
4. And through prayer, he could turn sand into flour,
5. The zamzam, which will continue to flow until the final hour, is also his miracle.

His distinctive qualities are patience, kindness and submission.

Peace be upon him....





PROPHET
ISAAC

-peace be upon him-

The prophet who is the forefather of the prophets of the Israelites

ISAAC

-peace be upon him-

Isaac (as) is the son of Abraham (as) from Sarah. History books describe him as a tall, well-spoken and handsome man with dark eyes, wheat skin and snow-white hair and beard. Both in mannerism and appearance, he resembled his father Abraham (as). (Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, II, 607)

The Qur'an also praises Isaac (as):

وَأَذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ. إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ. وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنِ الْأَخْيَارِ

“And remember Our servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, those of strength and vision. We chose them for an exclusive quality: remembrance of the home of the Hereafter. And indeed they are, to Us, among the chosen and outstanding.”

(Sad, 38: 45-47)

After the passing of his father, Isaac (as) was assigned a prophet for the people of Damascus and Palestine. Allah had made him an eminent person of exceptional character. The Qur'an says:

وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ. وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى إِسْحَاقَ وَمَنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ

“And We gave him good tidings of Isaac, a prophet from among the righteous. And We blessed him and Isaac. But among their descendants is the doer of good and the clearly unjust to himself.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 112-113)

At old age, Isaac (as) began losing his sight and eventually became completely blind. He had two sons, Jacob and Iys, also called Esau. They were twins.

Towards the end of his life, Isaac (as) prayed for both his sons but in different ways. He asked for prophets to be raised from the lineage of Jacob (as), while he asked for kings to come from children of Esau.

Isaac's (as) Miracles

It is reported that his people once said to him:

“We will not believe in you unless you can get animals to confirm you are a prophet!”

So, Isaac (as) turned to some animals nearby and said, “Tell these people who I am!”

A fox replied, “You are a prophet of Allah!”

A gazelle exclaimed, “You are the son of Allah's friend!”

And a goat said, “Whoever does not believe in you will end up in hell!”

Again, while in Jerusalem, people asked Isaac (as) to “...move this mountain if you want us to believe!”

The mountain suddenly shook and the people of Jerusalem accepted the call.

As he was inviting others one day, a man brought a few cowhides and asked him to “...bring these back to life!”

Isaac filled the skin with sand and prayed. In no time, they were all up on their feet.

Every sheep Isaac (as) touched with his hand would also give birth.



It is narrated that Isaac (as) passed away at around the age of 160 near Jerusalem and was buried next to his father, Abraham (as). (Ibn Asir, al-Kamil, I, 127)

Peace be upon him...



RELIANCE, SUBMISSION AND PILGRIMAGE

The words reliance (*tawakkul*), submission (*taslimiyah*) and pilgrimage (*hajj*) instantly call to mind Abraham and Ismail (as). For one, pilgrimage, which Muslims will continue to make until the last hour, is an act that is founded on their sincerity.

Tawakkul is to rely on or trust in someone. In Sufism, it is to fill the heart with divine love, and depend on and seek refuge in none other than Allah (jj).

Allah asked Moses (as) ‘to throw his staff’, as relying on the staff was casting a shadow on his reliance on Allah (jj).

The Qur’an says:

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

“And upon Allah let the believers rely!” (Ibrahim, 14: 11; al-Tawbah, 9: 51)

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“And rely upon Allah, if you are believers.” (Al-Ma’idah, 5: 23)

وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ

“And whoever relies upon Allah, then He is sufficient for him.” (Al-Talaq, 65: 3)

The Noble Prophet (saw) says:

“If you were to truly rely on Allah, you would be fed like the birds who leave their nests hungry in the morning but return on a full stomach at night!” (Al-Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 33; Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 14)

However, relying on Allah is not to abandon precautions or to stop trying. On the contrary, it is to seek help in Allah’s infinite power only after having taken the necessary measures.

The Almighty says:

وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

“...and consult them. And once you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely upon Him.” (Al Imran, 3: 159)

Allah (jj) is the Cause of all causes. He has the power to execute His will even outside the laws of nature:

He created Adam (as) from soil and Eve, from Adam’s (as) flesh.

He brought Jesus (as) into the world through Mary, without a father.

He made Abraham (as) resistant to the fire after ordering it to keep ‘cool and calm’.

He opened a passage for Moses (as) through the sea just with the strike of a staff and helped them escape the Pharaoh’s tyranny.

He left Ezra to lie dead for a hundred years, while preserving the food by his side and bringing back to life his donkey which had long been reduced to bones.

He enabled the Sleepers of the Cave to lie in slumber for more than three hundred years without food or water.

The Almighty can make a person walk on water or fly without wings. He can suspend eyesight and turn the heart into an eye that can peer into worlds no man can see.

Yet, it would be arrogant and immodest to think that a fire will not burn just because it did not burn Abraham (as).

Rumi explains:

“There is such a thing as entering the fire in the path of Allah. However, first look at yourself to see if you carry the attribute of Abraham. For the fire recognises that, not you!”

Thus, it is dangerous and ignorant to hold oneself in the same light as those who have greater spiritual rank. What we need to do is take our precautions, resort to the available means and depend on Allah for a result. For relying on Allah without taking the necessary steps is something that has been forbidden by the Prophet (saw).

A bedouin once told the Prophet (saw), “I let my camel roam in the desert and rely on Allah to bring it back to me”.

The Prophet (saw) warned, *“Tie your camel and only then rely on Allah!”* (Al-Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 60)

During a campaign, caliph Umar (ra) advised the Muslim army against entering a town struck with a contagious disease. Commander Abu Ubaydah ibn Jarrah (ra) commented, “Are you trying to escape divine fate?”

“No”, he replied. “We seeking refuge from one divine fate in another!”

For the Prophet (saw) has ordered caution against infectious diseases, saying, “*Do not let the ill near the healthy!*” (Al-Bukhari, Tibb, 53; Muslim, Salam, 104)



Allah is the helper of believers in both worlds. Relying on Him is enough. Finding peace and comfort, both as an individual and a society, lies in turning to Him and seeking His help.

Taslimiyah, or submission, is for one to obey and find peace by accepting whatever comes his way. Submission is done with the heart. It sets one free from doubting the words of Allah, from desires that go against His commands and contradict sincerity, and from objecting to divine will and the laws of religion.

True submission is possible only through a trust that comes with a genuine contentedness with whatever may be in store. Only a being, who can be trusted in every sense of the term, can be relied on. Because that being can be none other than Allah, one must submit only to Him. However, to do that, we must wholeheartedly and with certainty believe that:

- All power belongs to Allah (jj),
- No being can do any good or harm without His permission,
- All beings are mortal, except for Him, who is immortal,
- All beings need Him but He needs no one,
- And there is no being like Him.

But man’s submission to Allah is proportionate to how much he knows of Allah and how much he believes in Him. Submission is the essence of being a servant and it is therefore the most important kind of turn the heart can make to the Lord. This turn begins with faith and increases with knowledge.

Abraham (as) displayed one of the most consummate examples of turning to Allah. He had absolutely no place in his heart except for the Lord. The angels had wondered:

“But, our Lord! Abraham has his own life, as well as children and belongings! How can he be a ‘friend’ to You?”

However, on three separate occasions, Allah showed the angels Abraham’s (as) unconditional submission and just what made him a ‘friend’. These trials and their results are brilliant examples to those who follow in his path.

The angels had come to Abraham's (as) help just as he was about to be thrown into the fire. However, he said, "I do not need you! Who has given fire the power to burn?" He then sought refuge in Allah, saying, "What a wonderful Trustee he is!"

As a reward for his submission, the fire was told be "cool and peaceful for Abraham!".

Again, as the father and son were walking on the path of submission, one as a sacrificer and the other as the sacrifice itself, they united as one to stone the devil trying to sever their ties with Allah. In return for their surrender to Allah's will, they were sent a ram from paradise.

Once again, Abraham's (as) vast wealth meant nothing in value compared to Jibril (as) mentioning Allah's name just three times. "You can go ahead and have them all!" he said.

Ruwaym defines Sufism as, "Surrendering the soul to Allah's will..."

Being a servant is to submit. That is because Allah does not want His servants to serve any One else other than Him. He wants His servants to save themselves from the claws of desire.

The Qur'an says:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

"And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him." (Al-Isra, 17: 23)

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ
عَلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً
فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

"Have you seen he who has taken his desire as god, and Allah has sent him astray due to knowledge and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So who will guide him after Allah? Will you not be reminded?" (Al-Jathiyah, 45: 23)

To submit is to obey through love. It was through this kind of submission that Abraham (as) did not allow his own life, kids or wealth to stand between him and Allah. Hajj, or the pilgrimage, became a deed of worship that has symbolized his trust and submission.

Abraham's (as) tongue simply translated the language of his heart, when he said:

أَسَلَّمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 131)

Hajj, which is the symbol of a father and son’s reliance and submission, is the manifestation of a servant’s love for Allah. It is to enter the fold of infinite divine compassion by shedding all feelings that are mortal. It is to undress from all worldly ranks and to drape oneself in just two pieces of cloth called *ihram*, and to walk towards Allah barefooted and barehanded with steps taken from the heart.

When in *ihram*, one cannot hunt, cut a strand of hair or even pull out a single weed. One cannot engage in *rafas*, *fisq* or *jidat*.⁶⁵ There is only love, mercy and courtesy for the created, for the sake of the Creator.

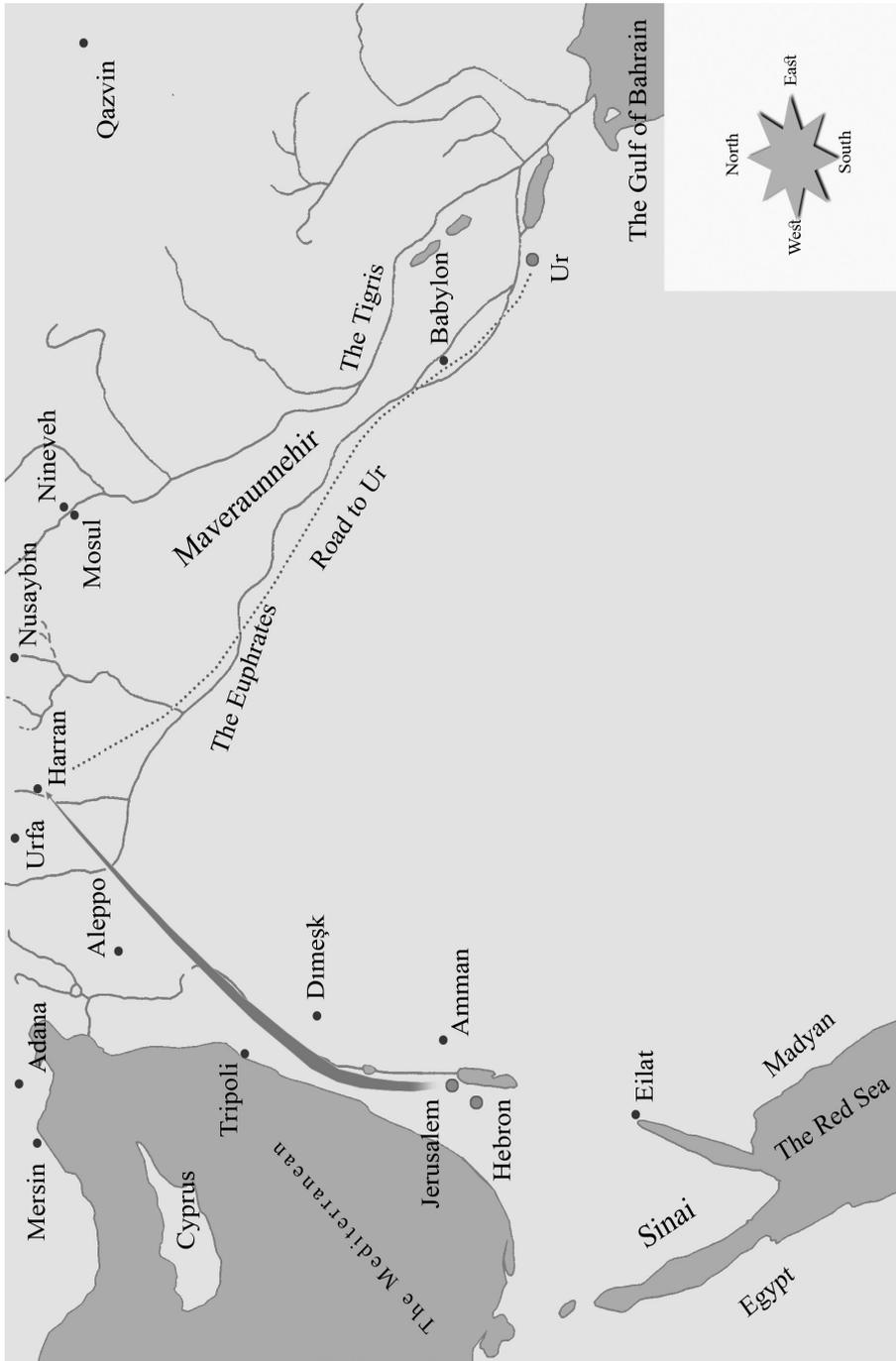
Hajj shows us that sins can be shed only through pleading to Allah through worship that rests on reliance and submission.

May Allah (jj) grant us a life of reliance and submission! May He be our sole refuge and shelter! And may He give us the opportunity to make pilgrimage with a heart that feels!



65. See, al-Baqarah, 197. *Rafas* is to engage in or talk about sexual intercourse or saying anything bad in general. *Fisq* comprises every kind of sinful action, while *jidat* is to get into useless fights and arguments.

Prophet Isaac





PROPHET
LOT

-peace be upon him-

The prophet who called Sodom away from evil and perversion

LOT

-peace be upon him-

Lot (as) was the son of Abraham's (as) brother, Harran. The Qur'an mentions his name 27 times.

Lot (as) was the first person to believe in Abraham (as) and had the privilege of emigrating alongside him. He remained on Abraham's (as) path and law and was known as a pious, generous and patient man with great hospitality. He made a living as a farmer.

The Almighty states:

وَلُوطًا آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي
كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ الْخَبَائِثَ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَاسِقِينَ.
وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“And to Lot We gave judgement and knowledge, and We saved him from the city that was committing wicked deeds. Indeed, they were a people of evil, defiantly disobedient. And We admitted him into Our mercy. Indeed, he was of the righteous.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 74-75)

وَأِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

“And Ismail, Elisha, Jonah and Lot. All of them We preferred over the worlds.” (Al-An'am, 6: 86)

Lot (as) began serving his duty as prophet at Sodom.

The People of Sodom and Gomorrah

The Sodomites were a wicked and depraved people, who engaged in an act no society had ever engaged in before. They took to their vile act like a profession, doing it brazenly, out in the open. They would silence those who tried to stop them, shouting:

“Leave our land if you are so clean!”

Decency and shame had been totally forgotten in this society and a vile practice, which does not exist even among animals, had emerged. They had degraded themselves to a level which the Qur'an describes as, 'lower than animals.'

This was the kind of people Lot (as) had been given the task to call to sanity. He worked day and night to speak sense into them. The Qur'an recounts his efforts:

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ لُوطٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ. إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ. فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا. وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ. أَتَأْتُونَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ. وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عَادُونَ

“When their brother Lot said to them, ‘Will you not fear Allah. Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger. So fear Allah and obey me. And I do not ask you for it any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds. Do you approach males among the worlds and leave what your Lord has created for you as mates? You are a people transgressing.’” (Al-Shu'ara, 42: 161-166)

The people of Sodom and Gomorrah immediately opposed him and ignored his call. Lot (as) reminded them of the severity of their practice:

قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

“And Lot when he said to his people, ‘Do you commit an immorality that no one in the world has done before you?’” (Al-Araf, 7: 80)

He warned what they were doing would ultimately destroy them. However, they reacted by trying to force Lot (as) out of the land:

وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنْفُسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ

“But his people had no answer but to say, ‘Evict them from your city! They are men who keep themselves pure!’” (Al-Araf, 7: 82)

For people so depraved, being clean was a crime. Because they received their spiritual nourishment from filth, they were uncomfortable with people of virtue, and dished out threats:

قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ يَا لُوطُ لَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِينَ

“They said, ‘If you do not desist, Lot, you will surely be of those evicted!’” (Al-Shu'ara, 42: 167)

Lot (as) reminded them of divine wrath:

وَلَقَدْ أَنْذَرَهُمْ بَطْشَتَنَا فَتَمَارَوْا بِالنُّذُرِ

“And he had already warned them of Our assault, but they disputed the warning.” (Al-Qamar, 54: 36)

However, they could not grasp the dread of the disaster that would come their way. So, they not only ignored the warnings, they audaciously challenged Lot (as) to:

اِئْتِنَا بِعَذَابِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“Bring us the punishment of Allah, if you are of the truthful!” (Al-Ankabut, 29: 29)

They did not think, even for a moment, they would be better off quitting their perversions.

A Dreadful Noise and Hard Rain

Lot (as) struggled under extremely difficult conditions –according to one report- for 40 years. The tyranny and depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah had become unbearable. Not only were they unconcerned about divine punishment, they had deserved it, for challenging their prophet to bring it on. A dejected Lot (as) sought refuge in His Lord and called for His help:

رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَأَهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ

“My Lord, save me and my family from what they do!” (Al-Shu’ara, 42: 169)

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“He said, ‘My Lord, support me against the corrupting people!’” (Al-Ankabut, 29: 30)

Lot (as) had spent decades working for the guidance of his people. However, at the end, he only had a handful of followers, including his two daughters. Even his wife had taken the side of the Sodomites. So, this prayer was the last resort.

The Almighty answered the prayer and sent angels to destroy them. The angels arrived in the form of handsome young men and it was enough to provoke the people’s homosexual desires. They tried making a move on them. The Qur’an recounts:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا وَقَالَ هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ

“And when Our messengers, came to Lot, he was anguished for them and felt for them great discomfort and said, ‘This is a trying day!’” (Hud, 11: 77)

Seeing them in the form of young boys, Lot (as) thought his guests were human and feared the people might rape them, as they frequently did to strangers.

وَجَاءَهُ قَوْمُهُ يُهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ فِي ضَيْفِي أَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَشِيدٌ

“And his people came hastening to him, and before this they had been doing evil deeds. He said, ‘My people, these are my daughters; they are purer for you. So fear Allah and do not disgrace me concerning my guests. Is there not among you a man of reason?’” (Hud, 11: 78)

According to some scholars of the Qur’an, Lot (as) was not referring to his own two daughters but to the girls of Sodom and Gomorrah. A prophet is considered the elder and spiritual father of his people; so it can be common for him to figuratively refer to the girls of the land as his own daughters. However, the Sodomites were seeing red:

قَالُوا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَمَا لَنَا فِي بَنَاتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيدُ.
قَالَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةً أَوْ آوِي إِلَى رُكْنٍ شَدِيدٍ.

“They said, ‘You already well know we have no interest in your daughters, and you well know what we want. He said, ‘If only I had against you some power or could take refuge in a strong support!’” (Hud, 11: 79-80)

Our Prophet (saw) once repeated those words uttered by Lot (as) before adding:

“May Allah have mercy on Lot. He surely took refuge in the Indestructible. It is because of his prayer that Allah has given every prophet to come after him supportive relatives.” (Ibn Hibban, XIV, 86)

قَالُوا يَا لَوْطُ إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَصْلُوا إِلَيْكَ فَأَسْرِ بِأَهْلِكَ
بِقِطْعٍ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا أَمْرَاتَكَ إِنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا مَا
أَصَابَهُمْ إِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ أَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيبٍ

“The angels said, ‘O Lot, indeed we are messengers of your Lord, they will never reach you. So set out with your family during a portion of the night and let not any among you look back. Except your wife; she will be struck by that which strikes them. Indeed, their appointment is for the morning. Is not the morning near?’” (Hud, 11: 81)

Although the perverted crowd tried one last time to break into Lot's (as) home, they suddenly became blinded. The Qur'an describes the incident:

وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدُوهُ عَن ضَيْفِهِ فَطَمَسْنَا أَعْيُنَهُمْ فَذُوقُوا عَذَابِي وَنُذِرِ

“And they had demanded from him his guests, but We obliterated their eyes. Taste My punishment and warning!” (Al-Qamar, 54: 37)

According to Qadi Baydawi and Fakhruddin Razi, one of the angels was Jibril (as). When the mob broke the door down, he blinded them all with a single stroke. They panicked and could not even find the exit. It was Lot (as) who had to hold them by their arms and escort them out.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ
مَّنصُودٍ. مُسَوِّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بَبَعِيدٍ

“So when Our command came, We made the highest part of the city its lowest and rained upon them stones of layered hard clay, marked from your Lord. And Allah ‘s punishment from the wrongdoers is not far.” (Hud, 11: 82-83)

The divine punishment that annihilated Sodom and Gomorrah is also explained chapter al-Hijr in different wording.

The Qur'an refers to what became of their land as '*al mutafikah*', which literally means the place that was turned upside down.

As the Sodomites had engaged in a sin as vile as homosexuality, the Almighty first made them hear a terrifying sound, then turned their land upside down and finally rained stones on them. One cannot think of a more severe way for a nation to be completely erased off the stage of history.

The Almighty declares He has turned them into a lesson for those to come:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ. وَإِنَّهَا لَبَسِيلٌ مَّقِيمٌ.
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“Indeed in that are signs for those who discern. And indeed, those cities are situated on an established road. In that is a sign for the believers.” (Al-Hijr, 15: 75-77)

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, the Almighty tell us He has left behind some remnants of them for people to take note:

وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

“And We have certainly left of it a sign as clear evidence for a people who use reason.” (Al-Ankabut, 29: 35)

This ‘sign’ has been interpreted as the stories of their destruction, the relics of their city, the rocks that rained down from the skies or the black texture of the lake that flooded their land.

After reminding that the verses about Sodom and Gomorrah were revealed to Meccan pagans, Fakhruddin Razi goes on to say regarding the verse, “...those cities are on an established road”, that “...the Meccans would mostly travel to Damascus to do trade. The road to Damascus ran south of the Dead Sea. It is therefore best to search for the relics of Sodom and Gomorrah around there”.

Lot’s (as) Wives and Children

When Lot (as) became a prophet, he was married to woman by the name of Fevat. She was a believer. However, around twenty years later, she passed away. Lot (as) then married Wahila, a native of Sodom. She was a hypocrite. She not only condoned her people’s transgressions, she also supported them behind her husband’s back.

That night when the angels arrived at their home in the guise of handsome young boys, it was Wahila who ran out and informed the people. She had betrayed Lot (as); so, she met the same end as the others.

Lot (as) had two pious daughters. They were among the few believers who accompanied him out of Sodom and Gomorrah just before the destruction arrived.

With their father, they later went next to Abraham (as), who married them off to two righteous local men. Allah blessed Lot’s (as) grandchildren in number. The Madyan were their descendants.

The Reasons Behind the Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

1. They were pagans.
2. They were homosexuals.

Ibn Abbas (ra) narrates the following from the Prophet (as):

“If you see people engaging in the same ugly activity as the tribe of Lot, kill both the giver and the receiver”. (Al-Tirmidhi, Hudud, 24/1456; Abu Dawud, Hudud, 28/4462)

In another hadith narrated by Ibn Abbas (as), the Prophet (saw) says:

“A person doing the deed of tribe of Lot has been damned.” (Al-Tirmidhi, Hudud, 24/1456)

Malik ibn Dinar says:

“Homosexuality was never practiced before the Sodomites. It was the devil who taught them. Once they started engaging in that unnatural activity to the point of no return, they perished under divine wrath. Allah has given lust to human beings for procreation. It is out of transgression and ignorance to use it outside of its purpose. It is degrading to the honour of being a human and drags one to a level lower than animals.”

3. They raped males to death.

When the leaders of Sodom and Gomorrah wanted to kill someone, they would have him gang raped to death.

4. The Sodomites would commit their acts out in the open and scorn those who preferred to live in honour. They had become so vulgar that they would even pass gas in public to entertain themselves.

Anyone trying to speak sense into them would be threatened with expulsion. They even warned Lot (as) to give up advising them or face being driven out of the land.

5. They were thugs. The Sodomites would sit on the sides of the road, throw stones at, mock and assault those who passed by.

6. They were gossipers.

7. They were miserly.

Hasan Basri narrates that the Prophet (as) once warned believers against the sins that led Sodom and Gomorrah to perish and added:

“And women...keep away from lusting after one another!” (Al-Suyuti, *al-Jami’ al-Saghir*, II, 51)



The Almighty orders us to take lessons from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and tell us that the relics of all destroyed tribes have been left behind to serve that purpose.

The ‘clear signs’ at the Dead Sea are certainly intriguing. The events that have taken place around the Dead Sea are as remarkable as the geological characteristics of the area. The sea, which technically is a lake, is around 400 metres below the surface of the Mediterranean Sea; and the deepest point of the Dead Sea, again, stands at 400 metres. So, at its lowest point, the Dead Sea is around 800 metres below sea level. Even that suggest how low in character Sodom and Gomorrah were.

The third verse of chapter Rum refers to the area as ‘*adna’l-ard*’, the lowest point on earth. Although this has also been interpreted as the ‘closest area’ in reference to

its proximity to Mecca, the essential and literal meaning of the term is ‘the lowest point on earth.’ Modern techniques of land surveying do indeed show that the lowest point on earth is the Dead Sea basin. Since it would have been impossible to measure this at the time the Qur’an was revealed, this also serves as another scientific proof that the Qur’an is the word of Allah.

Another feature of the Dead Sea is that nearly 35% of it is salt. That makes it unliveable for fish or plants; hence the name ‘Dead Sea.’ It is also remarkable that even animals do not live in this damned area. The lake is tar-coloured and releases a foul smell. Through its appearance and odour, it is as if the lake tells people about the sins once committed in the area.

It is thought that the events surrounding Sodom and Gomorrah conveyed by the Qur’an took place around 1800 BC. The high level of salt in the area is known to have dried up trees. The impact of the divine punishment sank the relics of the cities underground.

The fate of Sodom and Gomorrah is a lot similar to that of Pompeii.

The Destruction of Pompeii

Pompeii was an Italian city that has become the symbol of the Roman Empire’s degeneration. Like Sodom and Gomorrah, it was sexual perversion that brought its downfall.

Historical records suggest that right before the city was destroyed, Pompeians were at the end point of deviation and immorality. At around 79 CE, the nearby Mount Vesuvius suddenly erupted, and the lava erased the city off the map. Not a single person could escape. Some died in the act and were plastered by volcanic ash and stone.

This all unfolded in an instant. Allah’s retribution has always caught the wicked in the blink of an eye. Like in the case of Pompeii, some of their remains have been preserved for all to see.

The Qur’an refers to such instant destructions in the following:

إِنْ كَانَتْ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ خَامِدُونَ

“It was not but one shout, and immediately they were extinguished.” (Ya Sin, 36: 29)

That was how the people of Pompeii perished. Their bodies of stone that have survived two millennia to this day remain among the eeriest scenes of history.

The Almighty declares:

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ هَلْ تُحِسُّ
مِنْهُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا

“And how many generations have We destroyed before them? Do you see anyone of them or hear from them a sound?” (Maryam, 19: 98)

History is virtually a cemetery of lost nations. Disbelief, perversion and tyranny head the reasons for their destruction. Their final moments in the face of Allah’s revenge offer us images to reflect on. Despite the centuries that have passed, Pompeii continues to show us the corpses of people turned to stone for their wickedness. It is as if they are the silhouettes of men whose souls had become beasts!

However, for simpletons unable to see the truth behind their destruction and who only look at things with the eye of the ego, they are merely statues that arouse a little interest during sightseeing.

And like the wicked land of Sodom and Gomorrah that was sunk deep in the ground and the palaces Aad and Thamud had carved into rocks thinking the world was an eternal throne of pleasure, they are now desolate, expect perhaps for the owls that have now moved in.



GOOD MORALS AND PROTECTING THE GENERATION

Allah has created the human being as a specimen of elegance and depth. However, his real essence lies in serving Allah, understanding His Glory and reaping a share of insight into spiritual mysteries.

The universe and the creatures within are not haphazard coincidences without purpose. Neither is the human being. He was not created to roam according to his whims. There is a divine purpose behind his creation. The human is the only being who can reflect Allah's attributes of beauty (*jamal*) and glory (*jalal*) and therefore the only being who can be a friend (*khalil*) to the Lord.

All the other beings exist to help man survive. Man has been made the caliph. However, it is a trust only given to those willing to make sacrifices. For those who properly carry out this duty, the Lord becomes their seeing eye and hearing ear. This is possible only by embodying the morals of the Qur'an. The Almighty states:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۚ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي
بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ. وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا
وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا ذُو حُظٍّ عَظِيمٍ

“And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel evil by that which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity will become as though he was a devoted friend. But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion of good.” (Fussilat, 41: 34-35)

The Qur'an takes a person to the peak of morals. It is good morals that add beauty to all deeds of worship. Hasan Basri would thank and even send gifts to people who spoke behind his back.

The human being has come into this world as a composition of divine beauties. Because he has been subjected to a trial called life, he has also been given temporary freedom to choose between right and wrong. He has been left alone between his ego's appetite for evil and his spirit's leanings towards the good.

The risk of bad habits is there to ensure that trial. The Qur'an says:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا. فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا.
قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا. وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا.

“And by the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it with discernment of wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it. And he has failed who instills it with corruption.” (Al-Shams, 91: 7-10)

It is good nature that makes a man, while a bad nature turns him into something else.

It is the darkest, stupidest and most dangerous of all mistakes to live on Allah’s earth and make the most of His blessings, while rebelling against His commands. Tyrants and those who resist the order of faith and morals cannot escape divine retribution.

The only way to live as a human being is through religion and morals. The epitome of humanity, as well as the most perfect role model, is the Prophet Muhammed Mustafa (saw).

The Qur’an says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ
يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

“There has certainly for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent model for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often.” (Al-Ahzab, 33: 21)

The Prophet (saw) refers to his high morals, when he says:

“My Lord has trained and educated me...and beautifully at that.” (Suyuti, al-Jamiu’s-Saghir, I, 12)

It is for that reason that the secret of the human being can only be unravelled by the Mohammedan truth. The more one perishes in him, the clearer the divine mysteries become.

May our Lord gather us all under the Prophet’s (saw) banner of morals and happiness!

Amin...



PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

Having a family and children are natural outcomes of the divine gift that is life.

All prophets since Adam (as) have placed great importance on marriage for the honour of procreation. Only by having a strong institution of marriage is it possible to protect the family. Generations born out of wedlock and who have therefore been deprived of a household education can disrupt society, shake its foundations and cause anarchy. There is no bigger stupidity to exchange the bliss of marriage with the filth of extramarital relations.

Raising upright children is the cause of humanity's greatest happiness. The Prophet (saw) says:

"A father leaves his child no greater legacy than good morals". (Al-Tirmidhi, Birr, 33)

Also, stress and hardships faced while raising children are means to atone for one's sins.

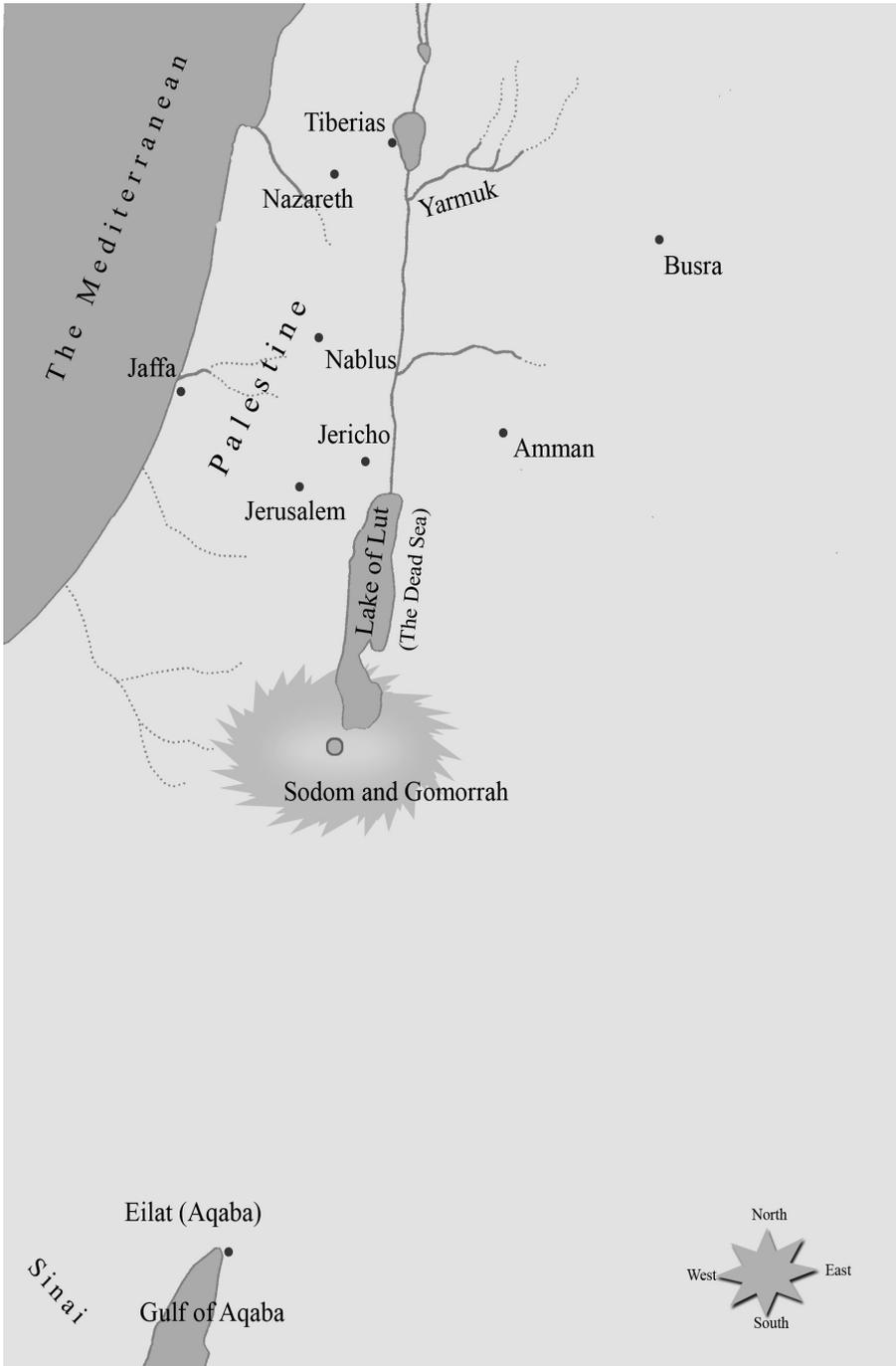
The Qur'an shines a light on the paths to eternal happiness by reminding us how nations that have forgotten their purpose of creation have lost their spiritual honour and human dignity, and have consequently been wiped off the face of the earth.

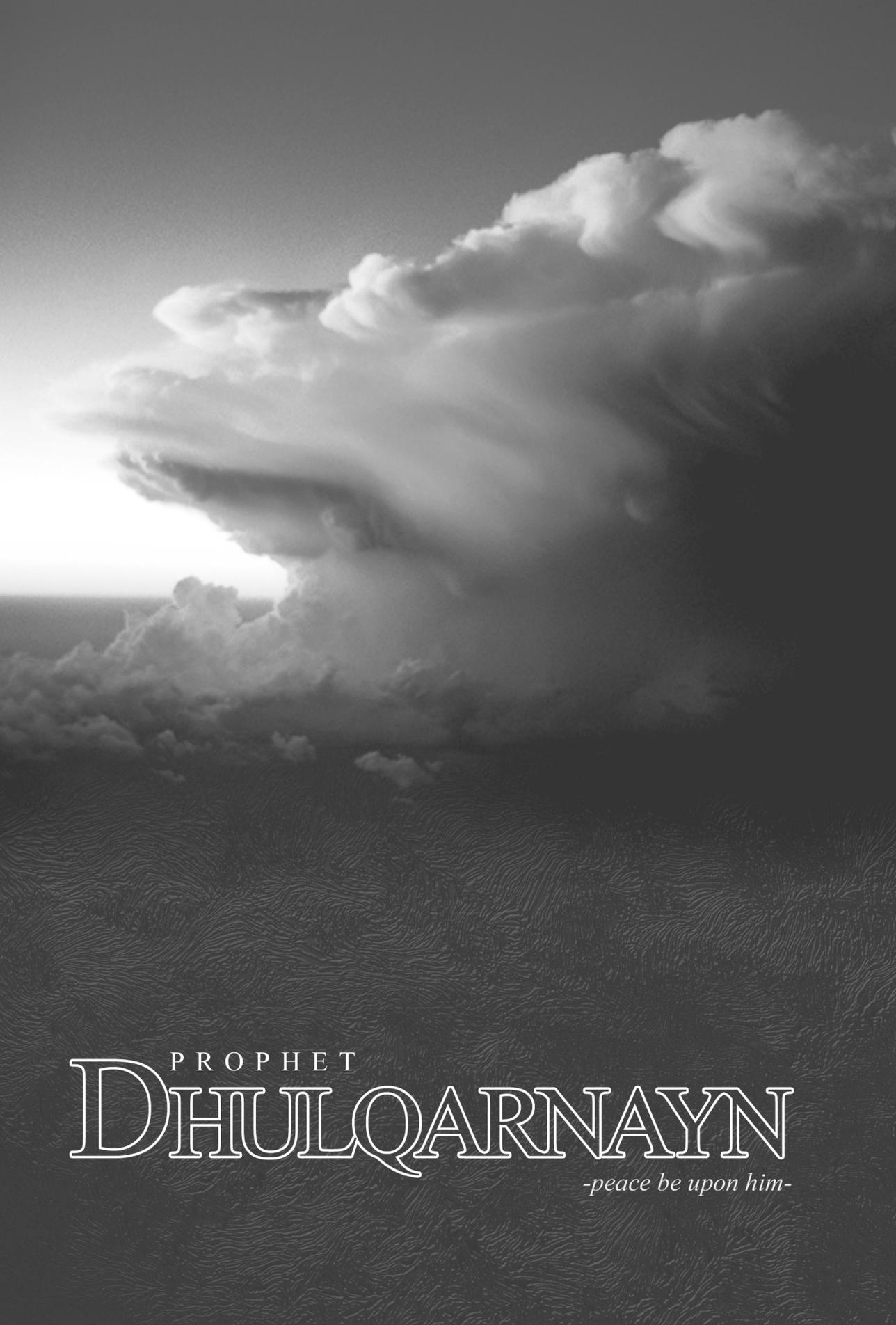
May our Lord give us the skill to use what He has given us on His path!

Amin...



Prophet Lot





PROPHET
DHIULQARNAYN

-peace be upon him-

The man who carried the flag of tawhid east and west

DHULQARNAYN

-peace be upon him-

Dhulqarnayn literally means 'the owner of two epochs'. Reports suggest that he was called by that name because he journeyed the east and west of earth, and that Allah gave him power over darkness and light.

It is disputed whether Dhulqarnayn (as) was a prophet or saint. The Qur'an briefly speaks of his campaigns east and west. It is reported that he is a descendent of Noah's (as) son, Yafes, and that his real name is Iskandar, whose Western variant is Alexander. However, he should not be confused with Alexander the Great. Alexander was a general born in Macedonia in the 3rd century BC, who campaigned as far as India in the east. He was a student of Aristotle. However, in contrast, Dhulqarnayn (as) lived around the same time as Abraham (as). It is even said that he offered pilgrimage with Abraham (as) and received his blessings.

In addition, the nature and motives of Alexander's expeditions bear little resemblance to those of Dhulqarnayn (as). History does not tell us that Alexander ever built a wall. Alexander did not believe in Allah either. Neither did he treat the nations he conquered with mercy and justice. Many details of Alexander's life have been recorded; yet, none of his conduct indicates even a small likeness to that of Dhulqarnayn (as). Alexander does not carry any quality truly worthy of the title 'Dhulqarnayn'.

It is narrated Dhulqarnayn's (as) first cousin was Khidr (as), who served as a commander in the army. Dhulqarnayn (as) led the army in wars waged on pagans. He built a wall of copper and iron against the nations of Gog and Magog. He spread the religion of Allah (jj) and the message of His Oneness; and delivered truth and justice to people.

Dhulqarnayn (as) passed away at Dumatu'l Jandal, between Medina and Damascus, and is believed to be buried near Mecca in the Tihamah Mountains.



In his interpretation of the Qur'an, Qurtubi notes that only four people ruled over the entire earth as it was known at the time. Two of them were Muslims, while the other two were pagans. The Muslims were Dhulqarnayn (as) and Solomon (as), while the pagans were Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar. There will also come a fifth

person, also a Muslim, to rule over the entire earth. In line with the declaration **“Allah will make Islam prevail over all religions”** (Al-Tawbah, 9: 33) that person will be Mahdi (as). (Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir, XI, 47-48)

Ali (kw) was once asked how Dhulqarnayn (as) had managed to reach the ends of the world’s east and west. He explained:

“The clouds would yield to him. Everything he needed was placed under his command. It made no difference whether it was night or day, as the light always shined for him.” (Ibn Ishaq, Sirat, p. 185)



In Meccan period, the Prophet (saw) would explain the stories of past nations his followers to reflect on. Jews and Persians then began elaborating their own accounts of past nations. At the time, there were Jews in Medina who believed that the last prophet would be born from among their community. After hearing that a prophet had hailed from Mecca, they sent a message to the pagans, saying:

“Test him to see if he really is a prophet! Ask him about the Sleepers of the Cave, Dhulqarnayn and the nature of spirit! If he answers the first two questions in full but is brief with the last, he is a prophet to be followed. But he if he is unable to answer them, he is a liar!”

So, the Meccan pagans went to the Prophet (as) and asked, “Who are the Sleepers of the Cave and Dhulqarnayn, who campaigned east and west? And what is the nature of spirit?”

It was then that Allah revealed chapter al-Kahf. This is how it begins telling the story of Dhulqarnayn:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ ذِي الْقُرْنَيْنِ قُلْ سَأَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا.
إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبَبًا

“And they ask you about Dhulqarnayn. Say, ‘Here is a small recollection about him!’ We did indeed establish him on the earth, and gave him a way to all things.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 83-84) (Al-Alusi, *Tafsir*, XVI, 24; Al-Wahidi, p. 306)

The Traits of Dhulqarnayn (as)

1. Allah the Almighty had given Dhulqarnayn (as) power. He launched expeditions east and west; and built the wall from a mixture of copper and iron.
2. He had clouds and other means at his service, to travel from place to another.
3. He was given knowledge, authority and an exceptional sense of judgment.

4. He had two flags, white and black. When journeying in daylight, he would place the black flag behind him and darkness would descend on his trail. That way, the enemies chasing him would become baffled and lost in the dark. At night, he would place the white flag in front of him, which would light up the path for his soldiers, and enable him to rout his enemies.

5. Dhulqarnayn (as) was merciful and just towards his subjects. After conquering a land, he would tell the people, *“The innocent has no reason to fear. Those who do good will get their rewards.”* He found a way inside people’s hearts through compassion, tolerance and understanding. He loved anything that was for the good of the people.

6. Dhulqarnayn (as) was not a slave to greed and ambition. At the time when people offered him money in return for building a wall, he said, *“Allah has blessed me with too many things for me to be in need of what you offer. Instead, work on the wall and help me with your physical strength.”*

7. He was generous. Unlike other rulers, he would not chase wealth. He was a gentle and forgiving man, who gave away a lot in charity.

8. Dhulqarnayn (as) was modest, dignified and wise. He recognized that his true aim was to serve people and bring them justice. He believed that wealth was for the welfare of the people, not for the comfort of kings.

Campaigns of Tawhid

Dhulqarnayn (as) expanded the borders of his realm and strengthened his state. He began to deliver Allah’s prohibitions and commands all across the world. With his army of believers, he first led an expedition west. He invited every pagan nation to believe that Allah is One. He reached the furthestmost point in the west. The land had come to an end and they were standing on the shores of a vast ocean. It was sunset; and it looked as though the sun was dipping in a pool of mud. There, he saw a pagan nation. Some of them believed in the message of Dhulqarnayn (as). Others resisted. Nevertheless, they were quickly defeated. In the end, they repented and embraced the belief of *tawhid*. The Qur’an explains:

فَاتَّبَعَ سَبِيلًا. حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ وَوَجَدَ
عِنْدَهَا قَوْمًا قُلْنَا يَا ذَا الْقُرْنَيْنِ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ تُعَذِّبُ وَإِنَّمَا أَنْتَ تَتَّخِذُ فِيهِمْ حُسْنًا.

“So he followed a way, until he reached the setting of the sun. He found it as if it was setting in a spring of dark mud. And nearby, he saw a people. Allah said, ‘Dhulqarnayn, you may either punish them or put them on a way of goodness.’”

(Al-Kahf, 18: 85-86)

Even though Dhulqarnayn (as) had been allowed to deal with those people as he pleased, he opted to act within divine guidelines:

قَالَ أَمَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نُعَذِّبُهُ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا نَكْرًا.
وَأَمَّا مَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَسَنَقُولُ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا

“He said, ‘We will punish the one who does wrong. Then he will be returned to his Lord, and will be punished even more severely! But as for one who believes and does what is right, he will have a good reward and we will make him do only what comes easy!’” (Al-Kahf, 18: 87-88)

Dhulqarnayn (as) always invited people to believe. Those who accepted found salvation. Others who resisted were punished.

Afterwards, he turned his army east and reached the point of dawn. The Qur’an says:

ثُمَّ أَتْبَعَ سَبِيلًا. حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَطْلِعَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَطْلُعُ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ
لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهَا سِتْرًا. كَذَلِكَ وَقَدْ أَحَطْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا

“He then followed a way, until he reached to the rising of the sun. He saw it rise on a people who We had given no shelter. And so it was. We had encompassed all that he knew.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 89-91)

This suggests that on this expedition, Dhulqarnayn (as) conquered one land after another until he reached the furthest point in the east, where civilization had come to an end. There, he encountered a people still living primitively, without proper clothes or homes.

When the sun came up, they sought shade in their caves or headed to the sea; and came out to search for food only after the heat was gone. Dhulqarnayn (as) also invited them to the religion of truth.

He then led his army north until he came across a nation speaking a foreign language. He spoke to them through an interpreter. The Almighty says:

ثُمَّ أَتْبَعَ سَبِيلًا. حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ
وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا

“Then he followed a way, until he reached a pass between two mountains, where he found a people nearby who could hardly understand speech.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 92-93)

They complained to Dhulqarnayn (as) about the constant pestering of Gog and Magog and asked him to build a wall to keep them out. It was after this that the Wall of Dhulqarnayn was built. This nation then chose the path of salvation and became Muslim.

The Qur'an recounts the event:

قَالُوا يَا ذَا الْقُرْنَيْنِ إِنَّ يَأْجُوجَ وَمَأْجُوجَ مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَهَلْ نَجْعَلُ
لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا. قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّي فِيهِ رَبِّي خَيْرٌ
فَأَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ أَجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا. آتُونِي زُبَرَ الْحَدِيدِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا سَاوَىٰ
بَيْنَ الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انْفُخُوا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا قَالَ آتُونِي أُفْرِغْ عَلَيْهِ قِطْرًا. فَمَا
اسْطَاعُوا أَنْ يَظْهَرُوهُ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا لَهُ نَقْبًا. قَالَ هَذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّي فَإِذَا جَاءَ
وَعْدُ رَبِّي جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءَ وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي حَقًّا

“They said, ‘Dhulqarnayn! Gog and Magog are great corrupters in the land. So can we pay you a fee for you to put up a barrier between us and them?’

He said, ‘That in which my Lord has established me is better than what you offer! But help me with your strength, and I will make between you and them a dam. Bring me sheets of iron!’

When he had leveled them between the two mountain walls, he said, ‘Blow with bellows!’ And when it became like fire, he said, ‘Bring me molten copper to pour over it!’ Thus, Gog and Magog were neither able to pass over it, nor penetrate it!

Dhulqarnayn said, ‘This is a mercy from my Lord; but when the promise of my Lord comes, He will make it level, and the promise of my Lord is always true!’” (Al-Kahf, 18: 94-98)

The Wall of Dhulqarnayn is not the Great Wall of China. Its exact location is disputed. Nevertheless, its collapse is a sign of the final hour. Gog and Magog will breach the wall and cause mischief across the entire earth.

Gog and Magog

Reports say that Gog and Magog are two troublesome and evil nations. They have flat faces, small eyes and big ears. They are short in height but many in number. As Judgment Day approaches, they will spread across the world and multiply rapidly, like flies on honey. Only Allah (jj) knows where they are now.

When that time comes, the Wall of Dhulqarnayn will be flattened; and Gog and Magog will sweep across every part of the world, except for Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem. Only these three places will be spared. They will consume everything in their path and lay waste to their surroundings. They will pester like a plague of grasshoppers and be as bothersome as a swarm of cockroaches. In the end, Allah will destroy them.

The Prophet (as) said:

“Each day, Gog and Magog chip away at the wall. However, just as they are about to open a hole, their leader says to them:

‘Enough for today; you will resume work tomorrow morning’. Nevertheless, overnight, Allah (jj) repairs the wall stronger than before. Days will follow like that, one after another, until finally their time is up and they are given reign to harass people. This time, their leader will say:

‘Enough for today. Allah-willing, you will drill a hole through the wall tomorrow!’ He will say Allah-willing for the first time.

So, they will stop work and return the next day, this time to find the wall as they had left it the night before. At the end of the day, they will break open a hole. They will then descend onto people. They will drink every source of water dry. People will flee before them in fright. Gog and Magog will shoot an arrow into the sky. The arrow will fall back down with blood on the tip. They will say:

‘We have trampled and crushed those on earth and humiliated those in the skies!’

Allah (jj) will send maggots that will seize them from the napes of their necks. These maggots will rip them to shreds and lay their dismantled corpses on the ground. And by the name of He who has my life in His hands, every single animal on earth would rejuvenate, lactate and beef up just by feeding on their corpses.” (Al-Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 18/6; Ibn Majah, Fitan, 33/4080)

Abdullah ibn Masud (ra) explains:

“On the night of Miraj, the Messenger of Allah (saw) met prophets Abraham (as), Moses (as) and Jesus (as). They discussed the day of judgment. They first consulted Abraham (as). He had no knowledge about it. They then asked Moses (as). He, too, did not know anything about it. The, it was Jesus’ (as) turn to speak.

‘I have been given knowledge about the signs that will come prior to the day’, he said. ‘But only Allah knows when exactly the day will be’. He then spoke of the emergence of Dajjal and added:

‘I will then come back down and kill him. After that, people will return to their homelands. However, then they will be met with Gog and Magog, who will attack

from every hill. They will drink up all the water they find and spoil everything they lay their hands on. I will then pray to Allah for Gog and Magog to perish; and they will. The foul smell of their slain corpses will fill the earth. I will then pray to Allah once more. He will send a rain that will wash away their corpses to the seas. Afterwards, the mountains will crumble and scatter, and the earth will spread out like leather. I have been told that once that takes place, the Day of Judgment will be as near as birth is to a woman in the final stages of her pregnancy.”

Awwam, who is among the narrators of that hadith, says that those events are confirmed by the verse:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُتِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ وَهُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ

“...until the day, when the dam of Gog and Magog is opened and they descend from every hill.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 96) (Ibn Maja, Fitan, 33/4081)

The Prophet (saw) informs us that the destruction of Gog and Magog will be followed by a period of peace and calm, where people will continue to live the religion.

“This House (the Kaaba) will receive pilgrims even after Gog and Magog.” (Al-Bukhari, Hajj, 47)

The Prophet (saw) also says Gog and Magog will be thrown into hellfire.

Abu Said (ra) reports that the Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

“On the Day of Judgment, the Glorious Allah will call out, ‘O, Adam!’

‘Yes, my Lord’, Adam (as) will say. ‘I am at Your command. All things good lie in Your hands!’ He will then hear a voice:

‘Allah has commanded you to set aside the dwellers of hell!’

‘My Lord, how many people are in hell?’ Adam (as) will ask. He will be told:

‘999 out of every 1,000!’

And that is the time when the pregnant will miscarry, children will age and people will become drunk from the intensity of the punishment, even though they have had nothing to drink!”

The companions found it difficult to digest what they had just heard and turned pale. Our Prophet (saw) continued:

“Every 999 out of a 1,000 from Gog and Magog will enter hell. However, from you, it will be 1 out of every 1,000. Know that among all humankind, you are only as

many as a white strand of hair on a black cow or a black strand hair on a white one.”
(Al-Bukhari, Tafsir, 22/1; Anbiya, 7)

The Prophet (saw) has warned believers against all the tribulations before the final hour, especially that of Gog and Magog.

Zaynab bint Jahsh (rha) recounts:

“The Messenger of Allah (saw) once entered the room terrified and said:

‘There is no god but Allah! Woe to the Arabs from an approaching catastrophe!’
He then made a circle with his thumb and index finger and said, *‘Today, a whole like this has been punctured in the wall of Gog and Magog!’*

I asked, ‘Messenger of Allah, does that mean we will all be destroyed even with righteous people among us?’

‘Yes’, he answered. *‘If evil becomes prevalent!’* (Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 7; Muslim, Fitan, 1/2880)

The reason why the Prophet (saw) refers to only ‘Arabs’ here is the fact that the Muslims of the time were all but Arab. Therefore, it is better to take it as a reference to all Muslims. Some scholars say that ‘the approaching catastrophe’ implies the troubles that began with the murder of Caliph Uthman (ra). Those troubles are considered the first spiritual and physical cracks that appeared in the wall of Gog and Magog.

Stories of Wisdom from Dhulqarnayn (as)

During one of his campaigns, Dhulqarnayn (as) encountered a tribe trying to overcome their egos and the fear of death. They possessed no wealth like gold or silver, and ate only vegetables, which they took great care to preserve. Each person also dug his own grave, cleaned it every day and performed his prayers inside it. Dhulqarnayn (as) summoned their chief. But he refused to go to him.

“I do not wish to see anyone”, he remarked. “And if someone wants to see me, he can come here!”

So, Dhulqarnayn (as) went to see him personally.

“Why did you refuse my invitation?” he inquired.

“I would have come if I needed you”, the chief responded.

Dhulqarnayn (as) then asked, “What is the story with you people? I have not come across anyone like you!”

“Well, we do not value gold or silver”, the chief explained, “Because we have come to realize that once a person obtains a certain amount of them, he wants more.

Nevertheless, in doing so, he loses his inner peace. We have therefore decided not to chase after the world.”

“What are these graves?”, Dhulqarnayn (as) then asked. “Why do you dig them up and pray inside them?”

The chief said, “We do so to curb our desire for the world. Once we see the graves, we remember that we will end up in them. And that makes us forget about everything else.”

“Why don’t you eat anything but vegetables?” Dhulqarnayn (as) then inquired.

“We do not want our stomachs to become graves for animals”, he said. “Besides, all food tastes the same once it passes the throat!”⁶⁶



A man once came to Dhulqarnayn (as) and asked, “Teach me something that will strengthen my belief and *yaqin*!”⁶⁷

He advised, “Do not get angry with anyone...for there is never an easier time for the devil to enter one’s body than when he is angry. Do not rush! By rushing, you will lose what would have come to you. Be soft to people near and far! Abstain from being stubborn, disbelief and oppressing others!”

On his deathbed, Dhulqarnayn’s (as) said:

“Wash my corpse, wrap it in a shroud and place it in a coffin. However, let my arms hang out. Have my servants follow me and load my treasures on mules. Let the people see that despite my magnificent kingship, I, too, am going empty handed, unable to take either my wealth or servants to the other side. And let them not be deceived by the dazzle of the word!”

His will was carried out. Scholars have interpreted his words as:

“I conquered east and west with invincible armies behind me. Countless soldiers and servants were under my command. None of them ever disobeyed me. The world was under my rule from end to end. I possessed treasures no soul could count. However, none of them are lasting. As I am being carried to the grave, you can see that my hands are bare. Wealth stays in the world. Do things you can take to eternity!”

The Prophet (saw) also confirms that with the words:

66. There is no harm in eating the meat of animals God has declared clean. These people abstained out of choice.

67. *Yaqin* means certain and complete knowledge removed of all doubt.

“Three things follow the dead to the grave: his family, wealth and deeds. Two of them, the family and wealth, return while deeds remain by his side.” (Al-Bukhari, Riqaq, 42; Muslim, Zuhd, 5)

Despite his kingdom, Dhulqarnayn (as) used to make armors and earn a living from his own labor. He would donate what he did not need.

Peace be upon him...



JIHAD AND ENJOINING THE GOOD

Believers who want the best of both worlds must use their lives, wealth and everything Allah has given them in the way of serious endeavors. For a person absorbed by the thought of death and beyond, there can be no greater purpose than the pleasure of Allah (jj). The Qur'an declares:

لَتُبْلَوْنَ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ

“We will surely test you with your wealth and lives.” (Al Imran, 3: 186)

For that reason, wasting Allah's blessings for no particular purpose pushes one to destruction.

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ. إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

“The day when no wealth or children will benefit anyone. But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 88-89)

Allowing ignorance to consume what Allah has given leads to unrest both in the individual and society. However, acting with a sound heart will bring paradise on earth, where society finds the peace and comfort it yearns for.

Abu Said al-Khudri (ra) narrates:

“The Messenger of Allah (saw) was once asked, ‘Who is the best of men?’

He said, *‘He who offers jihad, with his life and wealth, in the way of Allah!’*” (Al-Bukhari, Jihad, 2; Muslim, Ijarah, 122,123)

Another hadith says, *“True jihad is to wage war on the ego.”* (Al-Tirmidhi, Fada'il al-Jihad, 2/1621)

A Muslim defeats grief and captures joy by believing in Allah (jj) and doing good things. A true believer is a person others benefit from, both in words and action.



A wonderful example of this is companion Musab ibn Umayr (ra).

Despite coming from a wealthy Meccan household, the young Musab (ra) risked it all to become Muslim. He took no notice of his parents' threats that they would deprive him of their fortune, as he migrated to Medina, poor and estranged from

his family. There, he enthusiastically began work in the way of the Lord and served as a means in guiding many people. Musab (ra) was a flagbearer during the Battle of Uhud, 11: where he was eventually martyred while trying to defend the Prophet (saw). An angel then assumed the form of Musab (ra) and picked up the flag. The Prophet (saw), who in the heat of the battle had not yet realized that Musab (ra) had fallen, called out:

“Advance, Musab...advance!”

The angel then threw a glance back. That was when the Prophet (saw) understood that it was an angel and that Musab (ra) had been martyred.

Although Musab’s (ra) body was later found on the battlefield, the companions could not find even a shroud to cover him. He is among the people the Qur’an praises in the verse below:

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا

“Among the believers are men true to what they promised Allah. Some of them have fulfilled their vows to the death, and others are awaiting their chance...without having turned back on their word in any way!” (Al-Ahzab, 33: 23)

The Almighty also says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ وَعَدًّا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا بِالَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

“Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and properties in return for paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. It is a true promise binding upon Him, written in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur’an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So rejoice in the transaction you have just made. And in that is the greatest of all profit!” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 111)

It has been reported that the above verse was revealed during the second pledge at Aqabah. Abdullah ibn Rawahah (ra), who was among the 70 people who gave their word to the Prophet (saw), said:

“Messenger of Allah! You can lay down any condition on behalf of your Lord and yourself”

To that, the Prophet (saw) replied:

“On behalf of my Lord, I ask you to worship Him and not hold anyone as His partner. And on behalf of myself, I ask you to protect me, just as you protect your lives and properties.”

The companions asked, “If we do, what is in it for us?”

“Paradise!”, said the Prophet (saw).

“What a profitable trade!”, they exclaimed. “We will not turn back on it. And why would we even want to?” (Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, II, 406)

The companions’ lives offer a vivid picture of what it means to struggle in the way of Allah. They built their characters on what they obtained from the depths of the Prophet’s (saw) heart, and they absorbed his emotions to the best of their capabilities. It is remarkable that although 120,000 companions joined the Prophet (saw) during his Farewell Pilgrimage, only 20,000 of them are buried in Mecca and Medina. The rest of them took to all four corners of the world, far and wide, to spread the message of Islam and hold the word of Allah aloft. The furthest point they reached was where they were eventually buried.

They never shirked from sacrificing their wealth or their lives in the way of good. Whenever the Prophet (saw) asked them to make sacrifices for a high purpose, they generously surrendered whatever they had. The female companions would give their earrings, bracelets and necklaces without the slightest hesitation.

Sumayya (rha) donated her life and in doing so, became the first martyr of Islam.

The family of Uthman (ra) gave away all their jewelry.

When he became caliph, Umar ibn Abdulaziz donated all his wealth to the state to be used for the needs of the poor.

Again, during the Tabuk Campaign, which the Qur’an describes as *saat’ul-usra* or ‘the tough hour’, all women brought their jewels to the Prophet (saw). An 11-year-old girl was also keen on giving her earrings. However, she was unable to remove them from her ears, so she ripped them out, and placed the bloodied earrings in front of the Prophet (saw).

Aisha’s (rha) sister Asma (rha) had become blind in the later stages of her life. His son Abdullah ibn Zubayr (ra) was about to embark on a military campaign. When she hugged her son, she realized he was wearing an armor. She said to him, “Are you wearing an armor like a coward? Take it off, now!”

Hansa (rha) fought along with her four sons in the Battle of Qadisiyah. On the night before the battle, she gave them the following advice:

“My sons! You became Muslim by choice and have come all the way here with your own will. You well know of the great rewards the Almighty has prepared for those who fight against disbelievers for His own sake. You are well aware that the home of the hereafter is better than the fleeting stay on earth. The Almighty declares:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“O you who have believed! Persevere, endure, remain steadfast and fear Allah that you may succeed.” (Al Imran, 3: 200)

So, if, by the will of Allah, you make it to tomorrow, keep your eyes open and fight the enemy. Once the battle heats up and becomes ferocious, advance right into the heart of their ranks, and swing your swords on their commanders. You will then be granted victory and the spoils of war. But above all, you will be honored in the highest paradise!”

With those words echoing inside their minds, the brothers went into battle the next morning. They fought with great valor and courage, and all four of them were martyred. When the news of her sons reached Hansa (rha), she said:

“Praise be to Allah who has honored my sons with martyrdom. I pray that He unites me with them in His infinite mercy.” (Ibn Abdi'l-Barr, *al-Isti'ab*, IV, 1827-29)

Before she became Muslim, Hansa (rha) was a poet renowned for the elegies she had written about her slain brothers. This time, after tasting the zest of faith, she had used her artistic prowess to inspire her own sons to martyrdom. After hearing that she had lost her children, her own flesh and blood, to the battlefield, she did nothing but thank the Lord.

These are only a handful of examples of countless other women who have given it all in the way of the Lord.



It must be made clear that jihad in the way of Allah does not just mean swinging a sword on the battlefield. A sword is no more than a piece of iron that should be raised only in times of necessity, such as in cases of ending oppression and instating justice. The true battle is not to conquer lands but to conquer hearts.

The Qur'an uses many terms related to jihad, but only on a very few occasions does it use the term *qital*, which means warfare. Again, it does so only out of necessity, at times when war is absolutely unavoidable. There can be no war other than to protect Islam and raise Allah's word (*ilay-i kalimatullah*). Wars waged only to extend borders are a shame to humanity. Islam allows war only to instate justice, get rid of tyranny and save those who are oppressed. In the words of the Qur'an:

مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ
جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا

“Whoever kills a soul unless it is for a soul or for corruption in the land, it is as if he has slain all mankind. And whoever saves one, it is as if he has saved all mankind.” (Al-Maidah, 5: 32)

Thus, any action taken in the way of saving and guiding people is part of jihad.

The Qur’an further declares:

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ
عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“Take (Muhammed) from their wealth a charity to purify and increase them and invoke blessings upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurances for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 103)

Following Allah’s command to ‘take charity’, the companions virtually raced with each other to present whatever they had to the Prophet (saw). Those who had nothing to give began chopping and selling wood from the hills or carrying water from wells, and donated all the money they earned. They avoided wasting their spiritual and physical energies for the passing leisure of the world and facing poverty in the afterlife. They were fully conscious of the fact that Allah was the true owner of all wealth and assets; and that man simply kept an eye over them for a limited time. They traded their short lives on earth for a life of eternity.

Ahead of the Tabuk Campaign, the Prophet (as) was raising donations, and all Abu Aqil (ra) could offer was a cupful of dates, even though he needed them more than anybody else.

“Messenger of Allah”, he said. “I carried water on my back all night for two cups of dates. I left one cup at home for my kids and I have brought the other to you, hoping My Lord will accept it!”

The Prophet (saw) said to him, “*May Allah bless what you have brought and what you have left behind.*” (Al-Tabari, *Tafsir*, X, 251)

Uqbah ibn Amr (ra) remembers the following:

“When the ‘charity verse’ was revealed, we carried goods on our back to earn money to donate. One man came along and donated a lot. The hypocrites remarked, ‘He is showing off!’. Another man came and donated a cup of dates. This time, the

hypocrites commented, ‘Allah does not need this handful of fruit’. It was then that the Almighty revealed:

الَّذِينَ يَلْمِزُونَ الْمُطَّوِّعِينَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ
إِلَّا جُهْدَهُمْ فَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنْهُمْ سَخِرَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“As for those who criticize the believers about their charities, and ridicule those who have nothing else to give except an effort...Allah will ridicule them, and for them is a painful punishment.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 79) (Al-Bukhari, Zakat, 10; Muslim, Zakat, 72)

The below words by the Prophet (saw) are a chilling warning to those who abandon jihad:

“By Allah, who has given me life, you either enjoin good and forbid evil, or Allah will send down a punishment, after which your prayers will be of no avail!” (Al-Tirmidhi, Fitān, 9)

That means that running away from the duty of inviting people to good will only take one to the edge of divine punishment. What suits Muslims is to speak and defend the truth. Both the Qur’an and the Prophet (saw) command us to correct a wrong when we see it. The Almighty says:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا
وَقَالَ إِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah, does good and says, ‘I am indeed of the Muslims.’” (Al-Fussilat, 41: 41: 33)

The Prophet (saw) warns:

“When you witness something wrong, correct it with your hand. If you do not have the power to do so, then correct it with your tongue. And if you do not have the power to that, then condemn it in your heart. But be aware that this is the weakest level of faith.” (Muslim, Iman, 78)

There is no place to go beyond this world other than heaven or hell. Allah will personally pose the following question to those who have wasted their lives and wealth in trivial pursuits:

“Did not My Messenger come and deliver the truth to you? Did not I shower you in blessings and riches? What have you prepared for today?” The person will look left and right but find no one by his side. He will then look ahead, and see nothing but the flames of hell.

Our Prophet (saw) has said:

“On the day of judgment, the person will be brought forward to defend his case. Allah the Almighty will say:

‘Did I not give you eyes, ears, wealth and children? Did I not put animals and plants in your service and allow you to benefit from them? Did you not, for once, think that there would come a day when you would be brought to face Me?’

The person will reply, ‘No’.

Allah will say, ‘Then I will forget you today, just as you had forgotten me on earth!’” (Al-Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 6/2428)

The time will come when those who recklessly squandered their days on earth, will burn with agony over the times they laid to waste. A terrifying fire awaits those who have been unable to gain the pleasure of Allah (jj) in this world. Eyes that shut in denial on the deathbed will reopen in the pitch darkness of the grave.

The Almighty warns:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“Let there arise from you a nation inviting to good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. And it is them who will be saved.” (Al Imran, 3: 104)

This verse leaves no room for doubt about the need for there to be a group among believers, who are commit themselves to inviting people to the truth. At the beginning, Islam spread through the selfless efforts of companions, and later, through the toils of genuine scholars, saints and devoted believers. Allah has promised enormous rewards to those who follow their lead.

Anas (ra) narrates from the Prophet (saw):

“Let me inform you of a group of people. They are neither prophets nor martyrs. However, on the Day of Judgment, they will be envied by prophets and martyrs. They will be seated on pulpits of light. And everyone will recognize them.”

The companions asked, “Who are they?”

“They are those who endear Allah to people, and people to Allah. They roam the earth to give advice and speak the truth.”

Anas (ra) says he then asked, “Messenger of Allah...Making people love Allah is clear enough. But how do we make Allah love people?”

The Prophet (saw) thereupon said:

يَأْمُرُونَهُمْ بِمَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ وَيَنْهَوْنَهُمْ عَمَّا يَكْرَهُ اللَّهُ فَإِذَا
أَطَاعُوهُمْ أَحَبَّهُمُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

“They advise people to do things Allah loves and abstain from things Allah dislikes. And once people listen, Allah the Almighty loves them.” (Ali al-Muttaqi, III, 685-686; al-Bayhaki, Shu’ab al-Islam, I 367)

The best provision a person can take to the hereafter is *taqwa*. The best day is that which is better than yesterday. We must save up more provisions by doing more today than what we did in the last.

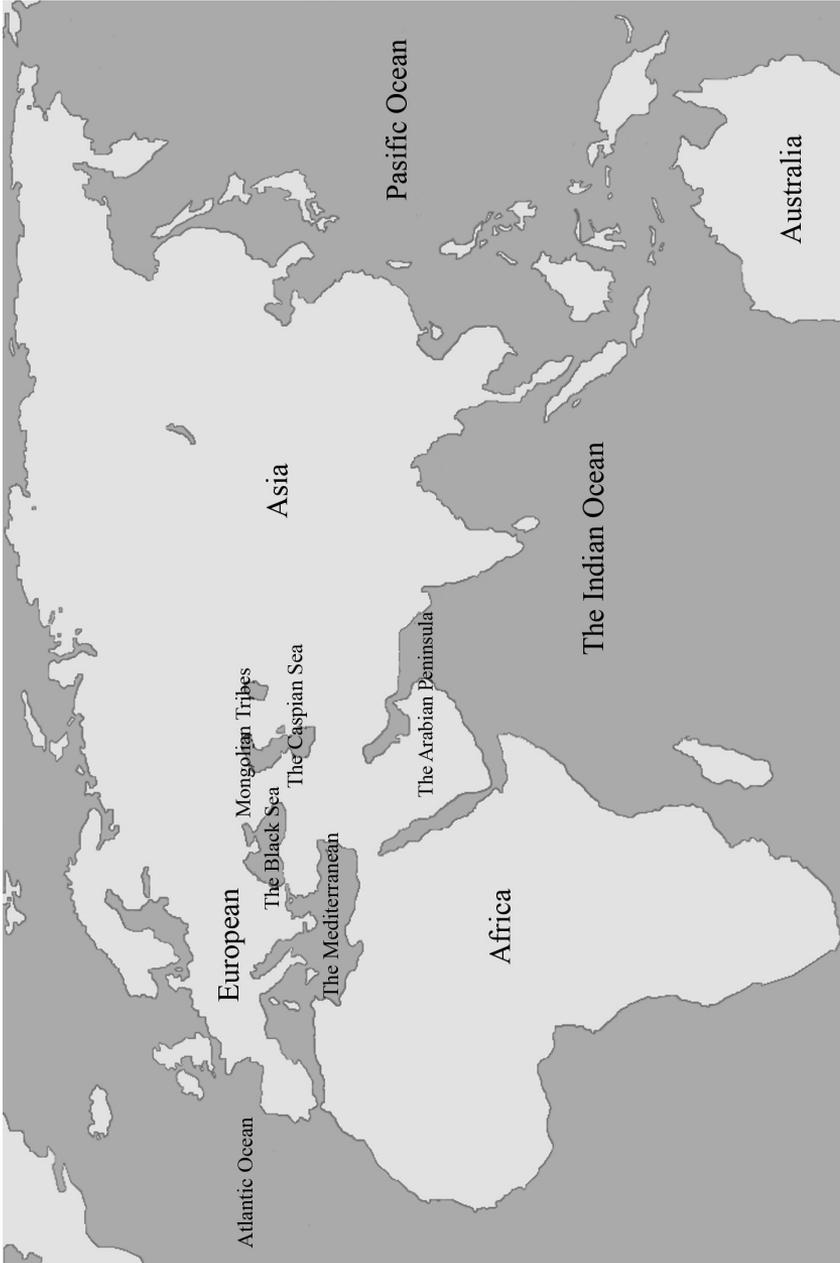
Those who lived before us are long gone. We will join them sooner than we suspect. We will die just like we fall asleep, and be revived just as we wake up. We will then be judged on all that we have done. The best and securest ranks in paradise are reserved for the pious. All things flow to Allah (jj), and to Him is the ultimate return.

May the Lord fasten our hearts on the path He is pleased with! May He protect us from our egos and the evils within!

Amin...



Prophet Dhulqarnayn





PROPHET
JACOB

-peace be upon him-

and

PROPHET
JOSEPH

-peace be upon him-

*The prophet who burned with love and longing
to become a pillar of patience*

JACOB

-peace be upon him-

and

*The prophet who rose from slavery and the dungeon
to become the king of hearts*

JOSEPH

-peace be upon him-⁶⁸

Jacob (as) was the son of Isaac (as) and a prophet to the people of the land of Canaan. Reports suggest he may have been born in either Madyan or Damascus. He was born moments after his twin Esau, and was named Jacob (as), meaning 'the one who follows'. His name also means *saffatullah*, 'the person purified by Allah'. Jacob's (as) nickname is Israel, which means 'the servant of Allah (jj)'.⁶⁸

Jacob (as) is the patriarch of a many prophets. Moses (as), Aaron (as), David (as), Solomon (as), Zachariah (as), John (as) and Jesus (as) are his direct descendants. This has to do with a prayer made by his father Isaac (as), who asked Allah to raise 'prophets and kings' from his lineage.

Allah gave each prophet a wish He would accept under all circumstances. Every prophet used that wish up in this life, except for Prophet Muhammed (saw) who has saved it for the hereafter, to intercede for his nation and rescue them from punishment.⁶⁹

As an adolescent, Jacob (as) was sent to stay with his maternal uncle, who had two daughters, Leah and Rachel. Jacob (as) served his uncle for seven years, at the end of which he married the elder daughter, Leah. After another seven years of service, he also married Rachel. The law that Jacob (as) adhered to allowed men to marry two sisters at the same time.

68. Most of the reports regarding this story are taken from Ismail Hakki Bursevi's interpretation of the Qur'an, *Ruhu'l Beyan*.

69. See, al-Bukhari, Da'awat, 1.

When giving his daughters' hands in marriage to Jacob (as), the uncle also gave each of them maids, Zulfa and Balha, to help them in their chores. He also gave Jacob (as) two concubines.

Jacob (as) had six sons from Leah, two from the concubines and two from Rachel. With Rachel, Jacob (as) did not have any children for a while. Rachel then prayed to the Lord and fell pregnant with Joseph (as). Soon after him, Benjamin was born. However, forty days later, Rachel passed away.

Jacob (as) was made a prophet in the same year Joseph (as) was born. He began calling people to believe in Allah's Oneness. Many people in Canaan accepted the call.

In the Qur'an, the Almighty says:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا. وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا

“We gave him Isaac and Jacob, and each of them We made a prophet. And We gave them of Our mercy, and a reputation of high honor.” (Maryam, 19: 49-50)

وَأذْكُرْ عِبَادَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ أُولِي الْأَيْدِي وَالْأَبْصَارِ. إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ. وَإِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَنَا لَمِنَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنِ الْأَخْيَارِ

“And remember Our servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; those of strength and vision. We certainly chose them for an exclusive quality: remembrance of the home of the hereafter. And to Us, they are among the chosen and outstanding.”

(Sad, 38: 45-47)

The Prophet (saw) also offers these words to describe their virtue:

“The noble son of a noble father, a noble grandfather and a noble great grandfather. That is Joseph, the son of Jacob, the grandson of Isaac and the great grandson of Abraham.” (Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 19; Tafsir, 12/1)

Joseph (as) was different to his brothers in every possible way. From an early age, his father loved and doted on him more than the rest of his sons. Jacob (as) simply saw himself in Joseph (as). He therefore always kept him by his side and held him in higher regard than the others.

Each heart is unique regarding the things it is fond of. It is attracted to different things, depending on the good or bad tendencies inside it. However, essentially, every being is attracted to itself. That determines attraction towards other beings. In other words, a being is attracted to another, when it perceives the other as shar-

ing the same qualities as itself. This is what it means to see oneself in another; it is to see in that other, one's own reflection. People of the same kind draw one another together. Love is nothing but two people finding themselves in each other. This unity and sameness is the condition of pulling or being pulled into love. In that sense, a sinner is attracted to sin, whereas a pious is drawn to spirituality. This law of attraction displays itself with all its splendor in both the material and spiritual worlds, in both good and evil.

Joseph's (as) Story: The Most Beautiful of All

The Qur'an describes the story of Joseph (as) as *ahsan'ul-qasas*, the most beautiful story ever told.⁷⁰ It recounts it in the chapter that takes its name from Joseph (as). A verse in it says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٍ لِّلسَّائِلِينَ

“In Joseph and his brothers, there are certainly signs for those who ask.”

(Yusuf, 12: 7)

As is understood by those words of Allah, the story of Joseph (as) abounds in lessons and wisdom. In no other book has the story ever been told more beautifully and eloquently than in the Qur'an. At the end of the chapter, it is made clear these are true events told from the unseen, or *ghayb*,⁷¹ and that, in no way, are they fabricated.⁷²

In terms of the wisdoms it contains, this is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable of all the Qur'an's stories. Scholars have tried to extract those wisdoms by listing the incredible stages of Joseph's (as) life:

1. Joseph (as) showed enormous patience to endure the troubles that began, when he was just a child.
2. Despite his brothers mistreating him and even plotting his murder, Joseph (as) was magnanimous. When they reunited years later, he forgave them all.
3. The story sheds light on prophets, the righteous, angels, devils, humans, jinn, animals, kings, lands, merchants, scholars, the ignorant, men and women, as well as a number of their tricks.
4. The story also tells us of *tawhid*, law, the interpretation of dreams, politics, society and offers many tips on making the world a better place.

70. *Ahsan'ul qasas* means the most beautiful story, in terms of both content and the style in which it is told. *Qasas* is the plural of *qissah*, which originally means a lead that is worth pursuing. Therefore, a story is a *qissah* only if it carries message that is worth being told and heard.

71. See, Yusuf, 12: 102.

72. See, Yusuf, 12: 111.

5. It speaks of the eternal happiness that awaits at the end of ordeals and hardship.

Joseph (as), in fact, became the king of Egypt at the age of thirty.

In the end, he ended up marrying Zulaykha, who regained her beauty and youth through his prayer.

Jacob (as) also regained his sight, which had been blinded from the tears he had shed for being separated from Joseph (as).

Joseph (as) forgave the brothers that had once tried to kill him; and they repented and became righteous people in their own right.

Jacob (as) and his entire family ended up migrating from Canaan to Egypt.

The dream Joseph (as) had seen as a child came true.

Egypt's ruler Rayyan handed over all the duties of state to Joseph (as) and became Muslim.

6. Joseph (as) made the most beautiful prayer to date. (Yusuf, 12: 101)⁷³



Undoubtedly, the best stories come from lived experiences. They become beautiful, when they are told eloquently through vivid imagery that throws light on the eternal beauties they contain. True beauty is always beyond imagination; and a story, or anything for that matter, is important, only to the extent it reflects a ray of it.

The story of Joseph (as) is a truth conveyed from the 'unseen,' a forgotten phase of history. It was revealed to symbolize a prelude to the Mohammedan beauty that was to set hold. It is especially this feature that makes it 'the most beautiful of all stories.'

Ubayy ibn Kab (ra) narrates that the Prophet (saw) once said:

"Teach your family and slaves the story of Joseph! For whoever does, will die easy, and will no longer feel the urge to be jealous of anyone!" (Zamakshari, Kashshaf, III, 98)

Joseph (as) suffered from the jealousy of his brothers, was thrown in a well, and later, in a dungeon. However, as a result of his *taqwa*, Allah (jj) sent Jibril (as) to console him. He gave Joseph (as) the strength to endure it, which ultimately delivered him to power, honor and kingship. When he did become king, the ordeals of his own past enabled him to treat the poor and neglected with even greater compassion.

It must be borne in mind that whoever continues to recite chapter Yusuf and reflect on its profound meanings, will receive a share of Joseph's (as) joy. The chapter

73. See, al-Qurtubi, *al-Jami'*, IX, 120.

contains more wisdoms than one can count. It offers insight into prophethood, interpretation of dreams, governance, staying calm and brave when faced with trouble, being patient during ordeal and forgiving when one can punish. It also gives clues into the mysteries of separation, love and attraction; as well as the ploys of women. There are also pointers to interpreting signs, both in dreams as well as in the Qur'an.

The chapter also touches on heirship to prophets and the secrets to becoming an envoy, or caliph of Allah on earth. In addition, it speaks about physical and nonphysical forces such as the heart, soul and spirit. In contrast to Joseph (as), Zulaykha represents *nafs'ul-ammarah*, the soul that commands evil. Once she becomes Muslim, her now refined soul finds peace, where it is content (*rida*) with the will of Allah. After that, her spirit is reunited with the spirit of Joseph (as). They become one. Nevertheless, it would never have been, if it were not for the maturity she gained from the troubles she faced on the road, which, ultimately and always, leads to the Lord.

It is narrated that chapter Yusuf was revealed, after a group of Jewish scholars came to Mecca's pagan leaders and told them to, "Ask Muhammed to tell you why Jacob and his family left Canaan for Egypt, and what the story was with Joseph!"

The pagans did, the chapter was sent. (Alusi, Tafsir, XII, 170)

The chapter was revealed in Mecca at a tough time for the Prophet (saw) and his companions. The Prophet's (saw) wife Khadijah and his uncle Abu Talib had both passed away. Especially after the death of Abu Talib, who was the Prophet's (saw) guardian, the pagans had stepped up the pressure on Muslims.

That year would be referred to as the 'year of grief', and Allah revealed the story of Joseph (as) to console the believers. The story ends with the message that victory is all too near for those patiently walk the path of Allah.



Chapter Yusuf begins with the declaration:

الر تِلْكَ آيَاتِ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ. إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ.

"Alif, Lam, Ra. These are the verses of the clear Book. We have indeed sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand." (Yusuf, 12: 1-2)

The expression 'an Arabic Qur'an' suggests Arabic is the most perfect of all languages. The Qur'an is a divine masterpiece of art, as its meanings, expressions and choice of words are all from Allah. It is a miracle, which no other being will be able to replicate until the end of time.

By revealing the Qur'an in Arabic, Allah (jj) has granted the language a distinctive honor. However, the Qur'an came in Arabic also to prevent its first recipients

from citing excuses, such as they did not understand it. The divine revelation had to come in a language that people spoke. As universal as it may be, any movement has to begin somewhere, somehow; and for it to set hold, its message has to be grasped by the people given the task of instigating it.

The next verse reads:

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ أَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ
هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ وَإِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمِنَ الْغَافِلِينَ

“We tell you the best of stories in what We have revealed to you of this Qur’an. And before it, you were among the unaware.” (Yusuf, 12: 3)

This is the first chapter revealed to the Prophet (saw) as a story. Its wording is concise, while its meanings are vast and deep. For the piercing eye, it contains many fine points and subtle wisdoms.

Of all Jacob’s (as) sons, Joseph (as) was the most handsome. He was equally beautiful in terms of his lineage. Not only had he come from three generations of prophets, he was also to become a prophet himself. On top of that, Joseph (as) was also to be graced with the foresight to interpret dreams and govern the land; as well as the skill to deal with famine and do what is best for the people. Joseph (as) was a beautiful man on all fronts; and he would even make the most beautiful of all prayers:

تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

“Make me die as a Muslim and join me with the righteous” (Yusuf, 12: 101) That made Joseph (as) the first man to wish to reunite with the Lord through death.

In this story, Joseph (as) also represents the heart, Jacob (as) the spirit, while his eleven brothers symbolize the emotions of the ego. The Qur’an’s expression contains a lot more subtleties like this. However, spotting them out requires foresight.

Joseph’s (as) Dream

The Qur’an says:

إِذْ قَالَ يُوسُفُ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي رَأَيْتُ أَحَدَ عَشَرَ كَوْكَبًا
وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ رَأَيْتُهُمْ لِي سَاجِدِينَ

“And when Joseph said to his father, ‘Father, I have seen a dream of eleven stars, the sun and the moon. I saw them all prostrating to me.’” (Yusuf, 12: 4)

The eleven stars Joseph (as) had seen in his dream were his brothers. The sun was his father Jacob (as), while the moon was his aunt Leah. His mother Rachel had already passed away.

The reason as to why Joseph (as) saw his brothers in the image of stars has to do with how siblings act as guiding stars, either to good or bad, in a person's life. The stars are mentioned before both the sun and the moon to indicate that, after his separation, Joseph (as) would first reunite with his brothers before his father and aunt.

When he saw the dream, Joseph (as) was seven years old.

A Jew once came to the Prophet (saw) and asked:

“Tell me...which stars did Joseph see in his dream?”

For a moment, the Prophet (saw) paused. Jibril (as) then came to inform him of the stars. He then said to the Jew:

“If I were to tell you, will you become Muslim?”

“Sure, I will”, said the Jew.

Thereupon, the Prophet (saw) named the stars as, *“Jarayan, Tariq, Zayyal, Qabis, Amudan, Falik, Misbah, Daruh, Fara, Wasab and Dhalkafitayn. Joseph saw these stars, the sun and the moon, descend from the skies and prostrate to him.”*

The Jew exclaimed, “By Allah, those are exactly their names!” (Bursevi, Ruhul-Beyan, v. IV, p. 212-213)

Three Types of Dreams

These are:

1. Images that come from the soul (*hadith'un-nafs*), where the person relives the activities he engaged in or thoughts that kept him occupied during the day, like dreaming of a person you love. Dreams of this kind are products of the imagination.

2. Images that come from the devil, like nightmares or hotchpotch dreams that distress and confuse a person. These dreams have no basis or meaning.

3. Images that come from Allah as good news or signs of things to come. Here, the angel of dreams reflects to the person an image from the Protected Tablet (*lawh-i mahfuz*) in heaven. These are called true dreams (*ruya-i sadiqah*). Only these kinds of lucid dreams should be taken seriously.

True dreams are mirrors from the Protected Tablet that shine a light onto the future.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“As the time draws near,⁷⁴ a dream a believer sees will almost always be true (they will take place in the way he sees them). A believer’s dream is one-forty-sixth of prophethood. And nothing that comes from prophethood can ever be a lie.” (Al-Bukhari, Tabir, 26; Muslim, Ruya, 6)⁷⁵

So, the Qur’an continues:

قَالَ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تَقْضُصْ رُؤْيَاكَ عَلَى إِخْوَتِكَ فَيَكِيدُوا لَكَ كَيْدًا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ. وَكَذَلِكَ يَجْتَبِيكَ رَبُّكَ وَيُعَلِّمُكَ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَيُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَى آلِ يَعْقُوبَ كَمَا أَتَمَّهَا عَلَى أَبَوَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ.

“Jacob said, ‘Son, do not tell your brothers about your dream, as they may contrive a plan against you. For, Satan is man’s clear enemy. Your Lord will choose you, teach you the interpretation of events and complete His favor upon you and upon the family of Jacob, as He completed it upon your fathers before, Abraham and Isaac. Your Lord is indeed Knowing and Wise.’” (Yusuf, 12: 5-6)

As soon as Joseph (as) explained his dream, Jacob (as) knew that his son was destined to attain a high and honorable rank in both this life and the next. So, he strictly told him not to explain the dream to his brothers, in case they became jealous and tried to do something bad. This shows that abstaining from doing things that may make other people jealous is as important as avoiding jealousy itself.

In fact, the Prophet (saw) has said:

“See to your needs in private...for every person of means, is envied.” (Al-Suyuti, *al-Jami’ al-Saghir*, I, 34)

Jealousy: The Fire that Kills the Heart

Jacob’s (as) sons Judah, Reuben and Simeon could not understand their father’s special love and affection towards Joseph (as). They were jealous and said:

74. Scholars of hadith have said that this refers to the Day of Judgment, as well as the period right before the break of dawn, where dreams tend to be more lucid.

75. That a true dream is one-forty-sixth of prophethood also has another meaning. The Prophet’s (saw) duty lasted 23 years, and the first six months of it consisted of lucid dreams. Six months are exactly one-forty-sixth of 23 years. For more on the nature of dreams, see Osman Nuri Topbas, *Imāndan İhsāna Tasavvuf*, p. 389-395.

إِذْ قَالُوا لِيُوسُفُ وَأَخُوهُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيْنَا مِنَّا وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّ
 أَبَانَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ. اقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوْ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ
 لَكُمْ وَجْهٌ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا مِن بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ

“Our father loves Joseph and his brother more than us, even though we are a strong group. He must be in clear error! So, kill Joseph or cast him out to another land. Then your father will indulge only in you, and by then you will become a righteous people.” (Yusuf, 12: 8-9)

After realizing that Joseph (as) was to later become a prophet, Jacob (as) began loving him more. Nevertheless, the other sons noticed this; and each day, they become more jealous, to the point where they devised a plot to get rid of Joseph (as). In a sense, the troubles were brought about by Jacob (as) going too far in love. God is *jami‘ al-azdad*; He unites all opposing attributes in His being. One of His names is *ar Raqib*. It means He always keeps an eye over us. However, it also means He is absolutely supreme. So, it is He who deserves the most love. Excessive love of another brings separation, simply because loving Allah (jj) allows no partners.

Jacob (as) had seen the light of prophethood on Joseph (as), which made him dote over him more. This made his other sons jealous. There came a day, where they could not take it anymore, and decided to do something about it.

Perhaps most importantly, this verse tells us to hide our love in our hearts, so that it does not lead to jealousy. Love is best kept a secret.



A heart that does not walk on the path of Allah becomes dark and makes the person do evil.

The Qur’an says:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Only by the remembrance of Allah are hearts assured.” (Al-Rad, 13: 28)

Dhikr is where remembering Allah (jj) turns into awareness inside the heart. This is the true *dhikr*, and is the only way to protect the heart from evil. The heart is the house of Allah, the space for divine love. Without *dhikr*, it falls prey to the ego, which darkens and ultimately kills it.

The Prophet (saw) states:

“Faith and jealousy never unite in a single heart.” (Muslim, Imarat, 130, 131/1891). Another hadith says that jealous people will be among those thrown into hellfire without trial.

All sins stem from conceit, greed and jealousy. The Prophet (saw) gives an idea of just how bad jealousy is:

“There are three things; and they are the source of all sins. Refrain from them under all circumstances. Conceit, which kept Satan from prostrating to Adam; greed which made Adam reach for the forbidden tree in paradise; and jealousy, which pitted Adam’s two sons against one another and left one of them dead.” (Al-Suyuti, *al-Jami’ al-Saghir*, 1, 101)

Jealousy is to rebel against divine will. To be jealous of someone is to want that person to be deprived of something, only because one does not have it himself. However, being envious is something else. To envy is to wish something both for oneself as well as for others. Islam has therefore commended envy, but condemned jealousy.

Jealousy does more damage to oneself than it does to others. It is like throwing a stone at someone, only for it to do a U-turn and take your eye out. Jealousy brings nothing but anger, and worse still, humiliation. In fact, the brothers’ jealousy of Joseph (as) only came back to bite them.

The Almighty has forbidden believers from being jealous:

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَىٰ مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

“Or are they jealous of people for what Allah has given them of His bounty?”

(Al-Nisa, 4: 54)

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“Avoid jealousy, for it consumes all good deeds, like fire consumes wood.” (Abu Dawud, Adab, 44/4903; Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 22)



Due to Jacob’s (as) excessive love for Joseph (as), Allah decided to test him with separation. For a father, a child can be a cause for great trial. Despite earlier having prayed for the total annihilation of all disbelievers, even Noah (as) could not bear to watch his son drown in the rising waters, and prayed:

رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي

“My Lord, indeed my son is of my family...” (Hud, 11: 45)

To which, the Almighty responded:

قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ

“Noah! No way is he of your family, he is rather among those who did all except for good!” (Hud, 11: 46)

The Sinister Plan

For a while, the brothers discussed the best way to get rid of Joseph (as). Then, one of them proposed:

قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ لَا تَقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ وَأَلْقُوهُ فِي غَيَابَةِ الْجُبِّ
يَلْتَقِطُهُ بَعْضُ السَّيَّارَةِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ

“Do not kill Joseph but throw him into the bottom of the well. Some travelers will pick him up. That is the way to go, if you are up to it!” (Yusuf, 12: 10)

It was Judah who came up with that idea and convinced the others; and Judah was supposedly the most compassionate among them! It says a lot about just how jealous they were. It also shows that jealousy makes an enemy appear as a friend. It is best to avoid these people as much as possible.



Only those who keep their hearts alive are truly upright. To the opposite are hearts that have forgotten Allah. They have come under the spell of the ego and burned to crisp in the flames of lust. This has made the heart rock hard, which makes the body too stiff to worship. Hearts of this kind have turned into wood and deserve nothing else than to burn. We seek refuge in Allah (jj) from being infected with this condition.

Allah the Almighty says:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

“Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah! Those are in clear error.” (Al-Zumar, 39: 22)



With the sinister plan in the back of their minds, they eventually approached their father:

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مَا لَكَ لَا تَأْمَنَّا عَلَى يُوسُفَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَاصِحُونَ.
أَرْسَلْهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَزْتَعِ وَيَلْعَبَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

“They said, ‘Father, why do you not place Joseph in our care, when we are so genuine towards him? Send him with us tomorrow, so that he may eat and play. We can surely keep an eye out on him!’” (Yusuf, 12: 11-12)

Trouble Comes from Between the Lips

قَالَ إِنِّي لَيَحْزُنُنِي أَنْ تَذْهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَأْكُلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَأَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ غَافِلُونَ

“Jacob said, ‘It worries me that you may take him and a wolf may maul him, when you are unaware!’” (Yusuf, 12: 13)

It is narrated that Jacob (as) had once seen a dream, where he was on a hilltop, while Joseph (as) was on a field. Then suddenly, ten wolves appeared and mauled Joseph (as). It was for that reason that Jacob (as) told his sons about his fears that a wolf might attack him. However, unaware, he had also given his sons an excuse to cover up their crime.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“*Trouble comes from between the lips.*” (Al-Suyuti, *al-Jami' al-Saghir*, I, 110)

“*At times, things cross my mind, which I keep to myself out of fear that I might be tried because of them.*” (Bursevi, *Ruhu'l-Beyan*, IV, 222)

One should never give clues to the enemy.

Until then, Joseph (as)'s brothers had not thought of the idea of a wolf. However, now, they had an alibi to revise their plan.



Ibnu's-Sikkit, who had his tongue cut off, said:

“A slip of the tongue can be more disastrous than a slip of the foot. If you slip and fall, you will get up and recover; but if your tongue slips, you may lose your head.”

Despite the dream he had seen, Jacob (as) handed Joseph (as) over to his brothers. It just goes to prove that:

“If something is destined to be, the foresight turns blind!”

A person who says ‘I will never commit so-and-so mistake’ leaves the gates wide open to the devil, who drops everything and pesters the person, until he commits that mistake. (Suyuti, *al-Jamiu's-Saghir*, I, 110)

We must, therefore, never talk big, and seek refuge in the Lord at all times.

Joseph's (as) brothers did not have a lot of respect for their father; so they brushed aside the warning:

قَالُوا لَئِن أَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَنَحْنُ عُصْبَةٌ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّخَاسِرُونَ

“They said, ‘What losers we must be if a wolf would dare eat him, despite how strong a clan we are!’” (Yusuf, 12: 14)

The Betrayal

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبُوا بِهِ وَأَجْمَعُوا أَنْ يَجْعَلُوهُ فِي غِيَابَةِ الْجَبِّ
وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ لَتُنَبِّئَنَّهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِمْ هَذَا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“So they took him out and agreed to throw him into the bottom of the well. But We inspired him, ‘A day will come when you will inform them of what they have done, while they have no clue of your identity.’” (Yusuf, 12: 15)

Most interpreters of the Qur'an say the expression ‘We inspired him’ suggests that was the actual moment Joseph (as) was made a prophet.⁷⁶

Following his sons' repeated pleas to take Joseph (as) on a picnic, Jacob (as) complied. Just so that his heart rested easy, they walked out of home carrying their little brother on their shoulders. However, once they were completely out of sight, they threw him to the ground and yelled:

“Tell us, liar! Where are the stars you saw bow to you? Call them and see if they come to your rescue!”

They then started beating Joseph (as). To whichever of his brothers Joseph ran to for mercy, he received a greater belting and abuse. He felt completely helpless and began to cry:

“Dad”, he said. “How quickly have your sons forgotten the promise they gave you! Not even the child of a slave deserves what they are dishing out to your son! If only you could see”

It is reported that, at the point, Reuben grabbed Joseph (as) and forcefully threw him to the ground. He then sat on his chest and tried to kill him. Levi, on the other

76. Jesus (as) and John (as) became prophets before they reached puberty. The Almighty prepared many others like them from an early age and opened them the gates of prophethood. Similarly, the Almighty opens the gates of sainthood to many at an early age. An example is Sahl ibn Abdullah at Tustari. This shows that reaching puberty or the age of forty is not a condition of becoming a prophet or saint. Nevertheless, as part of God's law, most prophets were entrusted with the duty at the age of forty, which marks the pinnacle of maturity.

hand, wanted to break his neck. Joseph (as) looked at Judah, the most compassionate of them all, and begged him to:

“Fear Allah and stop them from trying to kill me!”

Judah relented and called out to the others, “Do not kill him! You all promised me you would not!”

“Yes, we did”, they responded.

Judah then said, “You would be better off by just throwing him in a well!”

Joseph (as) is Thrown in a Well

The rest of them yielded and dragged Joseph (as) to the edge of a well.

This well was somewhere in Jordan and was first dug up by Shaddad, the tyrant king of Aad, during his development of the region. It had a narrow mouth but a wide a pit.

Joseph (as) was crying and clutching onto the clothes of his brothers, as they pushed and shoved him around. They tied a rope around his feet and hanged him down the well waist up. They also tied his hands so he could not hold on to anything as he dropped. They then removed his shirt and smeared it in the blood of a sheep they slaughtered, to take it back to their father as proof.

Joseph (as) pleaded them to return his shirt. “It will be my shroud if I die or my cover if I survive!” he said. Nevertheless, they held onto it.

They hanged him down further and finally cut the rope, hoping he would fall to death. However, there was some water at the bottom; and Joseph (as) made a smooth landing on a rock right beside it. He stood and called out to his brothers one last time with the hope they would feel bad and take him out.

“What...he is not dead!” they exclaimed and picked up stones to pelt him. However, again, Judah intervened.

At that moment, the Almighty ordered Jibril (as) to go to Joseph (as).

Jibril (as) made his way inside the well, sat Joseph (as) up on a rock and fed him with food from paradise. Afterwards, he dressed him in Abraham’s (as) shirt.

Hasan Basri says:

“Joseph (as) was twelve when thrown in the well. It would be another forty years before he would reunite with his father.”

The well was terrifying, with snakes, scorpions and other bugs crawling around. However, they were all ordered to stay put inside their holes.

Joseph (as) prayed:

“O, the Witness who is never absent, the Near who is never far, the Victorious who is never defeated! Deliver me out of this distress into comfort! Open me a door out!”

It is narrated that Joseph (as) remained in the well for three days. Other reports suggest it was only an hour.

Jibril (as) had taught Joseph (as) the following prayer:

“You who removes all kinds of distress, responds to every prayer, mends every broken bone and makes all hardships easy! The friend of the forlorn and the companion for the lonely! My Lord...there are no gods other than You... and You are free of all deficiency! I ask You for relief out of this distress, a door out of this trouble! My Lord...fix Your love in my heart so firm that it no longer feels any stress and calls out no other name than Yours! Protect me, my Lord...the Most Merciful of all!”

After being thrown in the well, Joseph (as) began to do *dhikr* to remember Allah (jj). The angels heard his beautiful voice and asked Allah’s permission to listen to him. Allah stated:

“Were you not the ones who had previously said:

أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ

‘Will You place upon earth one who causes corruption and sheds blood, when we are here to declare Your praise and sanctify You?’ (Al-Baqarah, 2: 30). After reminding them of that time, Allah gave the angels permission.



The heart is drawn to spirituality, while the ego, along with all its sensations, is attracted to animality. If man is left to his own, the ego claims victory and the body reigns over the spirit. That is the condition of sinners.

Nevertheless, acquiring good morals through remembering Allah (*dhikr*) and attending the circles of the righteous (*sohbah*), make the heart and the spirit reign supreme. This allows them to seize and guide the ego, and along with it, the body. This is the condition of the pious.

Because prophets are reinforced with revelation and saints with inspiration, they face troubles with patience and see them as means to take their hearts closer to the Lord.

The Almighty afflicted both Jacob (as) and Joseph (as) with great grief so that, despite the pain, they would keep patient and strengthen their attachment to Him.

They took it as a means to turn to the Lord at all times and reach greater spiritual ranks by cutting all ties with passing interests. Such great ranks are attained only at the end of grueling hardship.

Thus, one of the reasons why Joseph (as) stayed in prison for twelve years was so that he could reach spiritual maturity through solitude (*halwah*), self-discipline (*riyazah*) and self-struggle (*mujahadah*). Had he remained with his father, he would not have been able to achieve any of that. This wisdom underlies the fact that all prophets have spent some time alone, away from their homelands.



After all was said and done, Joseph's (as) brothers made their way home, shedding crocodile tears. The Qur'an describes the scene as:

وَجَاءُوا آبَاءَهُمْ عِشَاءً يَبْكُونَ. قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ
عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ الذِّئْبُ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ

“And they came to their father at night, weeping. They said, ‘Father, we went racing each other and left Joseph to mind our possessions. That is when a wolf ate him. But you would not believe us, even if we were telling the truth.’ (Yusuf, 12: 16-17)



Once, a woman came crying to Qadi Shurayh, after having a fight with her husband. Shabi, who was there at the time, commented:

“Judge...I suspect this woman is innocent. Look at the way she is weeping!”

“Shabi”, said Qadi Shurayh. “Joseph's (as) brothers had also come home crying, despite being guilty. One cannot use tears as evidence. Only facts!”



The brothers had brought a little piece of evidence of their own to try to fool their father:

وَجَاءُوا عَلَى قَمِيصِهِ بِدَمٍ كَذِبٍ قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْراً
فَصَبْرٌ جَمِيلٌ وَاللَّهُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ

“And they brought forward his shirt with false blood. Jacob said, ‘It seems your souls have enticed you to something. Patience is best from here on in. And Allah is the One to help against what you describe!’ (Yusuf, 12: 18)

It is said that Jacob (as) rubbed the bloodied shirt on his face, and said, as he wept:

“I have never heard of a wolf so kind! It has devoured my son without damaging his shirt!”

Beautiful Patience

Jacob’s (as) grief over Joseph (as) has become legendary; and our own Yunus Emre gives voice to it:

*I was a Jacob, who kept to himself
With only the Lord’s name on my mouth
But then I lost Joseph in the land of Canaan
And now I cry and cry for my Joseph*

*They took Joseph and bloodied him red
The wolves devoured him, they turned and said
Who knows to his shirt what they did
And now I cry and cry for my Joseph*

Jacob (as) cried but he had no other choice than to be patient. He did without complaining to anyone about his distress:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَنِيَّ وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ

“He said, ‘I only complain of my suffering and my grief to Allah, and I know from Allah that which you do not.’” (Yusuf, 12: 86)

The Prophet (saw) once asked Jibril (as):

“How much was Jacob’s (as) longing for Joseph?”

He replied, “As much as that of seventy mothers who had lost their children.”

“Then how much are his rewards?” asked the Prophet (saw).

“As great as the rewards of seventy martyrs”, replied Jibril (as), “...for he did not think bad of Allah even for a moment.” (Al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Mansur*, IV, 570).

This is what the Qur’an describes as *sabrun jamil*, beautiful patience. It is to face troubles and distress with fortitude and resignation, without whining, groaning or complaining. Patience withers if a person complains to others about Allah.

The Sale of Joseph (as)

While Jacob (as) remained beautifully patient, Joseph (as) was waiting in the well with similar trust and resignation. Then:

وَجَاءَتْ سَيَّارَةٌ فَأَرْسَلُوا وَارِدَهُمْ فَأَدْلَى دَلْوَهُ قَالَ يَا بُشْرَى
هَذَا غُلَامٌ وَأَسَرُّهُ بِضَاعَةً وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ. وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ
دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ

“There came a company of travelers. They sent a man to get some water and he let down his bucket. He said, ‘Good news! There is a boy here!’ And they took him as merchandise; and Allah knew what they did. And they sold him for a cheap price - a few dirhams - and were content with whatever they could get.”

(Yusuf, 12: 19-20)

As captivated as they were by Joseph’s (as) beauty, the travelers sold him at a cheap price. They wanted to quickly get him out of their hands, fearing someone from his family may turn up to claim the boy.

The great sheikh, Muhyiddin ibn Arabi says:

“When the Almighty wants to execute the mystery:

وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا

‘And the command of Allah is a destiny bound to happen’ (Al-Ahzab, 33: 38), He does so by making a person commit a blunder.”

Joseph (as) had once looked at himself in the mirror and thought, “If I were a slave, there would be no guessing as to how much money I would fetch!”

Because of his momentary vanity, Allah had Joseph (as) sold as a slave but at a very small value.

The Prophet (saw) was once on the way home when a group of children cut him off and playfully exclaimed, “We will not let you pass unless you give us something like you give Hasan and Hussein!”

So, the Prophet (saw) smiled at Bilal (as) and said, “Go home and bring back whatever you can find for my ransom!”

Bilal (as) soon returned with eight walnuts. And the Prophet (saw) handed them to the children and joked,

“My brother Joseph (as) was sold at a bargain. And I have gone for just eight walnuts!”



What is important is inner beauty, not outer. Outer beauty perishes, while a beautiful heart and morals are everlasting. The Prophet (saw) has said:

“Allah does not look at your bodies or faces. He looks at your hearts.” (Muslim, Birr, 22; Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 9)

Hagar was in fact given to Sarah as a slave. However, she gave birth to Ismail (as), from whose lineage came the Prophet (saw).

The body is of no great importance. It is only a cover for the spirit. It is through his spirit that man is either graced or disgraced. A person with a clean heart and good deeds is honored in the sight of Allah (jj). His pretty face or lavish wealth carry no weight, whatsoever.

A person enslaved by desire is really selling himself cheap! We need to spare a moment to think about the danger that awaits those who sell their hearts and spirits to their lust. Man must be aware of honor he carries and be wary of the shackles of his ego. The Almighty declares:

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلاً

“Have you seen the one who takes his own desire as god? And how could you be responsible for him?” (Al-Furqan, 25: 43)



The Qur'an continues:

وَقَالَ الَّذِي اشْتَرَاهُ مِنْ مِصْرَ لِامْرَأَتِهِ أَكْرِمِي مَثْوَاهُ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلِنُعَلِّمَهُ مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ وَاللَّهُ غَالِبٌ عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“And the man from Egypt who bought him, said to his wife, ‘Make his stay comfortable. Perhaps he will benefit us, or we will adopt him as a son.’ And We established Joseph in the land so that We might teach him the interpretation of events. And Allah is predominant over His affair, but most people do not know.” (Yusuf, 12: 21)

Scholars of the Qur'an tell us that the slave trader who bought Joseph (as) ended up selling him to Egypt's minister of finance. The minister had sensed that Joseph (as) was an intelligent and capable young boy, who could later be useful in state affairs. In addition, he had no children of his own, and thought he could perhaps adopt him.

The fact that Joseph (as) was sold to a man of high social standing suggests that, this time round, he was traded for a high price. It is said that the slave trader auc-

tioned Joseph (as) for three straight days; and the auction ended, after the minister agreed to pay his weight in gold, silver, pearls, silk and musk.



Allah has declared:

“Son of Adam! You wish for something...and I wish for something. Only that which I want happens. If you surrender to My will, I will grant you your wish. However, if you try and challenge My will, I will turn your wish upside down. And in the end, My command will still prevail.”

In the Qur’an, Allah praises knowledge and denounces ignorance.

The Prophet (saw) was asked, “Which action has greater virtue?”

“*Knowing Allah*”, he replied.

The companions then rephrased the question. “Which action raises one’s rank?” they inquired.

The Prophet (saw) once again said, “*Knowing Allah.*”

“What is the reason, Messenger of Allah, that you tell us about knowledge when we ask you about action?” asked the companions.

“*Little action taken with knowledge of Allah takes you a long way*”, the Prophet (saw) answered. “*But without knowledge, not so...even if you were to do a lot!*” (Al-Munawi, *Fayd al-Qadir*, IV, 688)

Sufis say that perfecting knowledge is superior to perfecting deeds. Nevertheless, at the same time, an error in knowledge is a lot more dangerous than an error in deeds; as one cannot properly offer any deed without having a sound faith.

For that reason, prophets have prayed to Allah to increase their knowledge. The angels honored and prostrated to Adam (as) only because of the names he had been taught. Solomon (as) achieved his great kingdom through foresight and administrative genius; while Joseph (as) rose from being a prisoner to a king, through his mastery of the art of interpreting.

Joseph (as) and Zulaykha

The Qur’an says:

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“**And when Joseph reached maturity, We gave him judgment and knowledge. And that is how We reward the doers of good.**” (Yusuf, 12: 22)

Joseph (as) had grown to become a strikingly handsome young man. The lady of the house, Zulaykha started developing different feelings towards him. There came a day, when it all unraveled:

وَرَاوَدَتْهُ الَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَغَلَّقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَايَ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ. وَلَقَدْ هَمَمْتُ بِهِ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَنْ رَأَى بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ الشُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُخْلَصِينَ

“And the lady of the house shut the doors and said, ‘Come to me.’

He said, ‘I seek refuge in Allah. He is my Master, who has made my stay comfortable. And wrongdoers will never succeed!’

She was certainly determined to seduce him, and he, too, would have inclined had he not seen the proof of his Lord. It was to keep him away from evil and immorality. He was indeed of Our chosen servants.” (Yusuf, 12: 23-24)

Zulaykha had three things the ego desires the most: fortune, fame and sensuality. She was young and beautiful; and had a charm that could have had many men chase after her. Now, she had the door locked tight. In a moment of secrecy and privacy that stirs the most hidden desires, she tried to seduce Joseph (as).

“Come to me (*hayta lak*)”, she said, to try and fulfil her evil desire. The call would have melted the steeliest willpower; and Joseph (as) found himself in a spot of bother, which Allah alludes to with the words:

“He, too, would have inclined to her, had he not seen the proof of His Lord.” One of the hardest things a man could ever do in life is to say ‘no’ to a young, beautiful and wealthy woman, especially if she makes an advance in private.

To resist the temptation, Joseph (as) wore a spiritual armor by genuinely seeking refuge in Allah with the words ‘*maadh’Allah*’. He was then shown the ‘proof’ and given an insight into how wicked it would have been to follow temptation. With that, he was placed under divine protection.

The only way to refuse the call of temptation that invites man to sin is to seek help from the One, who has an infinite power to protect.



Some interpretations of the Qur’an offer the following to explain what is meant by the word ‘proof’ (*burhan*):

As Zulaykha was trying to seduce him, Joseph (as) heard a voice, saying ‘don’t do it!’ However, he did not pay it any attention. The call was repeated two more times and suddenly, the image of Jacob (as) appeared before him. It was only then that Joseph (as) came to his senses and turned back.

With the permission of Allah (jj), Jacob (as) had offered spiritual help (*istianah*) to his son and stopped him from being seduced by Zulaykha.

This serves as an example of the types of spiritual help *istianah*, *istighathah* and *rabita*.

Ali ibn Hasan narrates that there was an idol in the room, which Zulaykha had covered with a cloth before she made her advances. Joseph (as) asked her why, to which she replied, “I just felt ashamed that it would see me engage in illicit passion.”

Joseph (as) then said, “I have more right to feel ashamed from My Lord, who created me in the most beautiful form, than you do from a piece of rock!”



After seeing the ‘proof’, Joseph (as) felt horrified and ran to the door. Zulaykha chased him:

وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ مِنْ دُبُرٍ وَأَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَى الْبَابِ قَالَتْ
مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا إِلَّا أَنْ يُسْجَنَ أَوْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“And they both raced to the door. She tore his shirt from the back, and they found her husband at the door.

She said, ‘How else could you punish a person who intended evil for your wife, other than with prison or something more painful?’ (Yusuf, 12: 25)

The minister had heard the commotion and stormed in.

“What on earth is going on?” he asked.

Zulaykha now added slander to her list of sins. “This young man just tried to rape me!”, she screamed.

The minister looked at Joseph (as) in dismay and said, “For all that I have done for you, is this how you repay me?”

Joseph (as) suddenly found himself in another difficult situation. He tried explaining what had really happened. He had someone to help:

قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدْتَنِي عَنْ نَفْسِي وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ كَانَ
 قَمِيصُهُ قُدًّا مِنْ قَبْلِ فَصَدَقْتَ وَهُوَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ. وَإِنْ كَانَ قَمِيصُهُ
 قُدًّا مِنْ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبْتَ وَهُوَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“Joseph said, ‘It was she who tried to seduce me!’

And a witness from her family testified. She said ‘If his shirt is torn from the front, then she has told the truth, and he is lying. But if his shirt is torn from the back, then she has lied, and he tells the truth.’ (Yusuf, 12: 26-27)

Joseph (as) prayed to the Lord to provide him with clear evidence of his innocence. Zulaykha’s baby, who was three or four months old at the time, miraculously spoke and testified that Joseph (as) was not the one to be blamed.

فَلَمَّا رَأَى قَمِيصَهُ قُدًّا مِنْ دُبُرٍ قَالَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ كَيْدِكُنَّ إِنَّ كَيْدَكُنَّ عَظِيمٌ. يُوسُفُ
 أَعْرَضَ عَنْ هَذَا وَاسْتَغْفِرِي لِذَنْبِكِ إِنَّكِ كُنْتِ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ.

“So when her husband saw his shirt torn from the back, he said, ‘For sure, this is just another plot of you women. And how great your plots are! Joseph, forget this ever happened. And, my wife, ask forgiveness, for you have surely sinned!’” (Yusuf, 12: 28-29)

However, soon, the word was out on the streets:

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتَاهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ قَدْ
 شَغَفَهَا حُبًّا إِنَّا لَنَرَاهَا فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

“And women in the city said, ‘The minister’s wife is seeking to seduce her slave boy. Passion has blinded her. She has surely lost the plot!’” (Yusuf, 12: 30)

The Women Cut Their Hands

It did not take long for Zulaykha to find out she was being mocked by the city’s women, including her own friends. So, she decided to invite them over:

فَلَمَّا سَمِعَتْ بِمَكْرِهِنَّ أَرْسَلَتْ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَعْتَدَتْ لَهُنَّ مُتَّكًا وَآتَتْ كُلَّ
 وَاحِدَةٍ مِنْهُنَّ سَكِينًا وَقَالَتِ اخْرُجْ عَلَيْهِنَّ فَلَمَّا رَأَيْنَهُ أَكْبَرْنَهُ وَقَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ
 وَقُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا هَذَا بَشَرًا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ

“So when she heard of their gossip, she called them over. She prepared for them a banquet and gave each one of them a knife. She then told Joseph to ‘Come out!’

And when they saw him, they watched him in awe, as they sliced their hands and said, ‘Perfect is Allah! This cannot be a man! He must be none other than a noble angel!’” (Yusuf, 12: 31)

The verse refers to the feast or banquet with word ‘muttekeen’, which literally means ‘cushions to lean on’. Egypt’s high society of the time would enjoy these feasts leaning back and slouching on cozy cushions, as wealthy and conceited people do. Eating while leaning back has therefore been forbidden. The Prophet (saw) has said:

“I do not eat while leaning back.” (Al-Bukhari, Atimah, 13)



Aisha (rha) compares the beauty of Joseph (as) with the Prophet’s (as) own:

وَلَوْ سَمِعَ أَهْلُ مِصْرَ أَوْصَافَ حَدِّهِ
لَمَا بَدَّلُوا فِي سَوْمِ يُوسُفَ مِنْ نَقْدٍ
لَوَائِمُ زُلَيْحَا لَوْ رَأَيْنَ جَبِينَهُ
لَأَثَرْنَ بِالْقَطْعِ الْقُلُوبَ عَلَى الْأَيْدِ

“Had the folk of Egypt heard of his beauty
On Joseph, they would not have spent a cent
If the friends of Zulaykha had seen his face
Their knives would have gone in their hearts.”

However, the Prophet (saw) would constantly pray for an inner beauty. Even when looking at the mirror, he would lay emphasis on the importance of morals, praying:

“My Lord...give me a beauty of morals just like the beauty you have given my appearance!”

“My Lord...take me to the most beautiful of morals! And only You can take me there!” (Ibn Hajar, Fath al-Bari, X, 456)



Zulaykha snapped after seeing her friends mesmerized by Joseph (as):

قَالَتْ فَذَلِكُنَّ الَّذِي لُمْتُنَّنِي فِيهِ وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ فَاسْتَعْصَمَ
وَلَئِن لَّمْ يَفْعَلْ مَا أَمَرُهُ لَيَسْجَنَنَّ وَيَكُونَا مِنَ الصَّاغِرِينَ

“She said, ‘This is the one you blame me about! I certainly did try to seduce him but he firmly refused. But if he continues to refuse my orders, I will make sure he is imprisoned and humiliated!’” (Yusuf, 12: 32)

Joseph (as) had now become known throughout the city. He could no longer walk the streets without women trying to court him. He feared their ploys and prayed to Allah to protect him. He knew that women driven by lust could come up with tricks the devils could not think of.

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي
كَيَّدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُنَّ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ

“He said, ‘My Lord, I would prefer prison over what they invite me to! And if You do not avert their games from me, I just might yield and join the ignorant!’” (Yusuf, 12: 33)

Sufis have said:

“It is impossible to keep guard against the dangers of the ego by making compromises and giving the ego what it wants. The only way is to seek refuge in Allah (jj) and fulfil His commands. This was what saved Joseph (as).”

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ فَصَرَفَ عَنْهُ كَيْدَهُنَّ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

“So his Lord responded and averted their plans from him. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing.” (Yusuf, 12: 34)

No heart, not even those of prophets, is safe without Allah’s protection. Man is created in such a way that he can never be sure of the traps of the world, the murmurs of the ego or the whispers of the devil. This is verified by the fact that Joseph (as) was able to hold himself back only after he saw a ‘proof from His Lord’, which acted as a barrier between him and sin.

So, as the servants of Allah, we must always be wary of what our egos may get up to and know that we have no power to put up a fight, unless through Allah’s protection.

The Dungeon

Joseph’s (as) prayer was accepted, and:

ثُمَّ بَدَأَ لَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا رَأَوْا الْآيَاتِ لَيْسَجُنَّهُ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ

“Then, despite seeing the proofs, they decided it would be proper to imprison him for some time.” (Yusuf, 12: 35)

Joseph (as) was shackled from his feet and made to wear a coarse woolen cardigan. As he approached the door of the dungeon, he bowed his head and said ‘in the name of Allah’, before entering. All the inmates turned their heads and Joseph (as) began to cry. Jibril (as) came and asked why.

He answered, “It is because there is no proper space to pray here”. Jibril (as) then said:

“Pray wherever you wish. Allah has made 40 yards inside the dungeon clean for you.”⁷⁷

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السِّجْنَ فَتَيَانِ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَعْصِرُ خَمْرًا
وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَحْمِلُ فَوْقَ رَأْسِي خُبْرًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ نَبِّئْنَا
بِتَأْوِيلِهِ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ. قَالَ لَا يَأْتِيكُمَا طَعَامٌ تُزْزِقَانِهِ إِلَّا نَبَّأْتُكُمَا
بِتَأْوِيلِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمَا ذَلِكَمَا مِمَّا عَلَّمَنِي رَبِّي إِنِّي تَرَكْتُ مِلَّةَ قَوْمٍ لَا
يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ

“And two young men entered the prison with him.

One of them said, ‘I dreamt that I was pressing wine.’ The other said, “And, I dreamt that I was carrying some bread on my head and the birds were eating from it. Tell us what they mean. We see that you are a good man!”

Joseph said, ‘I will interpret your dreams before you receive your next meal. That is from what my Lord has taught me. I have left the religion of a people who do not believe in Allah, and who deny the life after!’” (Yusuf, 12: 36-37)

As for how these two young men ended up in prison, it is said that some of Egypt’s nobles had devised a plan to kill the king Rayyan and replace him with one of their own. So, they bribed the two men. One of them was the king’s cook, while the other was his cupbearer. They were to carry out the plan by lacing the king’s meal and drink with poison.

77. Previous prophets and their nations were not allowed to perform ritual prayer wherever they wished. They could only pray in designated areas. However, as a privilege given exclusively to the Prophet (saw), Muslims have been allowed to pray anywhere that is clean; as for them, the entire earth has been rendered a ‘mosque’. The Prophet (saw) has in fact said, “*The earth has been cleansed and made a mosque for me.*” (Al-Bukhari, Tayammum, 1)

The cook did his part but the cupbearer felt bad and changed his mind at the very last second. So, when the table was set and the king reached out for the plate, the cupbearer shouted:

“Do not touch the food, my king! It is poisoned!”

When the cook heard that, he also called out, “Do not touch the drink, my king! It is also poisoned!”

The king then ordered the cupbearer to drink from the cup. He drunk from it without hesitation. He then turned to the cook, commanding him to eat the food. The cook resisted. It was then fed to an animal, which died instantly.

In the end, both were thrown into prison to await their verdict. That was when they saw the dreams. (Al-Qurtubi, *al-Jami'*, IX, 189)

Before proceeding to interpret the dreams, Joseph (as) first wanted to invite his two cellmates to *tawhid*; and let them know that his knowledge had been given to him by Allah and that the people of Egypt were on the wrong path.

The lesson to take here is that even in the most difficult circumstances, a believer must never neglect the duty of encouraging people to the good and discouraging them from evil.

The following three verses detail Joseph's (as) call:

وَاتَّبَعْتُ مِلَّةَ آبَائِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ مَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ.
يَا صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَرَبَابٌ مُتَفَرِّقُونَ خَيْرٌ أَمِ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ. مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءَ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.

“And I follow the religion of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And it was not for us to associate any partners with Allah. This is the favor of Allah upon us and upon the people, but most people are not grateful. So, my cellmates, are separate lords better or Allah, the One, the Prevailing? What you worship beside Him are nothing but names you and your fathers have given, without Allah having given you any authority to do so! Judgment is Allah's alone. He has commanded that you worship only Him. That is the correct religion, but most people just do not know!” (Yusuf, 12: 38-40)

Joseph (as) Interprets Dreams

After explaining *tawhid* to his fellow inmates, Joseph (as) informed them:

يَا صَاحِبِي السِّجْنِ أَمَّا أَحَدُكُمَا فَيَسْقِي رَبَّهُ خَمْرًا وَأَمَّا الْآخَرُ فَيُضَلَّبُ
فَتَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْ رَأْسِهِ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ الَّذِي فِيهِ تَسْتَفْتِيَانِ.

“So, my two cellmates. One of you, will return serving drinks to his master. But as for the other, he will be crucified, and the birds will eat off his head. That is the way things are destined to be about the things you ask!” (Yusuf, 12: 41)

وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِي عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ فَأَنَسَاهُ الشَّيْطَانُ
ذِكْرَ رَبِّهِ فَلَبِثَ فِي السِّجْنِ بِضْعَ سِنِينَ

“And he said to the one who he knew would be set free, ‘Mention my name next to your master.’ But Satan made the man forget, and Joseph remained in prison several years.” (Yusuf, 12: 42)

The events unfolded exactly how Joseph (as) had told them. The cupbearer was released and he resumed his old job, while the cook was hanged.

Some interpreters of the Qur’an say that the Almighty was not pleased with Joseph (as) asking for help from someone else, when he told the cupbearer to put in good word for him ‘next to his master.’ It was a momentary blunder. Because of it, Joseph (as) remained in prison for another seven years, on top of the five he was serving. So, he his term increased to a total of twelve years.

It is reported that even after their release, the inmates would visit Joseph (as) and have long conversations him, as would the prison guard. One day he said to Joseph (as), “I love you more than all of my friends.”

Joseph (as) responded, “I seek refuge in Allah from your love.”

“Why?” asked the guard.

“My father loved me and my brothers threw me inside a well. Zulaykha loved me and they threw me in prison. And if you love me, who knows where I might end up next!”



Malik ibn Dinar narrates that when Joseph (as) asked the cupbearer to put in a good word for him next to the king, Allah revealed:

“You, Joseph, have relied on someone other than Me. And I will now extend your term in prison!”

Joseph (as) then began to weep and said, “My Lord! My heart has become heavy from all the grief and sorrow. You will never, ever hear me say such words again!”

Hasan Basri would cry every time he read that and wonder, “What will then become of us, who run to others for help every time we are in trouble?”

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“May Allah have mercy on my brother Joseph. Had he not asked the cupbearer to mention his name next to his master, he would not have stayed in prison an extra seven years after the five.” (Bursevi, *Ruhu'l-Beyan*, IV, 264)

However, Allah the Almighty puts prophets and saints through grief, not as a punishment, but as a gift.

The Prophet (saw) has stated:

“When Allah loves a servant, He pours and pours trouble on him!” (Ali al-Muttaqi, *Kanz al-Ummal*, III, 334/6811)

Abu Said al-Khudri (ra) visited the Prophet (saw) during his final illness, and personally witnessed the pain he was going through. He recounts:

“I placed my hand and I could feel his fever through the quilt.

‘You have very high fever, Messenger of Allah’, I said.

‘Prophets are like that’, he said. ‘We are given troubles in spades but also rewards in equal measure.’

‘Messenger of Allah’, I asked. ‘Who are the people who endure the most trouble?’

‘Prophets’, he said.

‘After them?’ I asked.

‘The righteous’, he replied, before adding:

‘Some among them are trialed with such great poverty that they have nothing except for cloak to cover up with. But they celebrate trouble, just as you celebrate wealth!’” (Ibn Majah, *Fitan*, 23)

The King’s Dream

What followed was:

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ إِنِّي أَرَى سَبْعَ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعَ عِجَافٍ وَسَبْعَ
سُنْبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ وَأُخَرَ يَابِسَاتٍ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي رُؤْيَايَ إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ لِلرُّؤْيَا
تَعْبُرُونَ. قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَأْوِيلِ الْأَحْلَامِ بِعَالَمِينَ. وَقَالَ الَّذِي

نَجَا مِنْهُمَا وَادَّكَرَ بَعْدَ أُمَّةٍ أَنَا أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِتَأْوِيلِهِ فَأَرْسِلُونِ. يُوسُفُ أَيُّهَا الصِّدِّيقُ
أَفْتِنَا فِي سَبْعِ بَقَرَاتٍ سِمَانٍ يَأْكُلُهُنَّ سَبْعُ عِجَافٍ وَسَبْعِ سُنبُلَاتٍ خُضْرٍ
وَأُخْرَى يَابِسَاتٍ لَعَلِّي أَرْجِعُ إِلَى النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ.

“And one day, the king said:

‘I saw a dream, where seven lean cows ate seven fat ones. And then there were seven green spikes of grain and others that were dry. My men, explain what my vision means, if you can interpret it!’

They said, ‘It sounds like a mixture of false images. And besides, we know nothing about interpreting dreams!’

But then the freed cellmate remembered, and said, ‘If you give me permission, I will come back with its interpretation!’

And he said, ‘Joseph, man of truth! Explain what it means for seven fat cows to be eaten by seven lean ones. Also, seven green spikes and others that are dry! Tell me, so I may return to the people, and perhaps they will know about you!’

(Yusuf, 12: 43-46)

With his God-given knowledge, Joseph (as) offered an interpretation:

قَالَ تَزْرَعُونَ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ دَأْبًا فَمَا حَصَدْتُمْ فَذَرُوهُ فِي سُنْبُلِهِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا
تَأْكُلُونَ. ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ سَبْعٌ شِدَادٌ يَأْكُلْنَ مَا قَدَّمْتُمْ لَهُنَّ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِمَّا
تُحْصِنُونَ. ثُمَّ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ عَامٌ فِيهِ يُغَاثُ النَّاسُ وَفِيهِ يَعْرِضُونَ.

“Joseph said:

‘You should plant for seven years consecutively. What you harvest, leave in its spikes, except a little to eat from. There will then come seven hard years, which will consume what you will have saved, except the little that you will have stored. A year will then follow in which the people will be given rain, and they will press olives and grapes.’ (Yusuf, 12: 47-49)

The king felt rejoiced, and wished to reward Joseph (as):

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ الرَّسُولُ قَالَ ارْجِعْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَاسْأَلْهُ مَا بَالُ
النِّسْوَةِ الَّتِي قَطَّعْنَ أَيْدِيَهُنَّ إِنَّ رَبِّي بِكَيْدِهِنَّ عَلِيمٌ.

“And the king said, ‘Bring him to me!’

But when the messenger came, Joseph said, ‘Return to your master and ask him what the case was with the women who cut their hands. My Lord well knows what they contrived.’ (Yusuf, 12: 50)

It was out of politeness that Joseph (as) did not give Zulaykha’s name. He was also wary that she might get up to another trick, if she felt Joseph (as) was publically blaming her.

The king gathered the women in question and asked:

قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُنَّ إِذْ رَاوَدْتُنَّ يُوسُفَ عَنِ نَفْسِهِ قُلْنَ حَاشَ لِلَّهِ مَا عَلِمْنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ سُوءٍ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ الْعَزِيزِ الْآنَ حَصْحَصَ الْحَقُّ أَنَا رَاوَدْتُهُ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ.

“What were you thinking when you sought to seduce Joseph?”

They said, ‘Perfect is Allah! We know no evil of him.’

And the minister’s wife said, ‘Now that the truth is out in the open, let it be known that it was me who tried to seduce him. But, all along, he remained true!’” (Yusuf, 12: 51)

Joseph (as) then said that the only reason she wanted the women to confess was:

ذَلِكَ لِيَعْلَمَ أَنِّي لَمْ أَخُنْهُ بِالْغَيْبِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي كَيْدَ الْخَائِنِينَ

“So that the minister will know that I did not betray him behind his back and that Allah does not fulfil the plan of betrayers.” (Yusuf, 12: 52)



Allah the Almighty declares:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْخَائِنِينَ

“Indeed, Allah does not like traitors” (Al-Anfal, 8: 58)

No betrayal is worse than to betray Allah (jj) and His Messenger (saw). The Qur’an warns in this regard:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَخُونُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوا أَمَانَاتِكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“O you who have believed! Do not betray Allah and the Messenger, or your trusts, when you well know of the consequence.” (Al-Anfal, 8: 27)

The story below lays bare how those betray Allah's command by violating the rights of others, really betray no one but themselves. Treachery only comes back to bite the treacherous.

The Story of Darwan

It is told that a generous man from Yemen had some land near Sanaa, where he grew grapes, dates and various other crops. At harvest time, he would set aside a lot of the produce for the poor. On his deathbed, he asked his sons to continue his practice. However, greed got the better of his sons; and they said to one another:

“We have a large family but little to take care of them with. We need to stop giving stuff to the poor. So, from now on, let's collect the harvest before they come around asking!”

Nevertheless, because of their malice, Allah burned their land overnight to crisp. The lush green garden was no longer recognizable. When they turned up in early in the morning, the stingy sons were left stunned, and even wondered whether they had come to the wrong place.

However, all along, it was their father's generosity and the prayer of the poor and the weak that had made their produce so abundant. The gardens were of benefit to every needy person in the town. But, the sons thought too much of it, without having the least idea that without charity, their gardens would be nothing. Neglect had blinded their hearts.

It is for that reason that Allah has declared:

“Do not be of the neglectful!” (Al-Araf, 7: 205).

This is known as the story of the people of Darwan and the Qur'an recounts it as follows:

إِنَّا بَلَوْنَاهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ إِذْ أَقْسَمُوا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا
مُصْبِحِينَ. وَلَا يَسْتَشْنُونَ. فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَائِفٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ.
فَأَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيمِ. فَتَنَادُوا مُصْبِحِينَ. أَنْ اغْدُوا عَلَيَّ حَرْثِكُمْ إِنْ
كُنْتُمْ صَارِمِينَ. فَأَنْطَلَقُوا وَهُمْ يَتَخَفَتُونَ. أَنْ لَا يَدْخُلْنَهَا الْيَوْمَ
عَلَيْكُمْ مَسْكِينٌ. وَغَدُوا عَلَيَّ حَزْدٍ قَادِرِينَ.

“We have tested them just as We tested the folk of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the early morning, without sparing any. So your Lord

sent down an affliction on the garden, while they were asleep. And it became as though it had already been reaped!

They woke each other up in the morning, saying, ‘Go on, get out early to cut the fruit!’ So they set out, and said to one another in low voices, ‘No poor is going to enter the garden today!’ And they walked in determination, assuming they were able men.” (Al-Qalam, 68: 17-25)

Nevertheless, once they got there, they realized the outcome of their greed and betrayal, and burnt with remorse. The Qur’an explains:

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوا إِنَّا لَضَالُونَ. بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ. قَالَ أَوْسَطُهُمْ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُونَ. قَالُوا سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ. فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَلَوْمُونَ. قَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا طَاغِينَ. عَسَى رَبُّنَا أَنْ يُبَدِّلَنَا خَيْرًا مِنْهَا إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا رَاغِبُونَ.

“But when they saw it, they said, ‘We have lost! Or more like, we have been deprived!’

The most moderate of them said, ‘Did I not tell you to be thankful?’

They said, ‘High is our Lord! We have wronged ourselves!’ Then they confronted and blamed one another. They said, ‘Shame on us, for having transgressed! But perhaps our Lord will give us something better in its place. We now only desire Him!’” (Al-Qalam, 68: 26-32)

How beautifully does Allah (jj) inform us of the bitter end of those who resort to trickery, just to deprive the poor of their right! Allah can see through every intention in the heart. His glory encompasses everything.

Allah the Almighty ends the story with an important warning:

كَذَلِكَ الْعَذَابُ وَالْعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةُ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ.

“Such is the punishment! And the punishment of the hereafter is greater, if only they knew.” (Al-Qalam, 68: 33)

Joseph’s (as) Foresight

Joseph (as) did not wish to leave prison until the circumstances of his imprisonment became clear, and both the king and the public knew he was an innocent man, who had been wrongly jailed. By keeping his composure and using his intelligence, he also prevented the women responsible for his imprisonment, from stirring up

more trouble. Only after it was proven that he was the victim of slander and lies did he agree to step out of the dungeon.

This is a prudent example for all Muslims, who should take special care to avoid places, as well as situations that might give others the wrong impression. If this has already happened, he must make an effort to clear his name.

Scholars have strongly advised Muslims against going to such places.

Umar (ra) has said:

“Whoever heads to suspicious places will become a suspect himself.”

Just as Joseph (as) was meticulous to clear misconceptions about him, the Prophet (saw) was also sensitive to prevent others from getting the wrong idea. His wife, Safiya bint Huyay (rha) recounts the below incident:

“The Messenger of Allah (saw) had retreated to the mosque in the last ten days of Ramadan. I visited him one night to talk to him about something. Afterwards, he got up to walk me back home. As we were heading back, we were seen by two men, companions from Medina, who quickly wanted to walk away.

‘Slow down’, the Messenger (saw) called out to them. *‘It is Safiya next to me!’*

They said, ‘Messenger of Allah! How could we even assume that a prophet of Allah could get up to anything improper?’

‘Still’, said the Messenger (saw). *‘The devil flows inside a person like blood...and I was worried he might cast doubt in your hearts.’* (Al-Bukhari, Itikaf, 11; Muslim, Salam, 23-25)

However, as necessary as it is to keep away from situations that may cause suspicion, it is also important to avoid being suspicious. The Almighty cautions:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ
كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُورًا

“And do not pursue things of which you have no knowledge. The hearing, the sight and the heart will all be held in trial for it.” (Al-Isra, 17: 36)



Joseph (as) had now fully proven his innocence. But he still sought refuge from his ego and humbly said:

وَمَا أُبْرِي نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“And I do not acquit myself. For, the ego constantly commands evil, except to those on which my Lord has mercy. My Lord is truly Forgiving and Merciful.”

(Yusuf, 12: 53)⁷⁸

Elsewhere in the Qur’an, the Almighty states:

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا
وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“And without the favor and mercy of Allah, not one of you would ever be pure. But Allah purifies whom He wills. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.”

(Al-Nur, 24: 21)

A true servant must therefore seek protection from the swagger of his ego, by repenting and praying to return to the Almighty with a clean slate.

Allah Turns a Slave into a King

The king had noticed that Joseph (as) was an amazingly intelligent man, who could provide great service to the state:

وَقَالَ الْمَلِكُ ائْتُونِي بِهِ اَسْتَخْلِصُهُ لِنَفْسِي فَلَمَّا كَلَّمَهُ قَالَ
اِنَّكَ الْيَوْمَ لَدَيْنَا مَكِينٌ اَمِينٌ

“And the king said, ‘Bring him to me! I will appoint him exclusively for myself.’ And when he spoke to him, he said, ‘You now have a rank by my side, and are trusted.’” (Yusuf, 12: 54)

As he was walking out, Joseph (as) wrote the following on the prison door:

“This is the home of trouble, the grave for the living. As the gates are shut from behind you, enemies laugh and grief takes hold.”

He then took a bath, wore his new clothes and prayed for the inmates inside:

“My Lord...make the hearts of the righteous lean towards them and do not keep them in the dark from news of their loved ones!”

And when he entered the king’s court, he said:

78. It is also said that the words quoted in the 52nd and 53rd verses of chapter Yusuf belong to Zulaykha. In that case, they could be understood as, “I am not, in any way, trying to claim innocence. I admit to what I did, only so Joseph knows that whatever I did to him, I did it in his presence. I never tried to do anything behind his back. What is done is done, and that was all there is to it.” By making that admission, Zulaykha not only cleared Joseph of all blame, she also hinted at her own belief in God.

“My Lord! I expect the good that comes from You more than the good that will come from here. I seek refuge in Your glory and power from its evil!”

By then, the minister, who had bought Joseph (as) as a child, had passed away. The king of the time was a noble and virtuous man from a family who had originally immigrated from Arabia and ruled Egypt for four centuries. He spoke many languages; and instantly admired Joseph (as) for the fact that he spoke more languages than him. He wanted to hear the interpretation of his dream directly from Joseph’s (as) mouth. So, Joseph (as) repeated the interpretation. The king admired the depth and eloquence of Joseph’s (as) words and asked for the right precaution to take.

“During the fertile years”, Joseph (as) explained, “you must try and produce more and stock up on the crops. That way you will not only be able to look after the people, you will also export the surplus goods and increase the treasury’s revenue.”

“But who will manage all that?” asked the king.

Joseph (as) thereupon said:

قَالَ اجْعَلْنِي عَلَى خَزَائِنِ الْأَرْضِ إِنِّي حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

“Appoint me over the storehouses of the land. I can surely and wisely guard them.” (Yusuf, 12: 55)

This shows that it is permissible for one to request an administrative position if he has the skill and power to uphold justice and divine law. But it is impermissible for Muslims to vie with each other over such positions.

Abu Musa al-Ashari (ra) explains:

“I was in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (saw) along with two of my cousins. One of them asked for an administrative position, and soon, the other made a similar request.

The Prophet (saw) replied:

“By Allah, we do not appoint people who strive for positions!” (Al-Bukhari, Ahkam, 7; Muslim, Imarah, 15)

What those words teach us is that people in power must give jobs to those who are competent; and take into account, not their personal desires or ambitions, but their qualifications.

The verse of the Qur’an that quotes Joseph’s (as) request for the position also indicates that at times when there is no other option, it is necessary to take power from the hands of non-Muslims, if that remains the only way in which one can reinstate Allah’s command and allow for good to prevail over evil. But this is a heavy

burden that comes with enormous responsibility. Yet, Joseph (as) had all the competence in the world required to shoulder the task. And he took on the job as treasurer, as there was no person more skillful than him to reform the land and its people for the better.

Allah the Almighty declares:

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَتَّبِعُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ يَشَاءُ نُنْصِبُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا مَنْ نَشَاءُ وَلَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ. وَلَا جُزْءَ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

“And thus We established Joseph in the land to settle wherever he willed. We touch with Our mercy whom We will, and We do not lose the rewards of those who do good. And the reward of the hereafter is far better, for those who believe and fear Allah” (Yusuf, 12: 56-57)

The king handed over even his own authority to Joseph (as). Because of his trust and respect towards a prophet, Allah blessed him with faith. The king wholeheartedly accepted the religion of *tawhid* in the presence of Joseph (as). Many others followed him. After all, Joseph (as) had not merely been sent to them as a treasurer in tough times. Above anything, he was a prophet to guide them to the true path.

It should be remembered that generosity is a means for eternal happiness. Even if it kindness comes from a nonbeliever, a Muslim should make the most of the opportunity to invite him to *tawhid*. It is hoped that such genuine moments can also serve as means for salvation.



As the effective ruler of Egypt, Joseph (as) immediately placed great emphasis on agriculture. He increased production and stocked up the surplus produce. When the years of famine struck, he used the produce both for the needs of his people, as well as for export, through which he generated revenue for the treasury. People far and wide began making their way to Egypt to buy food.

Marriage to Zulaykha

By this time, Zulaykha had lost everything she had. Her love for Joseph (as) had made her blind and frail. She looked like an old woman, even though she was still young. She eventually retired into a derelict home on a road Joseph (as) often used. There, she had time to reflect on and figure out why things had gone wrong for her. In a moment of regret and anger, she faced the idol she had worshipped and said:

“Shame on us both! You have shown no mercy to me, despite all that I have gone through! You have not deigned to help me out of my frail body and blind sight! Like

a fool, I have worshipped you to this day! However, it all ends here! From now on, I believe in the Lord of Joseph!”

She then began worshipping Allah (jj) day and night.

One day, Joseph (as) happened to pass by the home of Zulaykha on horseback, accompanied by his entourage. Zulaykha immediately stepped outside and said, out loud:

“I exalt the Power that turns sinful kings into slaves and pious slaves into kings!”⁷⁹

The wind had delivered her words to Joseph (as). He rode his horse to Zulaykha. He could not recognize her. He asked if she needed any help. Zulaykha said only Joseph (as) could help her. It was at that moment that Joseph (as) realized who she was. Zulaykha asked him to pray that she be given her sight and beauty back. She then asked for one more thing: for Joseph (as) to marry her.

Joseph (as) fulfilled her first two wishes. He prayed and Allah gave back Zulaykha her beauty and eyesight. However, on the third wish, Joseph (as) dropped his head and began to ponder. Not long after, Jibril (as) arrived to say:

“Your Lord has sent His blessings and ordered you not to refuse her! Marry her, for she is your wife both in this world and the next!”

On that order, Joseph (as) married Zulaykha.

Joseph (as) later raised his hands to the sky and prayed:

“My Lord, the Most Compassionate of all, who has blessed me with all this! An eternal praise and thanks to You!

My Lord! I ask You to complete Your grace, show me the face of my father Jacob and light up his vision by showing mine to him! I further ask You to open up the roads that will reunite me with my brothers! My Lord... You are the Acceptor of prayers and have power over all things!”

The Brothers Arrive in Egypt to a Plan

Meanwhile, the famine had also gripped Canaan. Jacob (as) sent all his sons, except for Benjamin, to Egypt to buy some provisions.

The Qur’an recounts what followed:

79. See, Sayyid Ali al-Hamadani, *Zahirat al-Mulk*, prepared by Necdet Yilmaz, Istanbul, 2003, p. 118-119.

وَجَاءَ إِخْوَةُ يُوسُفَ فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ. وَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ قَالَ ائْتُونِي بِأَخٍ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَبِيكُمْ أَلَا تَرَوْنَ أَنِّي أَوْفِي الْكَيْلَ وَأَنَا خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ. فَإِنْ لَمْ تَأْتُونِي بِهِ فَلَا كَيْلَ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي وَلَا تَقْرَبُونِ.

“And the brothers of Joseph came, seeking food. They entered his court. He recognized them, but they had no idea who he was. And when he stocked them up with their supplies, he said:

‘Bring me that brother of yours you have left behind with your father! Can’t you see that I give full measure and that I am the best of suppliers? Unless you bring him to me, there will be no more stock for you, and do not even think about coming back!’ (Yusuf, 12: 58-60)

There was a reason as to why Joseph (as) asked them to next time bring their younger brother. Because of the famine and the limited stock, the provisions were sold only per head. That mean that the person wishing to buy provisions had to personally be there. So, when they also asked for a share for their father and brother, Joseph (as) exempted the father due to his age and gave them his share just for that one time. However, he told them that next time, if they wanted to buy stock for his brother, they had to bring him along. Of course, beyond all that, he also wished to unite with Benjamin and see how he was doing.

The brothers said:

قَالُوا سَتَرَاوُدُ عَنْهُ أَبَاهُ وَإِنَّا لَفَاعِلُونَ. وَقَالَ لِفِتْيَانِهِ اجْعَلُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ فِي رِحَالِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَهَا إِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ. فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَبِيهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مُنِعَ مِنَّا الْكَيْلُ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا أَخَانَا نَكْتَلْ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ. قَالَ هَلْ آمَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَا أَمِنتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَخِيهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَافِظًا وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

“We will try to convince his father to release him. We will do everything we can!”

Joseph said to his servants, ‘Put their own stock, which they brought for barter, back in their bags, so they will see it when they return and have incentive to come back!’

So, when they returned, they said, ‘Father, we have been denied from asking for further stock, unless you send our brother with us. Rest assured, we will protect him!’

But he said, ‘Do you expect me to trust you with him, as I trusted you with his brother before? But Allah is the best guardian, and He is the most merciful of the merciful.’ (Yusuf, 12: 61-64)

When Jacob said, “But Allah is the best guardian, and He is the most merciful of the merciful”, the Almighty declared:

“By My Honor and Glory, since you rely only on Me, I will soon reunite you with both your sons!”

What is understood here is that a believer must trust and rely only on Allah (jj), not mortals. Every other being needs protection. The Almighty does not. However, while relying on Allah, it is also take the necessary measures and precautions.



The sons were doing everything they could to convince Jacob (as) to let Benjamin go with them to Egypt. But it was to no avail, until:

وَلَمَّا فَتَحُوا مَتَاعَهُمْ وَجَدُوا بِضَاعَتَهُمْ رُدَّتْ إِلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا مَا نَبْغِي هَذِهِ
بِضَاعَتُنَا رُدَّتْ إِلَيْنَا وَنَمِيرُ أَهْلَنَا وَنَحْفَظُ أَخَانَا وَنَزِدَادُ كَيْلٌ بَعِيرٍ ذَلِكَ كَيْلٌ يَسِيرٌ

“When they opened their baggage, they found their merchandise had been returned to them. They said, ‘Look, father, what more could we want? Our merchandise has been returned. Let us go. We will obtain supplies for our family, protect our brother and increase our stock by a camel’s load! It is easy business!’”

(Yusuf, 12: 65)

Jacob (as) eventually yielded and agreed to send Benjamin.

قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّى تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ لَتَأْتُنِي بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ
فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَى مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ. وَقَالَ يَا بَنِيَّ لَا تَدْخُلُوا مِنْ
بَابٍ وَاحِدٍ وَاذْخُلُوا مِنْ أَبْوَابٍ مُتَفَرِّقَةٍ وَمَا أُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ
الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَيْهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ

“Jacob said, ‘But I will not send him with you until you promise by Allah that you will bring him back to me, unless you should be surrounded by enemies!’

When they gave their promise, he said, ‘Allah is witness over what we say!’

And he said, ‘Sons, do not enter from one gate but enter from different gates. I have no power at all to spare you from the decree of Allah. The decision is only for Allah. I have relied on Him, and so should others looking for reliance!’ (Yusuf, 12: 66-67)

Jacob (as) had told his sons to enter Egypt through different gates, as their appearance and clothes stood them out from the crowd and also because last time they were in the country, they had received favors like no one else. He was therefore worried that people with bad intentions may plot against them. All eyes in the city would be on these striking men from a foreign land, and Jacob (as) was concerned for his sons’ wellbeing.

Our Prophet (saw) has in fact said:

“The evil eye (nazar) is a fact.” (Al-Bukhari, Tibb, 36)

“The evil eye puts a man in a grave, and camel inside a saucepan.” (Al-Suyuti, al-Jami’ al-Saghir, II, 60)

For that reason, one must never look with neglect or throw a gaze with bad intention. In turn, people who do not constantly seek refuge in Allah (jj) can never be secure from evil looks.

Ibn Abbas (ra) narrates the following:

“The Messenger of Allah (saw) used to say the following prayer to ask for the protection of his grandsons Hasan and Huseyn:

أَعُوذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَّةِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ وَهَامَّةٍ وَمِنْ كُلِّ عَيْنٍ لَامَّةٍ

‘I seek refuge in the perfect names of Allah from all kinds of devils, poisonous animals and every eye that touches.’

He would then add:

“This is the prayer your forefather Abraham would say for the protection of his sons Ismail and Isaac.” (Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 10; Abu Dawud, Sunnah, 20)

If one sees something he likes, he should say the following to make sure that his gaze does not have an ill effect:

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

“Only what Allah wills, happens; and all power is exclusively His.”

He should further pray:

بَارَكَ اللَّهُ فِيكَ وَعَلَيْكَ

“May Allah (jj) bless you with it!”



The sons took their father’s advices on board, and once again, set out towards Egypt.

The Qur’an recounts:

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَهُمْ أَبُوهُمْ مَا كَانَ يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ
مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا حَاجَةً فِي نَفْسِ يَعْقُوبَ قَضَاهَا وَإِنَّهُ لَذُو عِلْمٍ لِمَا
عَلَّمْنَاهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“And they entered the city in the way their father had ordered them. But it did not avail them against Allah, apart from appeasing the soul of Jacob. And he surely had knowledge of what We had taught him, while most people do not know.” (Yusuf, 12: 68)

I am Your Brother Joseph!

وَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ آوَى إِلَيْهِ أَخَاهُ قَالَ إِنِّي أَنَا أَخُوكَ
فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“And when they entered the court of Joseph, he pulled his brother towards him and said, ‘I am Joseph, your brother, so do not grieve over the things they have done!’” (Yusuf, 12: 69)

It has been narrated that Joseph (as) had a dinner prepared for his brothers. They sat around the table in pairs, which left Benjamin by himself. He became tearful and remarked:

“My brother Joseph would have sat with me, if he was still alive.”

So, Joseph (as) sat Benjamin next to him on his own table. After dinner, the brothers were sent to guesthouses, again, in pairs. Once again, Benjamin was left by himself. Joseph (as) then said:

“He is the odd one out. So, he can stay with me!”

Benjamin spent the night at Joseph’s (as) house. That evening, Joseph (as) asked him:

“Would you accept me in place of your deceased brother?”

“Who could ask for a better brother!” Benjamin said. “But you are not the son of Jacob and Rachel.” Joseph (as) began to cry and hugged Benjamin. He then came out with the truth.

“I am your brother Joseph! Do not worry about the things they have done to us!”

In telling Benjamin not to worry about what their brothers had done to them in the past, Joseph (as) suggests that Allah will never allow the jealous and their plots to succeed. Evidently, they had done many bad things to Joseph (as) but, in the end, things did not turn out as they had planned. Allah had now reunited Joseph (as) with his brother and He was about to bring him back to together with his father.

Benjamin Held Back

After revealing Benjamin his real identity, Joseph (as) went on to say:

“I am now going to keep you back. We both know how much our father grieves over my absence. I know that keeping you back here is only going to increase it. However, this is something we have to do, to reunite with him sooner than later. I have a plan.”

Afterward:

فَلَمَّا جَهَّزَهُمْ بِجَهَّازِهِمْ جَعَلَ السِّقَايَةَ فِي رَحْلِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ أَذَّنَ مُؤَذِّنٌ أَيَّتُهَا الْعِيرُ
 إِنَّكُمْ لَسَارِقُونَ. قَالُوا وَأَقْبَلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مَاذَا تَفْقَدُونَ. قَالُوا نَفَقْدُ صَوَاعَ الْمَلِكِ
 وَلِمَنْ جَاءَ بِهِ حِمْلُ بَعِيرٍ وَأَنَا بِهِ زَعِيمٌ. قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا جِئْنَا لِنُفْسِدَ فِي
 الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كُنَّا سَارِقِينَ. قَالُوا فَمَا جَزَاؤُهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ كَادِبِينَ. قَالُوا جَزَاؤُهُ مَنْ
 وُجِدَ فِي رَحْلِهِ فَهُوَ جَزَاؤُهُ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ

“So, when he had stocked up their supplies, he put the golden measuring cup in the bag of his brother.

Then an announcer called out, ‘Stop you thieves!’ And as they approached, they said, ‘What is it you are missing?’

They said, ‘We are missing the measure of the king! There is a camel load of rewards for he who brings it back. And I am up for the reward!’

They said, ‘We assure you by Allah that we have not come to your land to cause trouble. And we are certainly not thieves!’

The accusers said, ‘Then what is the compensation if you are lying?’

The brothers said, ‘If it turns out it anyone’s bag, then the thief himself is the compensation! That is how we punish the criminal!’ (Yusuf, 12: 70-75)

In Jacob’s (as) law, a thief was punished by serving the person he stole from, for a year, as a slave. But under the law of Egypt, a thief would be caned and made to pay the owner twice the value of the goods he stole. Joseph (as) knew this. To keep Benjamin back, he therefore asked them what a fitting punishment would be.

فَبَدَأَ بِأَوْعِيَّتِهِمْ قَبْلَ وِعَاءِ أَخِيهِ ثُمَّ اسْتَخْرَجَهَا مِنْ وِعَاءِ
أَخِيهِ كَذَلِكَ كِدْنَا لِيُوسُفَ مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ إِلَّا
أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَنْ نَشَاءُ وَفَوْقَ كُلِّ ذِي عِلْمٍ عَلِيمٌ .

“So he searched their bags before the bag of his brother. And he then extracted the cup from his brother’s bag. That was our plan for Joseph. He could not have otherwise held his brother according to the religion of the king. It was only that Allah had willed it. We raise in degrees whom We will, and above every person of knowledge, there is one who knows more.” (Yusuf, 12: 76)

So, under Allah’s command, Joseph (as) had come up with a beautifully prudent plan to hold Benjamin back. It is narrated that he first opened up to Benjamin about the plan and got his approval.

In doing so, Joseph’s (as) motivation was not to exact revenge from his brothers. He had long personally forgiven them for what they had done. Nevertheless, their crime had another element. In plotting to murder Joseph (as), the brothers had also violated the law of Allah. So, Joseph (as) also wanted them to receive divine forgiveness. For that reason, before revealing his identity, he called his brothers ‘thieves’, to get them to feel genuine remorse. However, he was not talking about the golden cup that they had never stolen to begin with. Joseph (as) was rather referring to how, years ago, they had cunningly stolen him from his father. That way, he guided them towards repenting for all the sins they had committed. To add fire to their remorse, he held Benjamin back. That way, they could hark back on what they had done to Joseph (as). Its effects would show the next time they were to return to Egypt. They would come back as different men, with softened hearts and clear thoughts.

This incident therefore proved to be a divine blessing in disguise.

Moreover, in keeping Benjamin back, Joseph (as) did not use force or misuse his powers, which someone else in his position could well have done. He did it within law and avoided any behavior that would give an impression of tyranny.

In doing so, Joseph (as) had at the same time paved the way for the law of Jacob (as) to take hold in Egypt.

When the Almighty wants something, He creates the means for it to happen. While teaching Joseph (as) the method by which he could detain Benjamin, Allah, at the same time, ensured that the brothers did not have the slightest clue as to what was going on and also made them judge the matter in the exact way Joseph (as) had wanted. Joseph (as) was thereby able to resolve the matter without violating the law of the land and in a way, the brothers had no other option than to accept.

It should also be remembered that before leaving Canaan, they had promised their father that they would not surrender Benjamin unless 'they were surrounded and they run out of all options.' Now, they were truly left with no other choice than to leave him behind. Thus, Joseph's (as) plan had also relieved them of moral responsibility, due to the oath they had given their father.

Once the cup turned up in Benjamin's bag, they retorted:

قَالُوا إِنْ يَسْرِقْ فَقَدْ سَرَقَ أَخٌ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَأَسْرَهَا يُوسُفُ فِي نَفْسِهِ
وَلَمْ يُبْدِهَا لَهُمْ قَالَ أَنْتُمْ شَرُّ مَكَانًا وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَصِفُونَ

“If he is a thief, then he is a thief just like his brother before!”

But Joseph kept quiet and did not reveal anything to them, except to say:

‘You are worse in position, and Allah well knows what you allege.’ (Yusuf, 12: 77)

Instead of questioning the accusations and looking for ways to defend Benjamin, the brothers let slip the animosity they still felt towards Joseph (as), despite all the years that had passed.

There are a number of reports about the incident for which his brothers accused Joseph (as) of theft:

a. Joseph's (as) maternal grandfather was a pagan. So, Joseph's (as) mother hoped to put an end to that by asking her son to steal the idol and break it. Joseph (as) did just that.

b. Joseph (as) had once taken food from the table and given it to the poor. It is also said that he took them either a live lamb or chicken.

c. Joseph (as) was much loved by his paternal aunt and he spent a couple of years during his early childhood with her. However, as Joseph (as) started getting older, Jacob (as) wanted his son to come back home. The aunt could not bear to be separated. So, she tied a belt around Joseph's (as) waist, which was left to her from her father Isaac (as). She then announced that the belt had gone missing. After a quick search, it was found around Joseph's (as) waist. Under law, he ended up staying with his aunt for a bit more.

d. The whole allegation is a slander. Despite the years that had since passed, the brothers still felt anger towards Joseph (as). Their reaction simply showed how difficult it was to clean a heart afflicted with jealousy and hatred. (Al-Razi, *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, XVIII, 147)

It has also been said that when they were accused with theft, they deep down remembered how they had stolen Joseph (as). Out of instinct, they tried reversing the blame on him, to justify the crime they had committed at the time.

However, the brothers made one last plea:

قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ إِنَّ لَهُ أَبًا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا فَخُذْ أَحَدَنَا مَكَانَهُ إِنَّا نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ. قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ أَنْ نَأْخُذَ إِلَّا مَنْ وَجَدْنَا مَتَاعَنَا عِنْدَهُ إِنَّا إِذًا لَطَالِمُونَ

“They said, ‘Minister! His father is an old man, so take one of us in place of him. We see you are a kind man!’

He said, ‘I seek refuge in Allah from taking anybody else in place of he, who has been caught with our possession! I would be a tyrant, if I did!’” (Yusuf, 12: 78-79)

Tyranny comes in many forms. Just as it is tyranny to overrule Allah’s command and judge to the contrary, it is also tyranny to want or condone tyranny itself. Infringing on the rights of others is tyranny against the other, while engaging in sins that merit punishment in the hereafter is tyranny against the self.

A victim of tyranny should repent and ask Allah for a way out.

Sahl ibn Abdullah al-Tustari says:

“When Allah loves a servant, He opens a gate to repentance by making his sins appear big in his eyes. This gate opens up to the garden of divine love. When Allah is angered by a servant, He makes his sins appear little in his eyes and corrects him with troubles. That is because a person who thinks little of his sins can no longer take advices on board and runs the risk of falling into eternal loss.”



Joseph’s (as) brother began thinking long and hard about what to do and how they would explain what had just happened to their father. The Qur’an sheds light on their dilemma:

فَلَمَّا اسْتِيسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا نَجِيًّا قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ آبَاكُمْ قَدْ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَوْثِقًا مِنَ اللَّهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطْتُمْ فِي يُوسُفَ فَلَنْ أَبْرَحَ الْأَرْضَ حَتَّى يَأْذَنَ لِي أَبِي أَوْ يَحْكَمَ اللَّهُ لِي وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ. ارْجِعُوا إِلَى آبَائِكُمْ فَقُولُوا

يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّ ابْنَكَ سَرَقَ وَمَا شَهِدْنَا إِلَّا بِمَا عَلَّمْنَا وَمَا كُنَّا لِلْغَيْبِ حَافِظِينَ.
وَاسْأَلِ الْقَرْيَةَ الَّتِي كُنَّا فِيهَا وَالْعِيرَ الَّتِي أَقْبَلْنَا فِيهَا وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ

“So when they gave up hope on getting him back, they discussed the matter in private.

The eldest of them said, ‘You well know you gave an oath to your father that you would protect him, and you have already failed in your duty to Joseph? So, I will never leave this land until either my father allows me or Allah decides for me, and He is the best of judges. But you return to your father and say, ‘Your son has been stolen, and we can only testify for what we know! And we do not know what is going on beyond it. If you doubt us, ask the people of the city we were in and the caravan in which we came. We promise you that we are telling the truth.’

(Yusuf, 12: 80-82)

They made their way back home and told their father just that.

An Ordeal that Led to Bliss

قَالَ بَلْ سَوَّلَتْ لَكُمْ أَنْفُسُكُمْ أَمْرًا فَصَبِّرْ جَمِيلٌ عَسَى اللَّهُ
أَنْ يَأْتِيَنِي بِهِمْ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ

“Jacob said, ‘It sounds more like your souls have enticed you to something! It is now best that I keep patient. Perhaps, Allah will bring them to me all together. It is He who, is the Knowing and the Wise.’ (Yusuf, 12: 83)

Jacob (as) was reluctant to believe them as they had lied to him before. So, he remarked:

“No, it appears as though you have once again let yourselves down and devised a plot. How could the minister otherwise know that under our law, a thief is held captive?”

وَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا أَسَفًا عَلَيَّ يُوسُفَ وَإِضْيَئْتُ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ فَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ

“And he turned away from them and said, ‘Oh, my sorrow over Joseph!’. And his eyes became white from grief, and he kept it all inside.’ (Yusuf, 12: 84)

At the time, Jacob (as) was the best human being alive. He had barely slept since the day he lost Joseph (as). He shed so many tears that he eventually became blind. It is said that one reason for that, was to prevent him from seeing his other sons, which would add to the grief he already had.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“Allah the Almighty has declared, ‘If I have taken away a person’s two most precious possessions (eyes) and he has responded to that with patience, I will not settle for any other reward for him than paradise.’” (Al-Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 58/24000)

Bukhari relays a similar hadith:

“If I test a servant with two of his beloveds, and he responds with patience, I will reward him with paradise.” (Al-Bukhari, Marda, 7)



Jacob (as) had cried for forty years. Regarding his blindness, some scholars have said:

Allah made Jacob (as) blind, so he could fix his gaze not on Joseph’s (as) external image but on the divine beauty that had manifested in him. The Lord’s light of beauty had reflected on Joseph (as) and that was why Jacob (as) loved him more than he loved his other sons. However, because he had unwillingly come close to blurring that distinction, Allah separated him from Joseph (as) and took away his sight, which had become fixed on Joseph’s (as) appearance.

This shows that unless man is able to close his eyes to the way the world appears, he will never be able to see the divine beauty within.

Never Despair of Allah’s Mercy

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ تَفْتَأُ تَذَكُرُ يُوسُفَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ حَرَضًا أَوْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْهَالِكِينَ.
قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَنِيَّ وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“They said, ‘By Allah, you are not going to stop remembering Joseph until you become fatally ill or perish! He said, ‘I only complain of my suffering and grief to Allah. And I know from Allah that which you do not know.’” (Yusuf, 12: 85-86)

Jacob (as) then turned to his sons and said:

يَا بَنِيَّ اذْهَبُوا فَتَحَسَّسُوا مِنْ يُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ وَلَا تَيْأَسُوا مِنْ رُوحِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يَيْئَسُ مِنْ رُوحِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

“Sons, go and find out about Joseph and his brother; and do not despair of relief from Allah! No one despairs of Allah’s relief except disbelievers.” (Yusuf, 12: 87)

This verse gives us a very important message. No matter what the circumstances may be, a person must never despair and always keep hope in Allah (jj). As the Qur'an says, only disbelievers despair of Allah's mercy.

The Prophet (saw) has also said:

"A sinner who does not despair of Allah is closer to Allah than a worshipper who does." (Suyuti, Jamiu's-Saghir, II, 68)

To despair is to fail to understand the meanings of the Lord's names 'Merciful' and 'Compassionate'. It is to be unable to grasp the power of divine mercy. Even the Pharaoh kept hope in Allah's mercy during his final breath.

Allaht the Almighty also states:

لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ

"Do not despair of the mercy of Allah!" (Al-Zumar, 39: 53)

With that on his mind, Jacob (as) sent a letter, with his sons, to the treasurer and effective ruler of Egypt, without knowing the man was actually Joseph (as). It read:

"In the Name of Allah, the Merciful and the Compassionate,

From Israel Jacob, the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham, to the Ruler of Egypt,

Our family has gone through a lot. My grandfather Abraham was thrown into fire by Nimrod. He kept patient and Allah guided him to a way out. My father Isaac was tested through hardship. He kept patient and Allah rewarded him. As for me, I lost my son Joseph. My eyes have become blind from the tears I have shed for him. It has bent my back. I took consolation from my youngest son, who you now hold captive. Know that our family does not raise thieves. If you return him to me, so be it. But if you do not, I will curse you so heavily that it will affect your seven generations to come!"

When he received the letter, Joseph (as) broke down and cried. He penned the following reply:

"In the Name of Allah, the Merciful and the Compassionate,

From the Treasurer of Egypt to Israel Jacob,

I have received your letter. I have read and fully understood your words. You speak of your pious fathers and how they kept patient in the face of tribulation. Take a leaf out of their book and remain patient just as they did!"

Jacob (as) had the letter read to him. His immediate response was:

“By Allah, a king could not have said these words. These are the words of a prophet. And this man has got to be Joseph!”

He sent his sons to Egypt, once again, to inquire about the matter.

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ قَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الْعَزِيزُ مَسَّنَا وَأَهْلَنَا الضُّرُّ وَجِئْنَا
بِبَضَاعَةٍ مُزْجَاةٍ فَأَوْفِ لَنَا الْكَيْلَ وَتَصَدَّقْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْزِي الْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ.
قَالَ هَلْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ بِيُوسُفَ وَأَخِيهِ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ جَاهِلُونَ

“So when they entered the court of Joseph, they said:

‘Minister! Trouble has touched us and our family, and we have come with goods poor in quality. But still, we ask you to give us full measure and be charitable. Allah surely rewards the charitable.

He said, ‘Do you recall what you did to Joseph and his brother at a time when you were ignorant?’ (Yusuf, 12: 88-89)

It is reported that the brothers who had thrown Joseph (as) in a well, used to also physically and verbally abuse Benjamin.

A Legendary Act of Forgiveness

قَالُوا أَإِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ يُوسُفُ قَالَ أَنَا يُوسُفُ وَهَذَا أَخِي قَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّهُ مَنْ
يَتَّقِ وَيَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ. قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ لَقَدْ آتَرَكَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنْ
كُنَّا لَخَاطِئِينَ. قَالَ لَا تَثْرِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ الْيَوْمَ يَعْفِرُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

“They said, ‘Are you really Joseph?’

He said, ‘I am Joseph, and this is my brother. Allah has certainly favored us. Allah never loses the rewards of those fear Him, keep patient and do good!

They said, ‘Allah has certainly preferred you over us. And we sure have been sinners!’

Joseph said, ‘No blame on you today. Allah will forgive you; and He is the most merciful of the merciful.’ (Yusuf, 12: 90-92)

Those verses also point to the most beautiful method of conduct, which is to respond to evil with good. This teaches the foe a lesson, softens his heart, and often makes him let go of his hostility. It also wins over those with neutral feelings, and increases love between friends.

The Qur’an elaborates it beautifully:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ
فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

“And the good and bad deed are not equal. Repel evil by that which is better; and you will find that your enemy has become a devoted friend.” (Fussilat, 41: 34)

This calls to mind a splendid episode from the Prophet’s (saw) life:

Abu Sufyan used to be a friend of the Prophet (saw) before the call began. However, afterward, he turned into one of his staunchest enemies. Abu Sufyan would write satires about him, to which the Prophet’s (saw) poet Hassan ibn Thabit would duly respond. However, years down the line, he came to regret all that he had done. He traveled to Medina, but when he was there, the Prophet (saw) did not even look at his face. Abu Sufyan was terribly saddened. He apologized with the words Ali (ra) taught him, which he himself had learnt from the Qur’an: “Allah has certainly preferred you to us.”

The Prophet (saw) of mercy also responded with the Qur’an, saying, “There will be no blame on you today. May Allah forgive you...He is the most Merciful of the merciful.” He forgave Abu Sufyan, as well as others who had done things as bad, if not worse.

Nevertheless, after Abu Sufyan became Muslim, he was unable to look at the Prophet (saw) in the face because of the shame he still felt. (Waqidi, Maghazi, II, 810-811; Ibn Hisham, Sirah, IV, 20-24; Ibn Abdilbarr, al-Isti’ab, IV, 1674)

When the Prophet (saw), sent as a mercy to the worlds, eventually conquered Mecca and set foot inside the Kaaba precinct, he found that the locals had packed the area, anxiously waiting how they would be dealt with.

The Prophet (saw) called out:

“People of Quraysh! The inhabitants of Mecca! What do you say? How do you think I will deal with you?”

“We only expect good and kindness from you”, they said. “You will do what is best. You are a noble and generous brother and cousin. And now that you have power, treat us with mercy!”

The Prophet (saw) thereupon said:

“Ours is like the situation of Joseph and his brothers. I speak to you in the words of Joseph: There will be no blame on you today. May Allah forgive you; for He is the most Merciful of the merciful. Return home, you are all free!”

The compassionate Prophet (saw) forgave the Meccans and set them all free, despite the fact that they had now fallen into his hands and he had a perfect chance to take revenge for all they had done to the believers. The Meccans have hence been called *tulaqa*, the liberated. (Ibn Hisham, Sirah, IV, 32; Waqidi, Maghazi, II, 835; Ibn Saad, Tabaqat, II, 142-143)

This, at the same time, is an instance of the manifestation of Allah's name *Sattar*, the Concealer of faults.

Ziya Pasha's poem gives voice to the final encounter between Joseph (as) and his brothers:

*There comes day when God makes the tyrants say
Allah has chosen you over us as He may⁸⁰*

The Shirt Sent to Jacob (as)

Joseph (as) treated his brothers to feasts day and night. This made them feel uncomfortable, knowing what they had done to him. So, they sent a message to Joseph (as) asking him to, "Please, stop treating us so kindly. It is only adding to our embarrassment!"

Joseph (as) replied:

"Until now, the Egyptians looked at me in the same way they did when I first arrived here and said, 'Praise to Allah, for giving him such a high rank, when he was just a slave sold for twenty pennies!'. Now, thanks to you, I have gained honor, for they now know that I am not only your brother, but a grandson of a great prophet like Abraham."

Joseph (as) did not say those words to boast; but rather, to put the minds of his brothers at rest and reduce the embarrassment they felt. It went to show just how deeply merciful and generous he was.

Joseph (as) then held out his shirt and told his brothers to:

إِذْهَبُوا بِقَمِيصِي هَذَا فَالْقُوهُ عَلَى وَجْهِ أَبِي يَأْتِ بَصِيرًا وَأْتُونِي بِأَهْلِكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

"Take my shirt, and cast it over the face of my father. He will then be able to see. And come back with your family, all together." (Yusuf, 12: 93)

وَلَمَّا فَصَلَتِ الْعِيرُ قَالَ أَبُوهُمْ إِنِّي لَأَجِدُ رِيحَ يُوسُفَ لَوْلَا أَنْ
تُقِنُّونَ. قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ إِنَّكَ لَفِي ضَلَالِكَ الْقَدِيمِ

80. Reference to chapter Yusuf, 12: 91.

“And when the caravan departed from Egypt, their father said, ‘I would say I can surely smell Joseph if you did not think I had become weak in the mind. They said, ‘By Allah, you are still in your same old error.’” (Yusuf, 12: 94-95)

Jacob (as) Regains His Vision

فَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَ الْبَشِيرُ أَلْقَاهُ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهِ فَارْتَدَّ بَصِيرًا قَالَ أَلَمْ
أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“And when the bearer of good tidings arrived, Jacob cast the shirt over his face, and he was able to see. He said, ‘Did I not tell you that I know from Allah that which you do not know?’” (Yusuf, 12: 96)

The bearer of the good news was Judah. It is narrated that he said, “It was me who sent my father into grief by taking the bloodied shirt to him. So, it should be me to deliver the news that will give him the greatest joy”, and eagerly walked barefoot and bareheaded all the way from Egypt to Canaan.

This was the shirt Jibril (as) had brought to Abraham (as) just as he was about to be thrown into the fire.

Rumi offers the below commentary:

“It was only Jacob (as) who saw the extraordinariness in the face of Joseph (as). The brothers were unable to see that light. Their hearts were far removed from what was required to see Joseph in the way he really was.

When Jacob (as) saw his own qualities in Joseph (as), his heart inclined towards him.

For Jacob (as), Joseph (as) had a certain pull. That is why he was able to smell his shirt from a long distance. However, the brother, who brought the shirt all the way from Egypt, was unable to smell it.

That is because the shirt was nothing but a trust in his hands. He was only tasked with delivering to shirt to Jacob (as). To him, the shirt was like an exquisite concubine in the hands of a slave trader. The concubine is not meant for the trader. She is meant for the buyer.

Many a scholar has no share of wisdom. He has committed every knowledge to memory but has been unable to commit himself to the Lord.”

Jacob (as) regained his eyesight through Joseph’s (as) shirt. That serves as an instance of seeking Allah’s help (*istia’nah*) and grace (*tabarruk*) through belongings.



The Qur'an says:

قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا اسْتَغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا خَاطِئِينَ. قَالَ سَوْفَ
أَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

“They said, ‘Father! Ask that we are forgiven for our sins, for we surely have been sinners!’

He said, ‘I will soon ask forgiveness for you from my Lord. It is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.’ (Yusuf, 12: 97-98)

Jacob (as) says he soon will ask for their forgiveness to suggest that a guilty person must first be forgiven by the victim. He delayed praying for them until he knew for sure that Joseph (as) had forgiven them.

Some scholars have interpreted Jacob's (as) conduct here as an indication that it is better to leave praying and repenting to the most suitable time.

In fact, Muharib ibn Dassar narrates:

Umar (ra) once arrived at the mosque at dawn and overheard someone pray:

“My Lord! You have invited me and I have attended your invitation. You have commanded and I have obeyed. Forgive me at this time of dawn!”

Umar (ra) listened in more closely and realized the voice belonged to Abdullah ibn Masud (ra). When he asked him why he had chosen this time, Ibn Masud (ra) explained:

“Jacob (as) had delayed praying for their sons to be forgiven, until the break of day. Allah the Almighty has praised those repent at this time. (Al Imran, 3: 17).” (Tabari, Tafsir, XIII, 85)

The Prophet (saw) is reported to have said:

“Our Lord descends on the world's skies each night⁸¹ and calls out, ‘Isn't there anyone asking, so I can give him what he wants? Isn't there a repentant so that I can forgive him?’” (Muslim, Musafirin, 168-170)

It is stated in another hadith:

“Jacob (as) delayed repenting for his sons to the night that joins Thursday to Friday.” (Al-Tirmidhi, Daawat, 114)

81. Allah the Almighty transcends space and time. Therefore, the expression that He “...descends on the earth's skies each night” is a metaphor, to suggest that God gets closer to people spiritually, in a way we cannot possibly understand.

Reunion and the Dream Come True

The king, as well as the public, had joined Joseph (as) and lined the streets to welcome Jacob (as) and his family. When they entered the city, Jacob (as) and Joseph (as), along with the rest, dismounted their horses, and the two prophets embraced each other.

The Almighty states:

فَلَمَّا دَخَلُوا عَلَى يُوسُفَ آوَى إِلَيْهِ أَبَوَيْهِ
وَقَالَ ادْخُلُوا مِصْرَ إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ آمِنِينَ

“And when they entered upon Joseph, he embraced his parents and said, ‘Enter Egypt, Allah willing, safe and secure.’” (Yusuf, 12: 99)

Great rewards always follow great troubles and matching feats of patience.

After finally reuniting with his son, Jacob (as) thanked the Lord and raised his hands to pray:

“My Lord! Forgive me for weeping over Joseph, for my lack of patience towards his separation and what my sons have done to their siblings!”

Jacob (as) was now immersed in a state of gratitude and contentment.

وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا وَقَالَ يَا أَبَتِ هَذَا
تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَايَ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي حَقًّا وَقَدْ أَحْسَنَ بِي إِذْ
أَخْرَجَنِي مِنَ السِّجْنِ وَجَاءَ بِكُمْ مِنَ الْبَدْوِ مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ نَزَغَ الشَّيْطَانُ
بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَ إِخْوَتِي إِنَّ رَبِّي لَطِيفٌ لِمَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ.

“Joseph raised his parents upon the throne, and they bowed to him.

And he said, ‘Father! This is the explanation of the vision I had before. My Lord has made it a reality. He was certainly good to me when He took me out of prison and brought you here from the wilderness, after Satan caused trouble between me and my brothers. My Lord is truly Subtle in what He wills. He is the Knowing, the Wise’ (Yusuf, 12: 100)

Joseph (as) had now seen that the Almighty had completed his blessings on him. At that instant, it then dawned upon him all the more clearly that the world was not a place to settle in, everything on it was fleeting and that perfection was always followed by demise. So, he wholeheartedly thanked the Lord and prayed:

رَبِّ قَدْ آتَيْتَنِي مِنَ الْمُلْكِ وَعَلَّمْتَنِي مِنْ تَأْوِيلِ الْأَحَادِيثِ فَاطِرَ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ أَنْتَ وَلِيِّي فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ تَوَفَّنِي مُسْلِمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

“My Lord! You have given me sovereignty and taught me the interpretation of dreams. Creator of the heavens and earth! You are my protector in this world and in the hereafter. Make me die a Muslim and join me with the righteous!”

(Yusuf, 12: 101)

It should be noted that in his prayer, Joseph (as) also displays an approach that should serve as an example to all believers. Before anything, to forgive the men who had tried to kill him, when it was well within his means to take revenge, represents the peak of maturity, magnanimity and moral perfection. He always credited Allah for raising him from being a slave to a ruler, and never for once attributed success to himself. He interpreted and came up with excuses for even the worst of his siblings’ behavior, even pointing the blame at the devil, and did not rub their crime in their faces. And that last prayer goes to show the affinity he always had with the Lord, and how his heart and soul were governed by the concern of ‘the final breath’. His prayer also serves as a vivid example in highlighting the importance of one of the most central pillars of the Sufi way: to keep company with the righteous.

Reports say that Jacob (as) lived in Egypt with his son Joseph (as) for another twenty-four years before passing away. In line with his will, he was buried next to his father Isaac (as) in Damascus. Joseph (as) lived another twenty-three years after that. His corpse was placed in a marble coffin and buried in the banks of the Nile. Because the people of Egypt loved him so much, they wanted him to be buried in their land. Moses (as) would later take his corpse out of Egypt during the exodus and rebury him next to Jacob (as).

Peace be upon them...



The Prophet (saw) has said:

“Death is a gift to the believer.” (Daylami, Musnad, IV, 338)

That is because death saves man his greatest enemy, the ego.

The Final Verses of Chapter Yusuf

The pagans of Mecca had gotten ideas from the Jews and posed a series of questions to the Prophet (saw). The Almighty revealed the final verses of the chapter in response.

By informing mankind of this story and similar news of the unseen, Allah has proven that His Prophet's (saw) call is true and that the Qur'an is indeed His word. But despite all the proofs, the pagans continued resisting the Prophet (saw) who worked day and night to guide them without asking for anything in return. And to console the Prophet (saw), the Almighty assured:

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ أَجْمَعُوا
أَمْرَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَمْكُرُونَ. وَمَا أَكْثَرَ النَّاسَ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ.
وَمَا تَسْأَلُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ

“This is from the news of the unseen which We reveal to you. You were not with them when they conspired their plan. And most of the people do not believe, even though you strive for it and do not ask for any payment. This is only a reminder to the worlds.” (Yusuf, 12: 102-104)

Besides, the pagans' denial was not just reserved to the Prophet (saw) and the divine message revealed to him. It was broader than that:

وَكَايِنٍ مِنْ آيَةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَمُرُّونَ عَلَيْهَا وَهُمْ عَنْهَا
مُعْرِضُونَ. وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

“And how many a sign within the heavens and earth do they pass over, and just turn away. And most of them do not believe in Allah except by associating others with Him.” (Yusuf, 12: 105-106)

That is to say, even if they do not entirely reject the existence of Allah, they do not believe in Allah without ascribing partners to him, whether secretly or openly.

أَفَأَمِنُوا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ غَاشِيَةٌ مِنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ أَوْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ. قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَى بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا
وَمَنْ اتَّبَعَنِي وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Or are they sure that there will not come an overwhelming punishment from Allah or that the hour will not suddenly come upon them, at a moment when they least expect? Say, ‘This is my way. I invite to Allah with insight, both myself and those who follow me. Exalted is Allah! And I am not of those who associate others with Him.’” (Yusuf, 12: 107-108)

This verse shows that inviting others to the religion is permissible and beneficial only if it proceeds on certain lines. One cannot make the call blindly, for false and

trivial pursuits or personal gratification. One has to do it prudently and with a genuine intent of seeking only the pleasure of the Lord. He must be aware of the weight carried by each word he says and, at the same time, observe the rules of etiquette. Otherwise, religion and religiosity are reduced to hollow names and empty slogans.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى
أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ
قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ.

“And We have not sent messengers before you except that they were men, from among the residents of cities, to whom We revealed. So have they not traveled the earth and observed what became of those before them? The home of the hereafter is best for those who fear Allah. Will you not reason?” (Yusuf, 12: 109)

This verse was revealed after the pagans protested, “Why could not Allah have just sent an angel as a prophet instead?”

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اسْتَيْسَسَ الرُّسُلُ وَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ كُذِّبُوا جَاءَهُمْ نَصْرُنَا
فَنَجَّيْنَا مِنَ النَّشَاءِ وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُنَا عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

“It went on until the messengers despaired and were certain that they had been denied. That is when Our victory arrived and We saved whoever We willed. The criminals can never repel our punishment.” (Yusuf, 12: 110)

And Allah (jj) ends the chapter by reemphasizing the importance of the Qur’an and its stories for mankind:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَىٰ وَلَكِنْ
تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

“There is certainly a lesson in their stories for those of understanding. No way is the Qur’an fabricated! It is rather a confirmation of what has happened before it, a detailed explanation of all things, and a guidance and mercy for people who believe.” (Yusuf, 12: 111)

Without a doubt, the Glorious Allah (jj) has spoken the truth.



Spiritual Connection and Seeking Help: RABITAH, ISTI'ANAHA AND ISTIGHATHAH

In the Sufi way, a student is a journeyman (*salik*) who tries to complete his spiritual voyage (*sayr-i suluk*) by getting his heart trained under the guidance of a master (*murshid*). He does his best to rid his heart of its thickness and weight by sticking to the path his master lays out for him. He takes to the whole training with an attitude of submission.

And the master or *murshid* is the guide, who shows him how to refine his heart.



Rabitah literally means a bond, connection or reunion; and it has spiritual as well as physical connotations. There is no creature in the universe without some sort of spiritual and physical connection with another. This connection or *rabitah* allows for both *istianah* and *istighathah*, which are ways of seeking spiritual help and refuge through another being.

In one sense, *rabitah* consists purely of love; and it enables to keep the love in the heart warm and alive.

There are three types of *rabitah*.

1. Natural Connection

This is the love a person feels for those close to him, like mother's love for her child.

2. Base Connection

This is the attachment some people have to the forbidden, like a gambler whose heart is so preoccupied with gambling that it makes him forget about the welfare of his wife and kids.

3. Spiritual Connection

This is the attachment felt towards the sacred and divine, and any means that has potential to take a person closer to the Lord. It is to develop a love for people who have been able to polish their hearts⁸² and reach a level where they are able to gaze at

82. Sufism refers to this as *tajliyah*, which literally means to 'polish'. In the spiritual sense, it is to polish the mirror of the heart from the dirt of base thoughts and the weight of all things other than God (*masiwa*);

the truth of the matter (*mushahadah*). It is to seek their company, either physically or spiritually, in the hope of making the most of what they have to offer.

The Qur'an states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَكُونُوا مَعَ الصَّادِقِينَ

"O you who have believed! Fear Allah and be with those who are true!"

(Al-Tawbah, 9: 119)

It is noteworthy that the Almighty does not say 'be true!'. He rather commands us to 'be with those who are true!' Not only is this necessary to preserve *taqwa*, it also underlines the need for man to live among a community of righteous people to help him fulfil his duty of servanthood in the best way possible.

One who forms a loving connection with another emulates that person's values and conduct as much as his capacity allows. The behavior of strong people is contagious. That is to say, people copy the conduct and states of mind of energetic characters. Those who are spiritually strong, inspire the weak. Compassionate, generous and selfless individuals have a positive impact on their communities.

However, this is just as valid for negative qualities. The Pharaoh's henchmen, like his vizier Haman and the other statesmen, soon became spitting images of the Pharaoh themselves, for taking him as a role model.

The connection the Sufi way refers to as *rabitah*, opens up the heart to receive spiritual emotions. It rids it of egoistic and selfish desires and replaces them with the master's conduct. It takes worldly wealth out of the heart and turns wealth into a means rather than an end.

The spiritual master's heart is like a lens. It is a heart that has received a manifestation of the divine names, which have scorched all negative feelings. They have killed off every desire for the world. In time, this state of mind is transferred to the student, as much his love allows, to the point where he becomes one with the master.

The Prophet (saw) has in fact said:

"A person is with whom he loves." (Al-Bukhari, Adab, 96)

"A person who tries to imitate a group of people is one of them." (Abu Dawud, Libas, 4/4301)

Imam Ghazzali says it is necessary to have a peace of heart when offering prayer, and adds:

and to ultimately replace that with a lightness, shine and purity through divine remembrance.

“It is necessary to envision the Prophet (saw) during the first and last sittings of prayer, through the eye of the heart.” This underlines the need to establish a connection, or *rabitah*, with the Prophet (saw).⁸³

Mirroring a State of Mind

As mentioned above, characters or states of mind are contagious. Some of the ways in which they are transmitted are as follows:

1. The Look (*Nazar*)

This refers to the gaze of prophets and saints.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“Beware the foresight of a believer, for he looks with the light of Allah.” (Al-Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 15)

A person with a sound and peaceful heart can transmit his state of mind just through a look. The look conveys the inspiration within the heart to the recipient.

The companions are the most exquisite among all believers for having been in the company of the Prophet (saw) and on the receiving end of his look. To be seen by the Prophet (saw) is in fact a requirement for any believer to be considered a companion.

2. The Word

The words spoken by a person who has cleansed his heart and soul, carry his emotions, and words laden with these emotions have an effect on the listener.

3. Spiritual Gatherings (*Sohbah*)

Spiritual gatherings are places that also establish a physical attachment. The various spiritual emotions felt in the hearts people who are there, reflect on those around. It offers a chance for the spiritually weak to become inspired and energized by those who are spiritually stronger.

4. Food

In a number of times and places, the companions sought their spiritual energy from the food the Prophet (saw) offered or left over.

There are a number of reports that recount the times when the Prophet (saw) would drink some milk and offer the companions the rest. This would allow a transferal of spiritual energy (*fiyaz*) but also increase the abundance (*barakah*) of the

83. For more on *rabitah*, see Osman Nuri Topbas, *Îmândan İhsana Tasavvuf*, p. 249-257.

milk, which would not decrease regardless of the number of companions that drank from it.

Sahl ibn Sad (ra) remembers when:

“A cup of drink was brought to the Messenger of Allah (saw). He drank a bit of it. There was a small kid to his right and some elderly companions to his left. Humble and courteous as ever, he turned to the kid and said:

“Would you please allow me to offer this drink to the elderly?”

However, the kid was smart and gave this reply, which astonished us all:

“Messenger of Allah! I honestly could not possibly forfeit a share, if you are the person offering it!”

The Messenger of Allah (saw) then handed the cup over to him. (Al-Bukhari, Ashribah, 19)

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (ra) would cook for the Prophet (saw), when he had him over as guest during the first months of the Hegira. If the plate was returned with some leftovers, Abu Ayyub (ra) would finish it up, especially taking care to eat from the spots where he suspected the Prophet (saw) had touched with his fingers. (Muslim, Ashribah, 170-171)⁸⁴

During the Tabuk campaign, when the companions were running low on drinking water, the Prophet (saw) had a small amount of water tipped on his fingers. Water then burst forth like a fountain from his index finger, which the companions drank from and filled up their bottles with. This water is better and more therapeutic than the zamzam, as it sprung directly from the finger of the Prophet (saw).

5. Personal Belongings

A number of sources report that the Prophet (saw) used to lean on a date log while giving his sermons. After a pulpit was made for the mosque, he stopped doing so. However, then the log began to audibly cry and calmed down only when the Prophet (saw) caressed it. (Al-Bukhari, Manaqib, 25)

Again, the Prophet (saw) sent his own mantle to Uwais al-Qarani and said:

“Let him wear this mantle and pray for the believers!” (Muslim, Fada’il al-Sahabah, 223-225)

Jacob (as) was all the way in Canaan, when he got a smell of Joseph’s (as) shirt that had just departed from Egypt. He was able to regain his vision, by casting the shirt over his eyes.

84. For more on this, see Osman Nuri Topbas, *Îmândan İhsana Tasavvuf*, p. 411-414.

Beyond seeking blessings (*tabarruk*) through personal belongings, there are a number of other ways to receive spiritual benefits. They include mentioning the names of saints, whilst meditating (*muraqabah*) with the purpose of forming a spiritual connection.

Sufyan ibn Uyaynah has in fact said:

“Mercy descends when the righteous are remembered!” (AjJuni, Kashfu’l Khafa, II, 70/1772)



Also striking in this regard is the Qur’an’s story about the Sleepers of the Cave. Qitmir was just a dog. However, it also received a share of grace for guarding righteous people. It is reported that it, too, will enter paradise with the righteous (Bursevi, Ruhu’l Bayan, V, 226). If a dog can reach that high a level just by accompanying the righteous, one should pause to think about the levels that await a believer who does the same with a genuine intent.



Before the coming of Islam, most of the companions were leading lives that defied their purpose of creation. Nevertheless, afterward, they turned into the most virtuous people ever known, just through the reflection of the Prophet’s (saw) mannerisms on their personal lives. The Prophet (saw) has transmitted these emotions to a spiritual chain of saints (*silsila*), who in turn pass it to others, through spiritual connections and gatherings. In the end, the Prophet’s (saw) exemplary character reflects onto the student, inasmuch as his capacity can take.

The Qur’an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ

“O you who have believed! Fear Allah and seek means of nearness to Him.”

(Al-Maidah, 5: 35)

Some scholars of the Qur’an have interpreted this ‘means of nearness’ (*wasilah*) as to embody the Prophet’s (saw) morals by receiving training under the guidance of a spiritual master.

Imam Malik says:

“When praying for something, mention the Prophet’s (saw) name as a means!”

Imam Shafii has said:

“Whenever I got stuck on a certain problem, I would offer a two-rakat prayer and visit the grave of Abu Hanifah. And in the end, my problem would be resolved.”

Imam Jazari has a similar advice:

“Take prophets and saints as means to have your wishes granted!”

This act of taking pious people as means is called *tawassul* and it is a practice that has its source in the Prophet (saw).

Ibn Abbas (ra) explains:

“The Jews of Khaybar would war with the Arabs of Ghatafan; but every time, they would lose. They eventually prayed:

‘Our Lord! We ask You for victory for the sake of the Unlettered Prophet You promised to send near the end of time!’ In the next battle, the Ghatafan were routed. But when the Prophet (saw), who they had sought as a means for victory, emerged, they denied him. That was the reason the Almighty revealed the following:

وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا
عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ

“And before, they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved. But then when there came to them that which they recognized, they denied it. So Allah’s curse will be upon the disbelievers!” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 89) (Al-Qurtubi, II, 27; al-Wahidi, *Asbab al-Nuzul*, p. 31)

Soon after the Prophet (saw) passed away, Medina suffered a severe drought. People gathered and sought the advice of Aisha (rha), who said:

“Go to the Blessed Messenger’s (saw) grave and open up a window to the sky. Let there be no veil between the sky and the Prophet (saw).”

They did as they were advised and soon, they received heavy downpour, which turned Medina green. That year was in fact referred to as the ‘year of abundance’ (*amu’l fatq*). (Darimi, *Muqaddimah*)

There are also a number of reports about instances of seeking out righteous people as means:

During a time of drought, Umar (ra) took Abbas (ra) with him to pray for rain. (Al-Bukhari, *Istisqa*, 3)

A man would frequently go to Uthman (ra) to ask him to take care of a personal need but Uthman (ra) would not pay him any attention. The man complained about the situation to Ibn Hunayf (ra), who said:

“Take wudu, head to the mosque to offer a two-rakat prayer and plead, ‘My Allah! I turn to You and ask You for the sake of Muhammed (saw), the Prophet of

Mercy. O Muhammed! I turn with you to your Lord. Please, take care of my need.” He told the man to then mention exactly what he wants.

The man went and did as he was advised. Afterwards, he turned up once again at the door of Uthman (ra). The doorman took him by the hand to Uthman (ra). This time, Uthman (ra) had him seated on the cushion next to him and asked:

“What is it that you need?” The man told him what he needed and it was immediately met. Uthman (ra) then asked:

“Why did you not tell me this before? Next time you need anything, come straight to me!”

The man left and immediately went to thank Ibn Hunayf (ra).

“May Allah reward you with good”, he said. “He never gave me any time of day until I spoke to you.”

Ibn Hunayf (ra) thereupon said, “I assure you I did not come up with the idea. But I once saw a blind man say to the Prophet:

‘Messenger of Allah...Please ask Allah to cure my eyes. I find it difficult to go on like this!’

‘It will be better for you if you kept patient...if you wish, that is’, the Prophet (saw) replied.

However, the blind man said, ‘Messenger of Allah...I have no one to take me by the hand; and I find it really hard to get on with my day. So, please, pray for me to regain my vision!’

The Prophet (saw) then told him to:

‘Take wudu, offer a two-rakat prayer and plead:

‘My Allah...I turn to you and ask You personally for the sake of Muhammed, the Prophet of Mercy. O Muhammed! I turn to your Lord for Him to take care of my need. My Allah! Allow him to intercede for me!’” (Al-Tirmidhi, Da’awat, 118; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, IV, 138; al-Haysami, *Majma’ al-Zawaid*, II, 279)

Hakim narrates that the blind man had regained his vision the moment he got back up. (Hakim, *Mustadrak*, I, 707-708)

Utbah ibn Ghazwan (ra) recounts how the Prophet (saw) once said:

“If you happen to be at an isolated place and lose something or find yourself in need of help, call out: يَا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ أَعِينُونِي *‘Servants of Allah...help me!’*. For, Allah has servants that you cannot see.” (Al-Haysami, *Majma al-Zawaid*, X, 132; Imam Nawawi, *al-Adhkar*, 201)

Imam Nawawi, who reports this, also adds:

“The person who taught me that hadith explained to me how he once got out of a similar spot of bother by doing exactly what the Prophet (saw) advised. I was taken aback. Then, sometime later, I saw a person unable to catch his camel, which kept on running off. I decided to relay this hadith to the man. He acted on it and soon, the camel, for no apparent reason, stayed put, and he caught it without any trouble.”

Mansur ibn Abdullah narrates the following from Abu Abdullah ibn Jalla, who says:

“I had arrived in Medina a poor man, worse for wear. I went to the grave of the Prophet (saw), gave him my greetings and said:

‘Messenger of Allah...I am in a poor state and need help! I have come to you as a guest.’

Moments later, tiredness got the better of me and I took a nap. The Prophet (saw) came to me in my dream and offered me a muffin. I ate half of it. When I woke up, I found the other half right next to me.”⁸⁵



The following is from Ibn Abbas (ra):

“I once saw the Prophet (saw) in my dream. He showed me kindness and mercy. When I woke, I thought it would be good to pay a visit one of his wives. She showed me a mirror the Prophet (saw) had used. I looked at the mirror and saw, not my own reflection, but the beautiful face of the Prophet (saw).”

This is a result of spiritual connection. It shows how one becomes annihilated or lost (*fana*) in the person with whom he establishes that bond.

Ubaydullah Ahrar has said:

“When the Almighty says ‘Fear Allah and be with those who are true’, the fact He uses the word ‘be’ implies that the need to be with the righteous, is constant. This has two meanings. Firstly, when in the physical presence of the righteous, one has to ensure that the heart is also present, and secondly, one needs to evoke them in their absence.”

Carrying on the love and respect for the spiritual master even in his absence, and embodying his morals at all times is called *fana fi’s-sheikh*, which means to become annihilated in the master.

85. See, Kalabazi, Ta’arruf, translated by S. Uludag, p. 214. For more detail on *tawassul*, see Osman Nuri Topbas, *Imândan İhsana Tasavvuf*, p. 399-410.

However, it must be made clear that the spiritual guide (*murshid-i kamil*) with whom this connection or *rabitah* has been made, is not a third person that stands between one and Allah. There is no clergy in Islam. The guide is simply an exemplary person for the student to take as a role model to guide him on his spiritual journey. Just as a car we travel is not an end but a means, the spiritual master is simply someone closer to Allah, who serves as a means to train the heart of the journeyman and adorn his inner world with the morals of the Prophet (saw). Holiness is an attribute that belongs exclusively to Allah.

Beyond the level of *fana fi's-sheikh* is that of *fana fi'r-rasul*, which is to become lost in the Prophet (saw). At this level, a person embodies the Prophet's (saw) morals by behaving, at every moment, as if he was in his presence. It was Abu Bakr (ra) who lived this state of mind to perfection. It is narrated that:

“Abu Bakr (ra) once told the Prophet (saw) that his vision never left him, even when he was in the bathroom.”

It was a result of Abu Bakr's (ra) total annihilation in him that on his deathbed, the Prophet (ra) said:

“Close all doors, except for the one that opens to the chamber of Abu Bakr!”
(Al-Bukhari, *Ashabu'n-Nabi*, 3)

Those words beautifully suggest how spirituality flows from one heart to another. In the end, it allows one to unravel the mysteries of:

وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ

“And He is with you, wherever you may be.” (Al-Hadid, 57: 4)

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

“We are closer to man than his jugular vein.” (Qaf, 50: 16)

This ultimately takes one to the level of *fana f'illah*, annihilation in Allah.

Another evidence of *rabitah* in the Qur'an is this:

“And the lady of the house shut the doors and said, ‘Come to me.’ He said, ‘I seek refuge in Allah. He is my Master, who has made my stay comfortable. And wrongdoers will never succeed!’ She was certainly determined to seduce him, and he, too, would have inclined had he not seen the proof of his Lord. It was to keep him away from evil and immorality. He was indeed of Our chosen servants.”

(Yusuf, 12: 23-24)

Interpreters of the Qur'an have said:

“What ‘the proof’ refers to in the verse is that just as Joseph (as) momentarily thought of accepting the advances of Zulaykha, his father Jacob (as) appeared before his eyes with his index finger on his mouth, and said:

‘Come to your senses and turn away!’ And it was only after the appearance of his father’s image that Joseph got himself together and kept away.”

As explained in the scholarly interpretation of this verse, *rabitah* is very much like Joseph (as) seeing the image of Jacob (as), where a student keeps the image of his master in front of his eyes, as well as inside his heart. It is also a type of *rabitah* to mentally and vocally remember the Prophet (saw), and to form with him a loving bond in the heart.



It is very difficult for humans to grasp or feel an abstract truth without comparing it to a physical shape or entity. For example, knowledge displays itself in the scholar, love in the beloved and art in the artist. Thus, it is impossible to present the abstract unless on some sort of a canvass.

All relations, like that between a master and disciple, a teacher and student, have to do with a spiritual connection. It is through this connection that the guide injects his spiritual qualities into the journeyman.

A student can be overwhelmed with sublime emotions when in the physical presence of the master. However, it is just as important to sustain these emotions in his absence. Only through this does a person grasp the essence of *rabitah*. It is otherwise impossible to be in the physical company of saints all the time.

Through a chain of saints, *rabitah* enables the inspiration from the Prophet (saw) to flow to anyone willing and ready to take it. The last person in the line can well receive the same current, very much like a chain of people caught in a current of electricity. Spiritual help comes as a result of this. This spiritual aid is referred to as *istianah* and *istighathah*.

A Bond with Death

In the Sufi way, *rabita-i mawt* is to establish a bond with the thought of death. Thinking about death has an enormous impact on a person’s state of mind and behavior. The Prophet (saw) has said:

أَكْثَرُوا ذِكْرَ هَاذِمِ اللَّذَاتِ، يَعْغِي الْمَوْتَ

“Always remember that which uproots all pleasures...that is to say, death.”

(Al-Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 4)

كَفَى بِالْمَوْتِ وَاعْظًا

“Death suffices as an adviser.” (Suyuti, Jamiu’s Saghir, II, 77)

Ibn Umar (ra) explains:

“I was with the Messenger of Allah (saw) when a companion from Medina greeted him and asked:

‘Who, Messenger of Allah, is the most virtuous among all people?’

‘The one who has superior morals’, said the Messenger (saw).

The man then asked, ‘And who is the most intelligent among believers?’

‘The one who remembers death the most and prepares for the life after’, said the Messenger (saw). ‘It is these who are the most intelligent.’ (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 31/4259)

Reflecting on death undoubtedly reduces the love for the world, which comes from the ego and really does nothing but to unsettle a person. An excess love of money, professional ranks and pleasures that appeal to the flesh are symptoms of many spiritual illnesses, like forgetfulness. To protect our hearts from forming a bond with these passing things, we need to think about the grave and the death that will inevitably come. This will encourage us to genuinely repent, and keep worldly ambitions and trivial pursuits out of our souls. The *dhikr* and *rabatah* we sustain will hopefully become means for our eternal happiness.⁸⁶

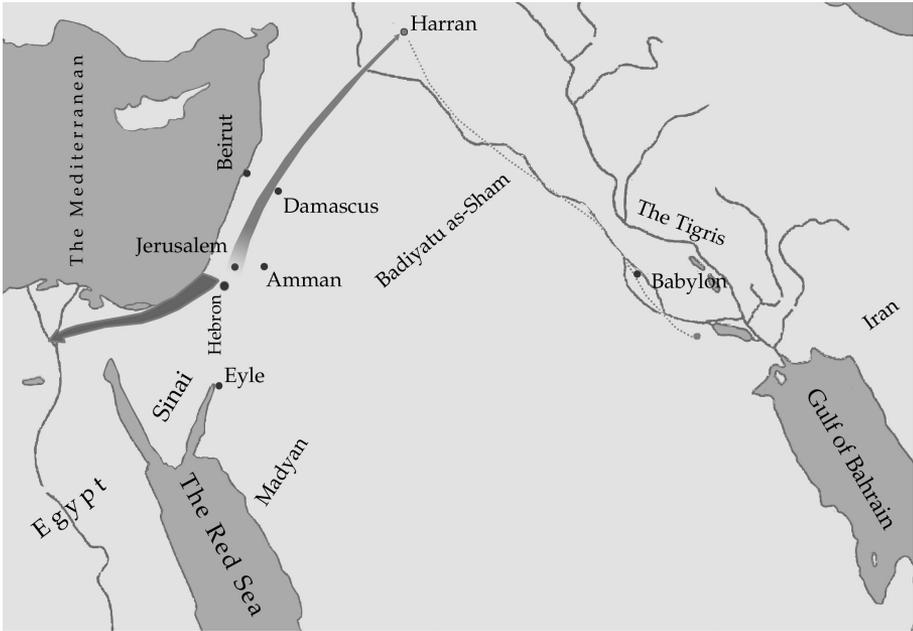
May Allah (jj) turn our hearts into springs of His remembrance and love!

Amin.

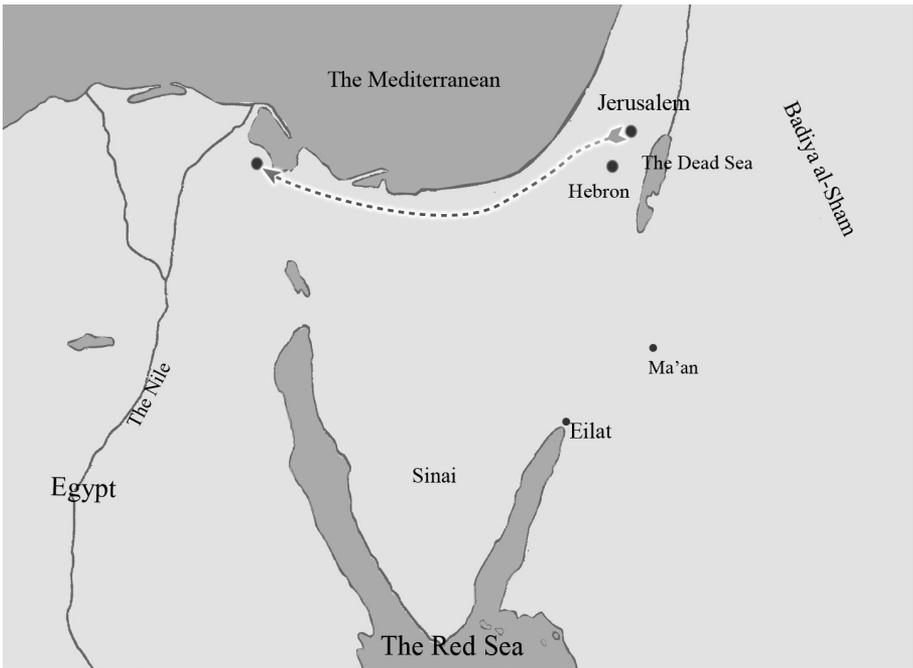


86. For more on this subject, see Osman Nuri Topbas, *Îmândan İhsana Tasavvuf*, p. 255-257.

Prophet Jacob



Prophet Joseph





PROPHET
JETHRO
-peace be upon him-

The prophet whose speeches enraptured hearts

JETHRO

-peace be upon him-

Jethro (as), or Shuayb (as) as the Qur'an refers to him, was a descendant of either Abraham (as) or Salih (as). He is also said to be a maternal cousin of Job (as). It is reported that he was born at a time when one of Lot's (as) daughters was still alive. He is more famously known as the father-in-law of Moses (as).

Jethro (as) was a prophet to Madyan and Aykah, two neighboring nations that lived in a mountainous and wooded region. (Hakim, Mustadrak, II, 621/4075)

Jethro (as) hailed from a noble family in Madyan, and spent his youth there, among a people who had become unruly. Jethro (as) kept to himself and lived a clean life away from their misdeeds. He set an example to the rest through his both lifestyle and words of wisdom.

The Madyanites

This nation took its name from Madyan, which is the region that stretches from the Khoms Valley to the Gulf of Aqabah.

The Madyanites had taken to transgression and rebellion. They had abandoned worshipping the Lord and doing good. They instead bowed to idols. Most of them were merchants, as Madyan sat on trade routes. However, they had become masters of deceit and fraud. They had turned defrauding into an art form. When purchasing goods, they would tip the scales to pay less; but when they sold the same goods, they would, again, tip the scales to swindle more money from the buyer. They even used one scale for buying and another for selling.

The Madyanites would also seal off roads and take away a portion of people's property by force. Especially vulnerable were foreigners and the weak, who were coerced to hand over their belongings through all sorts tricks. Social interaction in Madyan was based purely on fraud, abuse and tyranny. Not only were the Madyanites unthankful for the divine blessings they were given, they had taken their ingratitude a step further by rebelling against Allah and yielding to idols. Their belief was built on paganism, their trade on deceit, while their profession of choice was profiteering.

Every divine pillar in Madyan had crumbled and its people faced a total political, economic and moral collapse.

It was at a time when Madyanites were embroiled in such decadence, without a clue of what their evils would bring, that the Almighty sent them Jethro (as) as a prophet. He tried speaking sense into them and reminded them of Allah's prohibitions and commands. He urged them not to worship anyone other than Allah (jj), to be fair in trade, to have firm belief in the afterlife and not to cause strife on earth. While he told them of the enormity of Allah's punishment, he also spoke of His countless rewards.

The Qur'an states:

وإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ
إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ وَلَا تَنْقُصُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ إِنِّي أَرَاكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ وَإِنِّي
أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُّحِيطٍ

“And to Madyan, We sent their brother Jethro. He said, ‘My people, worship Allah! You have no god but Him. And do not steal from the measure and the scale! You may be in prosperity now but I fear for you the punishment of an overwhelming day.’” (Hud, 11: 84)

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ قَدْ جَاءتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ
رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا
تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ

“And to Madyan We sent their brother Jethro. He said, ‘My people, worship Allah! You have no god but Him. There has come to you clear evidence from your Lord. So fulfill the measure and weight! Do not deprive people of their due and do corrupt the earth after it has been reformed! That is better for you, if you should believe.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 85)

يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ

“My people, worship Allah and look ahead to the last day to come!”
(Al-Ankabut, 29: 36)

In such manner, Jethro (as) persisted with conveying the truth to his people, inviting them to affirm belief in the hereafter and divine tribunal, and encouraging them to do deeds that would save them.

Jethro (as) especially warned the people against resorting to deceit and fraud in trade. He told them that unless they changed their ways, Allah would take back

everything He had given them. Among other things, the Almighty had blessed the Madyanites with plenty of wealth. They should have thought better and repented, instead of stubbornly sticking to the habits that would ultimately destroy them.

Jethro (as) continued:

وَيَا قَوْمِ أَوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تَبْخُسُوا النَّاسَ
أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ

“And my people! Give full measure and weight in justice! Do not deprive people of their due. And do not commit abuse on earth, spreading corruption!”

(Hud, 11: 85)

Jethro (as) followed this up by the laying out the principles of trade. It was based on being fair in measuring the value of goods and being content with standard profits. This would ensure a secure trade and prevent violating the rights of others. Jethro (as) added:

بَقِيَّةُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ

“What remains lawful from Allah is best for you, if only you would believe! But I am not a guardian over you.” (Hud, 11: 86)

That is to say, “I neither have the power to punish you for your misdeeds, nor prevent you from losing all you have to ingratitude. I can do no more than to convey you the truths revealed to me!”

The above verses indicate that Jethro (as) invited his people to five things:

1. *Tawhid* and to worship Allah (jj) alone.
2. To accept he is a prophet.
3. To stick to fair measures and avoid deceit in trade.
4. To recognize the inviolability of the rights of others, and to abandon all crimes whether public or private, such as extortion, theft and bribery.
5. Not to cause mischief in worldly as well as religious affairs.

These five principles conveyed by Jethro (as) may be summarized as “to honor the Creator and show mercy to the created.” This encompasses the recognition of *tawhid*, the truth of prophets, the inviolability of the rights of others and the need to avoid causing mischief and corruption on earth.

Jethro’s (as) call proved to be very effective, and forced many people to question themselves. Many of his kinsmen began coming to him to profess their belief and

set out to act on his advices. They still continued doing trade, but justice had now become their norm.

However, a high number of people continued to deny him. What bothered them was the fact they had to settle for a fair, normal revenue and profit. They thought these made it impossible to become rich. So, they continued promoting injustice.

They said to Jethro (as):

قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ أَصَلَوْتُكَ تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ نَتْرِكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا أَوْ أَنْ
نُفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ

“They said, ‘Hey Jethro! Does your ritual prayer tell you that we should abandon what our fathers have worshipped and stop doing with our wealth as we please? You sure are mild and wise man!’” (Hud, 11: 87)

What they meant by ‘ritual prayer’, was the religion itself. That is because as the most comprehensive and important deed, ritual prayer or *salat* virtually represents religion. On the flipside, this also shows just how important the five daily prayers are.

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَرَزَقَنِي مِنْهُ رِزْقًا
حَسَنًا وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنْهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا
اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

“He said, ‘My people! Have you considered for once that I just might be on clear evidence from my Lord and He has provided me with a good provision? And I do not wish to differ from you by doing what I have forbidden you! I only intend on correcting you as much as I can. And my success is only through Allah. Upon him I have relied, and to Him I return.’” (Hud, 11: 88)

Here, Jethro (as) says to his people:

“I only ask you to do things that I already do myself. And if I ask you to avoid something, I would be the first person to stop doing it.”

Practicing what you preach when conveying the religion, is an important quality which Allah has (jj) praised. In contrast, Allah (jj) has banned and furthermore condemned hypocrisy. This was a major reason as to why the Qur’an panned some later Jewish scholars:

أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

“Do you order people to do good while forgetting it yourselves, when you well know what the Scripture says? Will you not reason?” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 44)

The Prophet (saw) also explains:

“On the day of judgment, a man will be brought forth and thrown into hell. All the organs around his belly will spill out from the heat. The man would start spinning like a donkey around a mill. The dwellers of hell would gather and ask:

‘What are you doing here? Were you not the one who advised us to do good and avoid evil?’

The man will say, ‘Yes, I was. I advised you to do good but did not do it myself. And I advised you to avoid evil but engaged in it myself.’ (Muslim, Zuhd, 51/2989)

Jethro (as) tirelessly continued his call to the truth. Nevertheless, most of his kinsmen were set in their ways. Soon, they took things to another level. They could not harm Jethro (as) personally, as he belonged to a strong clan. However, they began threatening those around him. Jethro (as) cautioned them against it:

وَلَا تَقْعُدُوا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوعِدُونَ وَتَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَتَبْغُونَهَا
عُوجًا وَادْكُرُوا إِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلًا فَكَثَّرَكُمُ وَاَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“And do not sit on every path, threatening and averting believers from the way of Allah, and try to deviate them! Remember the times when you were few and He increased you. And look at how it all ended for the corrupters.” (Al-Araf, 7: 86)

Jethro (as) took little notice of the problems facing him and persevered. He practiced the law of Abraham (as). Soon, his message reached as far as Damascus; and people far and wide, burning with divine love, began flocking to Madyan to meet him. However, this time, the troublemakers of Madyan came out on the roads that led to the city to prevent them from seeing Jethro (as). This was a clear sign that they were following Satan, who at the time of his expulsion from Allah’s presence, had said:

قَالَ فَبِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ. ثُمَّ لَأَنْتَهُنَّ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ
وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا تَجِدُ أَكْثَرَهُمْ شَاكِرِينَ

“Satan said, ‘Because You have put me in error, I promise you that I will sit and wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from their front and back, from their right and left. And You will not find many of them grateful.’ (Al-Araf, 7: 16-17)

Jethro (as) was striving to stop the Madyanites from:

1. ...assembling on the sides of roads to harass people
2. ...preventing others from believing in Allah
3. ...and trying to cast all sorts of doubts in the hearts of those who either had already accepted the religion or were about to accept it.

The Final Warnings

Jethro (as) had become worried by the misconducts and rebellious attitude of his people and wanted use all the patience he had to wake them up from their slumber. So, he issued a warning:

وَيَا قَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِي أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ مِثْلُ مَا أَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوحٍ
أَوْ قَوْمِ هُودٍ أَوْ قَوْمِ صَالِحٍ وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوطٍ مِنْكُمْ بِبَعِيدٍ

“And my people! Do not let your rebellion cause you to be struck by something similar to what struck the people of Noah, the people of Hud or the people of Salih. And the people of Lot are not too far away.” (Hud, 11: 89)

That is to say, it was only recently that the nations mentioned were destroyed. They are not too far back in time to remember. You, Madyanites, revel in the same evils that led them to perish. Therefore, you should stop and have a long, hard think!

وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ

“And ask forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him. My Lord is indeed Merciful and Affectionate.” (Hud, 11: 90)

However, the leaders of Madyan just would not listen:

قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ مَا نَفَقَهُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَقُولُ وَإِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِينَا ضَعِيفًا وَلَوْلَا رَهْطُكَ
لَرَجَمْنَاكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيزٍ. قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَهْطِي أَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ
وَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُ وَرَاءَكُمْ ظَهْرًا إِنَّ رَبِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ

“They said, ‘Hey Jethro! We do not understand much of what you say, and we think you are weak. And if it was not for your clan, we would have stoned you to death. We have no respect for you either!’

He said, ‘My people! Is my clan worthier of respect than Allah? But you have put Him behind your backs. Still, my Lord encompasses what you do.’ (Hud, 11: 91-92)

By now, Jethro (as) had all but given up hope that his kinsmen would change their ways, and there was no more he could do other than let fate take its course. However, in a final attempt, he reminded them of divine punishment, hoping perhaps that it would knock some sense into them:

وَإِنْ كَانَ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْكُمْ آمَنُوا بِالَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ وَطَائِفَةٌ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا
فَاصْبِرُوا حَتَّى يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَنَا وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ

“And if there should be a group among you who believes in what I have been sent with and a group who does not, then be patient until Allah judges between us. And He is the best of judges.” (Al-Araf, 7: 87)

However, this time, the Madyanites accused Jethro (as) of being a liar. They further threatened to expel both him and the believers from the land. They now felt that the believers living among them posed a threat:

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ يَا شُعَيْبُ وَالَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا مَعَكَ مِنْ قَرْيَتِنَا أَوْ لَتَعُوذُنَّ فِي مِلَّتِنَا قَالَ أَوَلَوْ كُنَّا كَارِهِينَ

“The arrogant leaders among his people said, ‘We will surely drive you, Jethro, and those who have believed in you, out of our city, unless you return to our religion!’

Jethro said, **“What! Even if we were unwilling to do so?”** (Al-Araf, 7: 88)

He added:

قَدْ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا إِنْ عُدْنَا فِي مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ إِذْ نَجَّيْنَا اللَّهُ مِنْهَا
وَمَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَعُودَ فِيهَا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا عَلَى
اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْفَاتِحِينَ

“We will have slandered against Allah if we returned to your religion after He has saved us from it. And we will not return, unless Allah wills it. Our Lord has encompassed all things in knowledge. And on Allah we rely. Our Lord! Separate us from our people on the lines of truth. You are the best of those who can do so.” (Al-Araf, 7: 89)

While Jethro (as) rejects the call to turn back, he makes an exception, saying that it is only possible if Allah (jj) wills it to happen. This attitude represents his total submission to Allah’s will. Prophets and saints constantly fear Allah’s punishment and are wary about their conditions changing for the worse.

For that reason, Jethro (as) says:

“It is unthinkable for us to leave Allah’s religion and return to yours. Yet, if Allah (jj) has willed for our destruction, we cannot do anything about it. All of our affairs are in His hands. He rewards whom He wills for doing good, and punishes whom He wills for committing evil.”

Our Prophet (saw) would frequently pray:

اللَّهُمَّ مُصَرِّفَ الْقُلُوبِ! صَرِّفْ قُلُوبَنَا عَلَى طَاعَتِكَ

“My Lord who rules over our hearts...Place our hearts in Your service.” (Muslim, Qadar, 17)

Nevertheless, Jethro (as)’s words of wisdom did nothing to disturb the Madyanites. Not only did they continue their denial, they became increasingly unable to stomach those who had believed in Jethro’s (as) call. The believers were condemned, threatened, abused and cornered to turn back from the religion:

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتُمْ شُعَيْبًا إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا لَخَاسِرُونَ

“The arrogant leaders among his people said, ‘If you follow Jethro, then you will certainly be the losers!’” (Al-Araf, 7: 90)

The Terrifying Shriek from the Skies

Jethro (as) could do no more to set his people right. So, he said:

وَيَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ
عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ وَارْتَقِبُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ رَقِيبٌ

“And my people, do whatever you can; indeed, I am, too. You will soon know who the punishment will disgrace, and who is a liar. So keep an eye out! I am watching alongside you!” (Hud, 11: 93)

And then:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَأَخَذَتِ
الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ

“And when Our command came, We saved Jethro and those who believed with him, by mercy from Us. And the shriek seized those who had wronged, and they were knocked out inside their homes.” (Hud, 11: 94)

Elsewhere, the Qur'an describes the scene as:

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ. الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شُعَيْبًا كَأَن لَّمْ
يَعْنُوا فِيهَا الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوا هُمُ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“So the earthquake seized them in their homes, and turned them into corpses fallen prone. Those who denied Jethro, it was as though they had never lived there. Those who denied Jethro; it was they who were the losers.” (Al-Araf, 7: 91-92)

So the Madyanites got their just desert for their debauchery, deceit, injustice and rebellion against the Almighty and His prophet. For tyrants, this punishment was inescapable; and tyrants did not deserve any compassion:

فَتَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّي
وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ فَكَيْفَ آسَىٰ عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ

“And Jethro turned away from them and said, ‘My people! I certainly conveyed to you the messages of my Lord and advised you. So how could I now grieve for a disbelieving people?’ (Al-Araf, 7: 93)

كَأَن لَّمْ يَعْنُوا فِيهَا إِلَّا بُعْدًا لِّمَدِينٍ كَمَا بَعَدَتْ ثَمُودُ

“As if they had never prospered therein. Then, away with Madyan, just like Thamud!” (Hud, 11: 95)

Like Thamud, the Madyanites perished through a loud and petrifying noise. The similarity of their punishment points to the likeness of their immoral characters. Allah, in fact, curses both of them in the same way: that they be distant from divine mercy. Madyan is spoken of in the same breath as Thamud.

The shriek that obliterated Thamud had sounded from the bottom of the earth, while that of Madyan came from the skies. However, the noise hurled eternally them away from Allah's mercy, just the same.

The People of Aykah

Aykah means a dense forest. Geographically, it is the area that stretches from the Red Sea to Madyan. Its inhabitants took their name from the area.

Jethro (as) had also been tasked to guide to people of Aykah, who like the Madyanites, were basking in wealth and prosperity but had strayed from the lighted path of *tawhid*.

Just like those in Madyan, the people of Aykah also denied Jethro (as).

Allaht he Almighty states:

كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“The people of Aykah denied the messenger.” (Al-Shu’ara, 26: 176)

وَإِنْ كَانَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ لظَالِمِينَ

“And the people of Aykah were also wrongdoers.” (Al-Hijr, 15: 78)

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ شُعَيْبٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ. إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ. فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا. وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“Recall when Jethro said to them, ‘Will you not fear Allah? I am to you a trustworthy messenger. So fear Allah and obey me. And I do not ask you for any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds.’” (Al-Shu’ara, 26: 177-180)

The prophets came to their people with two main qualities:

1. They did not ask for any payment or benefits, and stressed that their rewards were only from Allah (jj).
2. And their conduct set the best example for their communities. There was a perfect harmony between their words and action.

The importance of these two qualities is stressed in the story recounted in chapter Yasin. Envoys arrive at a town to invite people to the truth. A local, who scholars have identified as Habib the Carpenter, advises the townsfolk:

“Do these people ask for any money from you? Are they not exemplary in their conduct and character? Well, if that is the case –and it truly is- that means they are on the right path and speak the truth. And nothing is better for you than to follow them!”⁸⁷

Jethro (as) continued advising the people of Aykah:

أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ. وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ. وَلَا تَبْخُسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ. وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِبِلَّةَ الْأُولِينَ

“Give full measure and do not be of those who cause loss. Weigh with an even balance. Do not deprive people of their due and do not commit abuse on earth,

87. See, Ya Sin, 36: 21.

spreading corruption. And fear He who created you and those before.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 181-184)

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ. وَمَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَإِنْ نَظُنُّكَ لَمِنَ
الْكَاذِبِينَ. فَأَسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

“They said, ‘You are simply under a spell! You are but a man like us, and we truly think you are a liar! Make the skies crumble on us, if you are really speaking the truth!’ (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 185-187)

The Destruction from the Skies: Scorching Flames

When the people brashly asked for divine punishment, Jethro (as) just said:

قَالَ رَبِّيَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“My Lord well knows what you do.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 188)

He prayed to the Lord to bring on the destruction they had been asking for. Not long after, hot winds began to blow and blue flies appeared in the land to pester the people. The pagans were left helpless. The weather gradually got warmer to the point it became insufferable. The people of Aykah flocked to riversides, seeking shades beneath the trees. However, it was getting hotter by the day. Then, Jibril (as) brought a cloud and held it hovering right outside the city. The pagans thought the cloud offered a cool shade and rushed underneath it. When every single one of them had gathered under the cloud, they heard a voice:

“People of Aykah! Taste the torment you thought would never come! And ask your idols to help you if they can!”

Suddenly, the cloud began raining down fire. It burned everyone and everything, including the trees, and even stones.

The Qur'an says:

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ. إِنَّ فِي
ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ. وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

“And they denied him, so the punishment of the day of the black cloud seized them. It was the punishment of a terrible day. In that is a sign, but most of them still do not believe. And indeed, your Lord...He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 189-191)

In the end, both the communities to whom Jethro (as) was sent were destroyed: Madyanites with a shriek followed by an earthquake, and the people of Aykah with flames that rained from a cloud they mistook for a shade.

After the Destruction

After the two nations were destroyed, Jethro (as) settled around Madyan. During that time, he married and had two daughters.

Jethro (as) is known as *khatibu'l anbiya*, the orator of prophets. He spoke beautifully and gave convincing answers to the questions he was posed.

He was a prophet who offered lots of prayer and paid great attention to observe the rights of others. He especially showed great rigor in trying to get the merchants among his nation to stop rigging the scales. He meticulously tried to instill in them feelings of justice.

Another quality of Jethro (as) was that he was a sensitive man who shed a lot of tears. At old age, his eyes had become weak and his body frail. There came a point, where he cried so much that he lost his eyesight. Allah returned his vision and asked him, through revelation:

“Why is it that you cry so much? Is it because of your enthusiasm for paradise or fear of hell?”

Jethro (as) replied, “My Lord...You know better than me that my tears are neither for paradise nor hell. It is just that Your love taken hold of my heart and I am worried about whether I will be able to see You! Nothing else would worry me, if I knew for sure that I would!”

The Almighty said, “You have been true to your word...and for that, you will get to see Me. And I have designated Imran’s son Moses, whom I shall speak to, as your servant!”

This is the state of mind of people close to Allah. Contrary to the ignorant, they always hold the love of Allah above all things else and have no interest in public recognition. Because divine love has tightly embraced their hearts, they do not look at either the here or the hereafter, even with the corner of their eyes.

Prophets were sent to open up the eyes of people’s hearts, rid them of forgetfulness, endow them with beautiful morals and teach them how to worship Allah in a way that would deliver them to a perfect reunion with Him. In short, they were sent to call humans to the *daru’s salam*, the land of peace.

People, whose eye of the heart have the potential to open, sincerely desire spiritual training and make an effort to make progress on the path of truth. However, the stubborn and conceited, who have no desire to acquire this kind of certain knowl-

edge and block their ears to the teachings of prophets, leave themselves in a dark and depressing place. They become hardened sinners and pitiable, no different to a traveler who has lost his way, not knowing whether to turn left or right.

Because of the intensity of his compassion, Jethro (as) spent a lifetime trying to save people from misery, doing everything he could in his power and almost burning himself out in the process.

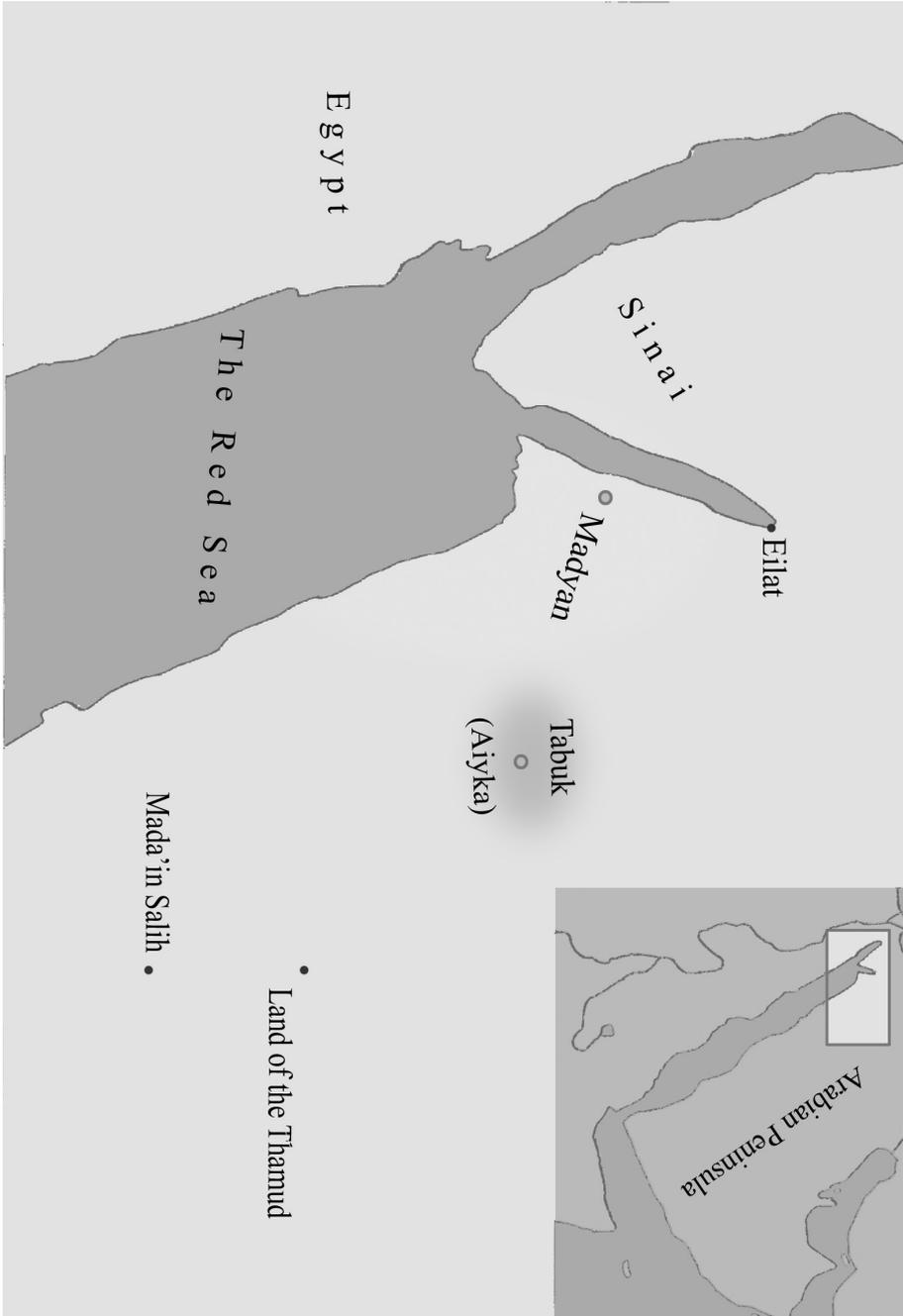


Towards the end of his life on earth, Jethro (as) led the believers on a migration to Mecca, where he spent the rest of his days. He was buried in Hatim at the Kaaba, right beneath the Golden Rainspout.

Peace be upon him...



Prophet Jethro





PROPHET
MOSES

-peace be upon him-

and

PROPHET
AARON

-peace be upon him-

*The prophet of the staff who drowned the pharaoh in
the swirls of the red sea*

MOSES

-peace be upon him-

and

Moses' righteous brother and aide

AARON

-peace be upon him-

Moses (as) is the third of six prophets of the highest rank (*ulu'l azm*). He is a descendent of Jacob (as) and a prophet to the Israelites. The Qur'an mentions him at a total of 136 times more than it mentions any other prophet.

Moses (as) and Aaron (as) were brothers.

Pharaoh Rayyan, who had made Joseph (as) the treasurer of Egypt, was a believer. He was succeeded to the throne by Kabus. Kabus did not believe in the religion of Joseph (as); yet he did not remove him from office either. However, the pharaohs to come after him did not value the Israelites at all.

The Israelites had settled in Egypt after Joseph (as) and stuck to the religion of Joseph (as), Jacob (as) and Abraham (as). However, the Copts, who were the old inhabitants of Egypt, were pagans. They worshipped stars and idols, and looked down on the Israelites. Their pharaohs were cruel. They gradually became worried that the Israelites, who they called the *Sipt*, would increase further in number and end up seizing power.

In time, the Copts felt they had enough. Led by their pharaoh, they started tormenting and abusing the Israelites. For the oppressed minority, life in Egypt quickly became unbearable. They had now entirely lost their social and political rights. They wished to return to Jacob's (as) homeland, Canaan. Nevertheless, the Pharaoh would not let them go. That is because he made the Israelites work in hard labor, such as in the building of the pyramids, and depended on them for labor.

The Israelites were twelve tribes, each a descendant of one of Jacob's (as) sons. The Pharaoh kept them under close surveillance and made them work in tough conditions. Even those unable to work were forced to pay high taxes on a daily basis.

Those unable to pay their taxes by sunset were tied up. The Qur'an recounts the tyranny of the Pharaoh:

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَسْتَضِعُّ طَائِفَةً
مِنْهُمْ يُذَبِّحُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“The Pharaoh certainly boasted in the land and divided its people into factions, oppressing a group among them, slaughtering their newborn sons, while keeping their females alive. He was truly a corrupter.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 4)

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِئِينَ

“And the Pharaoh's family picked Moses up out of the river, knowing little that he would become an enemy and a cause of grief. The Pharaoh, Haman and their soldiers were deliberate sinners.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 8)

It was at such a time of crisis that the Almighty sent Moses (as) as prophet:

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً
وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ. وَنُفَصِّلُ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرِي فِرْعَوْنَ
وَهَامَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ

“And We wanted to do a favor to those who were oppressed in the land; make them leaders and inheritors. And establish them in the land; and through them, realize the fears of the Pharaoh, Haman and their soldiers.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 5-6)

The Pharaoh's Disturbing Dream

One night, the Pharaoh saw a dream where a fire that rose from al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, burned down the houses of the Copts but left those of the Israelites untouched. He had the dream interpreted. He was told:

“A child will hail from the Israelites and destroy your kingdom!”

The Pharaoh then ordered every male newborn from the Israelites killed.

The soldiers would poke the bellies of pregnant women with weapons made from reed to speed up the birth. If the baby happened to be a boy, they would slaughter him on the spot.

It is reported there was also another reason that prompted the Pharaoh to take such a cruel measure:

The Israelites would talk about how a prophet would come from the descendants of Abraham (as) and put an end to the Pharaoh and his reign. This had its origin in the incident that had taken place between Abraham (as), his wife Sarah, and Egypt's pharaoh at the time. The pharaoh had evil intentions towards Sarah but the Almighty protected her. The Israelites interpreted that event as a sign that a time would come when one of Abraham's (as) great grandsons would save them from tyranny. The story became famous among the Israelites. They told it to lift each other's spirits and insist that better days were just around the corner. But the Copts outside the palace, as well as inside, also got word of it; and the Pharaoh retaliated by ordering every newborn Israelite male dead. He hoped that he would be able to kill the boy before he ever got the chance to destroy him. However, this was never going to change Allah's fate.

It was around this time that Imran's son Moses (as) was born. One of the midwives, who was also a relative of Moses (as), was startled upon noticing a bright light on the baby's forehead.

Shortly after the birth, the midwives stepped outside of the house to look out, only to see that the Pharaoh's soldiers were already on their way. They ran back inside the house; and out of panic, Moses' (as) mother hid the baby inside a burning oven. When the soldiers left, she came to herself and anxiously rushed to the oven, only to see that once she had opened the lid. Her baby was looking back at her unharmed by the fire, just like his forefather Abraham (as). She quickly picked him up, hugged him and thanked Allah for what had happened. She then received an inspiration telling her to breastfeed her baby and, when the danger reappeared, to leave him on the Nile. She was told that despite appearances, she would reunite with her son, who would grow up to be a prophet. The Qur'an recounts:

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

“And We inspired to the mother of Moses, ‘Feed him, but when you fear for him, cast him into the river. Do not fear or grieve! We will return him to you and will make him a messenger.’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 7)

Immediately after, she rushed to a carpenter and asked him to quickly make a trunk. She then placed Moses (as) in the trunk and cast him in the Nile.

The carpenter got a feeling of what was going on. He rushed to inform the palace. However, when he got there, he became tongue-tied and could not speak. So, the officials showed him the door.

In the meantime, the trunk had drifted on the Nile all the way to the palace. The female servants picked it up and took it to Asiya.

At the Pharaoh's Palace

Asiya was the Pharaoh's wife and a descendant of Rayyan, the ruler at the time of Joseph (as). The moment she saw Moses (as), she felt a spark in her heart. The baby was beautiful. She held him tight and hugged him, before taking him to her husband. She said:

“Let's adopt this child as our own! When he grows up, he will help and protect us. Please, spare this baby. He is a gift on our doorstep!” She eventually convinced the Pharaoh.

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرْتُ عَيْنٍ لِي وَلَكَ لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ عَسَى
أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“And the Pharaoh's wife said, ‘He will be the apple of our eyes. Do not kill him! He may benefit us, or we may adopt him as a son.’

But they had no idea.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 9)

Soon, they set out to find a wet nurse to breastfeed the baby. They found a few women but the baby would not drink any of their milk. As they thought about what to do, they received some advice from Moses' (as) sister, Maryam. She happened to be at the palace because:

وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهِ فَبَصُرَتْ بِهِ عَنْ جُنْبٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ.
وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى
أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ نَاصِحُونَ

“And Moses' mother told his sister to, ‘Follow him.’

So she watched him from a distance, without the people in the place becoming aware. And after We blocked him off from all the wet nurses, she said:

‘Should I direct you to a household that will take care of feeding him, while you take care of his upbringing?’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 11-12)

They had no other choice but to give Maryam's solution a try:

فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ أَنَّ
وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“So We returned him to his mother that she might be content and not grieve...and that she would know that the promise of Allah is true. But most people do not know.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 13)

However, not wanting to raise any suspicion, Moses’ (as) mother did not immediately accept the offer. Besides, she knew that she would get to breastfeed her son, as Allah had already willed it to happen.

“I have a baby, Aaron”,⁸⁸ she said. “And I need to bring him along. If you accept me as I am then I can breastfeed the baby. Otherwise, I cannot!”

That way, they did not realize the woman was Moses’ (as) mother. They quickly hired her.

In adopting Moses (as), the Pharaoh and his wife must have thought that by raising him as their own, he would be loyal to them. However, two factors play a major role in a person’s upbringing: inherited traits (*warasah*) and education. Man comes under the influence of one or the other; or sometimes both. This is what the Qur’an subtly points to where it says, the Pharaoh and his wife ‘had no idea how things would turn out’.

Reports suggest that in trying find the child who would grow up to destroy his dominion, the Pharaoh ended up slaying 980,000 babies. However, the Almighty would have the Pharaoh raise his archenemy in his own palace, and take away his judgment and power to murder the child who would end up smashing his throne with the force of the truth. That is because prophets are under Allah’s special training and protection.

The Prophet (saw) has in fact said:

“My Lord has trained me, and how beautifully has He trained me.” (Al-Suyuti, *al-Jami’ al-Saghir*, I, 12)

So, the mother began breastfeeding Moses (as) in the Pharaoh’s palace. However, the vizier, Haman became suspicious, and interrogated her.

“Are you this child’s mother?” he asked. “He does not feed from anyone else but you!”

She became a little nervous but calmly replied, “For some reason, babies love me. I love them, too.”

88. Because the Pharaoh used the Israelites as slaves and depended on them for heavy labor, he would kill the newborn males one year and spare them in the next. It was during a year of amnesty that Aaron (as) was born.

For tending to her own child, Moses' (as) mother was not only paid, but she also received lavish gifts in the process, including gold. This was a grace from Allah, who states:

إِنْ كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِي بِهِ لَوْلَا أَنْ رَبَطْنَا عَلَى قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“And the heart of Moses’ mother became empty. She came very close to reveal the secret, had We not have bound her heart to stay firm.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 10)



When Asiya missed Moses (as) and felt like seeing him, she would have his mother bring him to her room, where she would greet them with various gifts. One day, Moses (was) was taken to the Pharaoh's room. The Pharaoh took him in his arms. However, Moses (as) forcefully pulled his beard, tore out a strand of hair and gave him a slap. It is also said that he struck the Pharaoh with the whip he took off his hand.

The Pharaoh was furious.

“This is the enemy I have been searching for!” he said. He ordered Moses (as) killed.

“Please, no”, Asiya pleaded. “He is still a baby. He cannot tell right from wrong.”

However, the Pharaoh was adamant. Asiya then said, “At least test him. Put in front of him a plate filled with rubies and diamonds, and another plate with ember. If he reaches for the jewels, it will show that he is clever and can tell right from wrong!”

The Pharaoh accepted. They brought the two plates to Moses (as). Just as he was about to reach for the jewels, Jibril (as) intervened and pushed his hand away towards the ember. So, he grabbed a piece of ember and took it to his mouth. He burnt his tongue and subsequently developed a lisp, which would remain with him until the prayer he made on Mount Sinai.

“Fair enough”, said the Pharaoh. “He is still a child”. He forgave Moses (as) and kept him at the palace.

In his *Fusus al-Hikam*, Muhyiddin ibn Arabi writes:

“Just to kill Moses (as), the Pharaoh ended up murdering 980,000 innocent souls. In reality, these babies were murdered to reinforce Moses (as) in his life and strengthen his spirituality. Even if the Pharaoh and his family were not aware of Moses (as), the Almighty was. Surely, the lives that had been taken away from each would belong to Moses (as). For he was the purpose.”



Allah endeared Moses (as) to everyone around him:

وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَى عَيْنِي

“And I bestowed upon you love from Me that you would be brought up under My eye.” (Ta Ha, 20: 39)

As a result of this divine grace, anyone who saw Moses (as) would instantly be drawn to him. Eventually, he was also made a prophet:

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَاسْتَوَى آتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And when he attained full strength and maturity, We bestowed upon him judgement and knowledge. And that is how do We reward those who do good.”

(Al-Qasas, 28: 14)

The word أَشُدَّهُ implies that Moses (as) reached both physical and spiritual maturity. Moreover, most scholars suggest this may have been at the age of forty. At that age, the Almighty gave him wisdom and knowledge. Wisdom, which may also refer to *hikmah*, or spiritual wisdom, has also been explained as prophethood.

From that point on, Moses (as) began telling people that the Pharaoh's religion was corrupt and false.

The Death of the Copt

The Pharaoh had a baker, who was a Copt man by the name of Fatun. One night, he had a dispute with an Israelite named Samiri and started beating him up. Samiri called out to Moses (as) for help. So, he stepped in to separate them. However, things escalated. Moses (as) first pushed away the Copt and then punched him. Before he knew it, the Copt was lying on the ground, dead.

Moses (as) was deeply saddened. He had no intention of killing Fatun. He just wanted to help Samiri. With great distress, he turned to Allah to ask forgiveness:

The Qur'an recounts the incident:

وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَى حِينٍ غَفْلَةٍ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يُتْتَلَانِ هَذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَاسْتَعَاثَ الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ فَوَكَزَهُ مُوسَى فَقَضَى عَلَيْهِ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُضِلٌّ مُبِينٌ

“And he entered the city at a time of quiet and saw two men fighting: one from his faction and one from among his enemies. And the one from his faction called out to him for help. So, Moses struck the enemy and killed him.

Moses said, ‘This is from the work of Satan. He is a clear and misleading enemy.’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 15)

Moses (as) had already drawn the anger of Copts close to the Pharaoh for communicating *tawhid* and calling others to the truth everywhere he went. That is why he entered the city at a time of night when people had left the streets and gone home. When Moses (as) says ‘this is the work of Satan’, it has been suggested he may have been referring to the deceased Copt, who really deserved to die because of the crimes he had previously committed. With that said, it was not for Moses (as) to execute him; thus, in making that remark, he may have been referring to his own action. Yet, he did not, in any way, punch the man with an intent to kill. However, now, he was facing a situation he could not have anticipated. So, he prayed:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغَفَرَ لَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ.
قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ

“He said, ‘My Lord, I have wronged myself, so forgive me!’ And He forgave him, for He is truly the Forgiving, the Merciful. He said, ‘My Lord, for the favor You bestowed upon me, I will never assist criminals again.’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 16-17)

In the meantime, the Copts had filed a complaint to the palace and a manhunt had begun. The Pharaoh called for witnesses. However, nobody came forward. The Pharaoh then ordered a search outside of the city, in case the killer may have fled.

The next day, Moses (as) saw the same Israelite he had helped the night before; this time fighting another Copt. The man, again, asked for his help. Nevertheless, Moses (as) said:

“It is because of you that I got myself into this!”

After hearing those words, the Copt scooted to the palace and told the Pharaoh:

“The man who killed your baker is Moses!”

There and then, the Pharaoh sentenced Moses (as) to death.⁸⁹ Among those who had accepted Moses’ (as) call to the truth was the Pharaoh’s cousin. He immediately scuttled out of the hall to tell him the news.

The Qur’an sheds light on Moses’ (as) mindset and what unfolded following the death of the Copt:

89. Fakhruddin Razi says that Moses (as) should not have been sentenced to death, as he killed the Copt unintentionally.

فَأَصْبَحَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي اسْتَنْصَرَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِخُهُ
 قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى إِنَّكَ لَغَوِيٌّ مُبِينٌ. فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْطِشَ بِالَّذِي هُوَ عَدُوٌّ
 لَهُمَا قَالَ يَا مُوسَى أَتُرِيدُ أَنْ تَقْتُلَنِي كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا بِالْأَمْسِ إِنْ تُرِيدُ إِلَّا
 أَنْ تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ.

“And he spent the night fearful and wary of being exposed, when suddenly the one who sought his help the previous day cried out to him once again.

Moses said to him, ‘You sure are a trouble maker!’

And when he wanted to strike the one who was an enemy to both of them, the man said, ‘Do you want to kill me, Moses, like the person you killed yesterday? It seems you only want to be a bully and not a peacemaker!’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 18-19)

In the meantime:

وَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَقْصَى الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَا مُوسَى إِنَّ الْمَلَأَ
 يَأْتَمِرُونَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوكَ فَاخْرُجْ إِنِّي لَكَ مِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ. فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا
 خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

“A man came running from the far end of the city.

He said, ‘Moses! The leaders are talking to have you killed. Leave now! I only want the best for you!’

So he left the city, fearful and wary. He said, ‘My Lord, save me from the wrongdoers!’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 20-21)

In doing so, Moses (as) also showed what true *tawakkul*, or reliance, is. It is to discuss a matter, decide on it, take the necessary precautions and then leave the rest to Allah. That is what reliance is all about.

Bound for Madyan

Without wasting a minute, Moses (as) took off. However, he had never stepped outside of the city before and really did not know where to go. He had not even taken any food with him. He got a sense of direction, only when the Almighty sent Jibril (as) to show him the way. He was heading to Madyan, which would take eight days.

وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَاءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسَى رَبِّي أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

“And when he directed himself toward Madyan, he said, ‘Perhaps my Lord will guide me to the sound way.’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 22)

It is narrated Moses (as) was related to the people in Madyan, as they both had descended from Abraham (as). Madyan was, in fact, the name of one of Abraham’s (as) sons. The area was outside the borders of the Pharaoh’s dominion.

Moses (as) finally reached Madyan, just as the locals were taking their flocks of sheep out of the city’s walls to a well. Not long after, the well was surrounded by shepherds and their sheep. But what struck Moses’ (as) attention were two young ladies, waiting with their sheep in the distance and not mixing with the others.

He walked up to them and asked, “Why are you not watering your sheep?”

“We cannot until the shepherds leave”, they said.

“Don’t you have anyone to do it for you?” asked Moses (as).

“We have an old and frail father”, they replied. “So, he relies on us to graze and water the sheep. However, we do not want to mix with men. So, we wait until they all leave. But by the time we get to the well, there is often no water left!”

The Qur’an recounts:

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةً مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُونَ وَوَجَدَ
مِنْ دُونِهِمُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي
حَتَّى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاءُ وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ

“When he came to the well of Madyan, he saw a crowd of people watering their flocks. And aside from them were two women driving their flocks back.

He said, ‘What is the matter?’

They said, ‘We do not water the sheep until the shepherds scatter. And our father is an old man.’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 23)

They were Safurah and Sufayra, the daughters of Jethro (as).

Despite not having eaten for eight days, Moses (as) gathered all his strength to pull water out of the well for their sheep. After the job was done, the women thanked him and left.

فَسَقَى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ

“So he watered their flocks for them. He then retired to the shade and said, ‘My Lord, I am truly in need of whatever good You would send down to me.’”

(Al-Qasas, 28: 24)

Moses (as) had not eaten anything for days. He was starving. With those words, he prayed Allah to give him something to quell his hunger.

Some scholars have also interpreted those words as, “I am in need because of what You have given me!” Here, Moses (as) was pointing to the fact that he had fallen poor and needy because of the great mission Allah had entrusted him with. Previously, he was living in wealth and abundance at the Pharaoh’s palace. Yet, these were not words of complaint. Moses (as) was simply thanking the Lord for the blessing but, at the same time, asking Him to alleviate his hunger.

Jethro (as) was surprised to see his daughters return earlier than usual. They explained that a good man, who they had not seen in the region before, had helped them.

An Invitation from Jethro (as)

Without further ado, Jethro (as) summoned the stranger and asked him who he was.

“I am Moses, the son of Imran, from the line of Jacob”, he said before going on to tell all that he had gone through.

“Do not fear!”, Jethro (as) comforted him. “The Pharaoh has no say in this land!”

In the words of the Qur’an:

فَجَاءَتْهُ إِحْدَاهُمَا تَمْشِي عَلَى اسْتِحْيَاءٍ قَالَتْ إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ
لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ
قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

“Then one of the two girls shyly approached Moses. She said, ‘My father has invited you so he can reward you for watering our sheep.’”

So, Moses went to him. And when he told him the story, the man said, ‘Do no fear! You are now safe from the wrongdoers!’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 25)

Jethro (as) quickly had a meal prepared. However, despite his enormous hunger, Moses (as) was apprehensive about eating. Jethro (as) asked him why.

“I was taught not to trade even the smallest reward of the afterlife for even the biggest award here. I helped you only for the sake of Allah, not for this food.”

Jethro (as) was delighted with the answer.

“We offer you dinner not in return for helping us, but for being a guest at our home. So, come on...do not let it get cold!” he said.

Moses (as) had his meal. Exhausted, he retreated for some rest.

It was then that Safurah made a proposal:

قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ

“One of the girls said, ‘Hire him, father. You will not find a worker abler and more trustworthy!’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 26)

She added, “This man has all those attributes. He did not look at our faces even for once. He followed us from a fair distance away. We can depend on him!”

This also beautifully illustrates the essential qualities a person must have in order to be given a task:

1. Competence (*liyakah*): To have the skills and strength needed to perform the job.
2. Trustworthiness (*amanah*): To be dependable and counted upon.



The book *Arais-i Majalis* writes that:

“The most prudent women are two. Both of them showed foresight in correctly detecting the traits of Moses (as).

One is the Pharaoh’s wife, Asiya. When the Nile carried Moses (as) downstream to the palace, she picked him up from the trunk and pleaded to her husband to spare him, saying “...he will be light of our eyes!”

The other is Jethro’s (as) daughter, who advised him to hire Moses (as), remarking “...we will not find a better, more reliable person for the job!”

Foresight or *firasah* is an accurate intuition and insight that righteous believers have. It points towards intelligence, wit and perception, and is a spiritual type of comprehension that takes place in the heart.

Uthman (ra) once told a man to, “Veil your eyes from looking at obscenities!”

The startled man asked, “How did you know I have?”

“Have you not heard the words of the Messenger (saw)?” said Uthman (ra), before adding:

“Beware the foresight of the believer...for he looks with the light of Allah.”
(Al-Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 15)

Again, Abu Hanifah once advised a young man taking ablution to “...stop making so and so mistakes!”

The man was taken aback and asked him how he could possibly know, to which Abu Hanifah responded:

“From the water dripping off your face, arms and feet!”

Khadijah (rha), Aisha (rha) and Fatimah (rha) were also women with piercing foresight.

Khadijah (rha) was not only the first person to believe in the Prophet (saw), she also spent her entire wealth and health in the way of the call, at a time when things were not looking so optimistic. Aisha (rha) was gifted with an intellectual ability to perfectly understand the Prophet (saw), as well as a deep passion with which she was able to embody his morals for others to follow. Fatimah (rha) was a reflection of her father’s mercy, compassion and piety. And while all three women shared similar qualities, they also had unique ones that made them stand out.

Foresight requires eating only what is permissible and clean, and making an effort to develop the heart.

Wasiti (ra) says:

“Foresight is the ray of light that glimmers in the heart. It is the wisdom that takes hold in there. And this wisdom (marifah) unlocks all the secrets of the unseen.”

In the *Mathnawi*, Rumi expands on the secret to acquiring *marifah*:

“While reason is equipped for success in matters related to the world, it is by nature not good enough to unravel the truth and divine mysteries, and reach the knowledge of Allah. This is a higher form of travel that requires a vehicle. That vehicle is the love and ecstasy in the heart. And it begins to take shape once reason is sacrificed for Muhammed!”

A young man from out of town had come to listen to Abdulkhaliq Ghujdawani. And at the end, he asked:

“What is the meaning of, *‘Beware the foresight of the believer...for he looks with the light of Allah?’*”

The saint replied, “I will tell you only if you remove the clergy belt from your waist, which you have hidden beneath your clothes!”

The young man renounced his Christian faith on the spot and became Muslim.

Abdulkhaliq Ghujdawani then turned to his disciples and remarked:

“And let us remove the clergy belts from our hearts”, referring to damaging traits such as vanity, pride, miserliness and jealousy.

Marriage to Safurah

Jethro (as) loved the way in which Moses (as) conducted himself. He wanted him to stay a lot longer. After some thinking, he came up with a way. He offered Moses (as) the hand of his daughter in marriage. When Moses (as) asked how, Jethro (as) said it would be in return for tending to his sheep for eight years; and added that ten years would be preferable. His intention was to make Moses (as) stay for as long as possible. The Qur’an recounts their exchange:

قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُنْكَحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هَاتَيْنِ عَلَيَّ أَنْ تَأْجُرَنِي
ثَمَانِي حِجَجٍ فَإِنْ أَتَمَمْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَشُقَّ
عَلَيْكَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“He said, ‘I wish to wed you one of my two daughters, on the condition that you serve me for eight years. But if will be a favor from you, if you complete it to ten. And I do not wish to put you in difficulty. If Allah wills, you will find that I am an honest man.’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 27)

قَالَ ذَلِكَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ أَيَّمَا الْأَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَانَ
عَلَيَّ وَاللَّهُ عَلَيَّ مَا نَقُولُ وَكَيْلٌ

“Moses said, ‘That is a deal between me and you. I am free to complete whichever of the two terms. And Allah is witness to what we say.’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 28)

Here, the Qur’an draws attention to something we frequently come across in our social lives. Even two prophets, the most trustable among all humans, speak candidly about every detail of the verbal contract before committing to it. When they reach an agreement, they placed their trust in Allah, who they hold as witness to the deal.

As they had agreed on, Moses (as) began working for Jethro (as) as a shepherd.

It is said that Moses (as) fed the sheep well and treated them so kindly that he would not even poke them with his stick. In a sense, he would continue shepherding after Allah declared him a prophet. The skills he gained in the pastures of Madyan would allow him to keep an eye over the Israelites and protect them from harm.

A person who does not treat Allah's creatures like a friend cannot become a friend to Allah. Whosoever respects the dignity of the created and shows them mercy, will be able to match it with those of the highest rank.

Every prophet has more or less spent time working as a shepherd. It was a way for the Almighty to give them a sense of duty, responsibility and a deeper compassion, which are vital in managing people and shouldering the burden of prophethood.

The Almighty inspired Moses (as) to strike his staff on the ground whenever he felt the need to water the sheep. A spring would burst forth and Moses (as) would not need to wander around the meadows looking for water.

Years had gone by, and Moses (as) had now served his eight-year term. Jethro (as) gave all the sheep to his daughter and son-in-law.

However, Moses (as) completed the term to ten years. Until then, only a handful of sheep had given birth to spotted lambs, which were sought after and fetched a higher price. But, on the tenth year, all the ewes gave birth to twins, and every single one of them were spotted.

Jethro (as) remarked:

“This is Allah's gift to the family of Moses!”

The Staff of Moses (as)

Moses (as) carried a staff to protect his sheep from predators. The staff had a handle on one end, while the other end was pointed and sharp.

There are a number of reports about where the staff had come from. One suggests that it originally belonged to Adam (as) and had been passed on to Jethro (as), who gave it Moses (as) to help him graze the sheep.

They were in an area with grasslands to the right and mountains to the left. Wild animals could have struck from anywhere, especially from the mountain side. For that reason, Moses (as) always carried the staff around. Through it, he witnessed many actions of Allah. It was as if they were signs of the greater miracles to appear through the staff.

Return to Egypt through the Valley of Tuwa

Ten years had now passed; and with the permission of Jethro (as), Moses (as) decided to return with his wife Safurah to Egypt. They left Madyan with their sheep. It was winter. Moses (as) wanted to go back to Egypt, so that with the help of his brother Aaron (as), he could take the Israelites out of the land of oppression.

On the way, they were caught under heavy rain. It was a very dark night. They took refuge in a cave in Mount Tur. Safurah was pregnant and about to give birth. On this cold and dark night, they desperately needed to light a fire to keep warm. However, the ground was wet; and try as he may, Moses (as) could not get a fire going. Then, all of a sudden, he saw a bright light in the distance. He told his wife to remain where she was, until he returned with some ember from that burning fire. However, it was not what Moses (as) thought it was.

The Qur'an says:

فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ آنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ
نَارًا قَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ
أَوْ جَذْوَةٍ مِنَ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ

“And when Moses had completed the term and was traveling with his family, he sensed a fire burning from the direction of the mount.

He said to his family, ‘Stay here. I see a fire. I can perhaps come back with some information or burning wood so you may warm yourselves.’ (Al-Qasas, 28: 29)

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى . إِذْ رَأَىٰ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي
آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدٍ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى

“And has the story of Moses reached you? When he saw a fire and said to his family, ‘Stay here! I see a fire! Perhaps I can bring you a torch or find out about a way out.’ (Ta Ha, 20: 9-10)

Moses (as) walked towards the burning fire. However, as he got closer, he noticed pillar of light glimmering on a green tree.

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِي الْأَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ
مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ أَنْ يَا مُوسَى إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“But when he got to it, he was called out to from the tree on a blessed spot to the right of the valley:

‘Listen up Moses. I am Allah, the Lord of the worlds!’ (Al-Qasas, 28: 30)

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَا مُوسَى . إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ
طَوًى . وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى . إِنَّنِي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي. إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَىٰ. فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَزْدَىٰ

“And when he came to it, he was called out:

‘Moses! I am indeed your Lord, so remove your two sandals! You are now in the sacred valley of Tuwa. And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed. Certainly, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me. So worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance. The hour is coming. And I have almost concealed the time, so that every soul may be recompensed for what it strives for. So, do not let anyone turn you away from he who does not believe in it and follows his desire. If you do so, you will perish!’ (Ta Ha, 20: 11-16)

Scholars of the Qur’an have explained the command, ‘...remove your two sandals!’ a number of ways, including some *ishari*⁹⁰ or esoteric interpretations. These are detailed in Qushayri’s *Lataifu’l Qur’an* and Bursevi’s *Ruhu’l Beyan*; and they may be summarized as:

“The two sandals represent the here and the hereafter. So, empty your heart of engagement in both this world and the world to come. Isolate yourself from everything apart from Allah (jj), and try to annihilate yourself in His knowledge (*marifah*)⁹¹, so you can gaze at and witness the divine truths (*mushahadah*)!”

The human mind has its boundaries. Its limitations make it impossible for the mind to properly grasp the divine glory and its mysteries. Therefore, what the mind must ultimately do, is surrender.

Rumi offers a metaphor to illustrate the limits of reason:

“The mind of a person who is ill, can only do so much as to work out the need to see a doctor. But at the clinic, the mind must surrender to the doctor’s advices. And reaching divine wisdom is possible only to the degree that the mind submits.”

In other words, ‘...remove your two sandals’ can mean,

“Slip away from your nature and ego! Stop thinking about yourself and things that have to do with yourself. Just come!

90. This is to interpret the Qur’an in light of the meanings hidden under its surface. But to be considered valid, an *ishari* interpretation needs to comply with three conditions:

- a) It must not clash with the external meaning,
- b) The words must provide basis for the meaning extracted, and,
- c) It must be supported by the Qur’an and Sunnah.

91. *Marifah* is to know the Lord with love through the heart.

Quit reflecting on the proofs...for they lose all meaning, once your heart sees the truth!”

It was for this reason that after spiritually reuniting with the Lord, Sheikh Shibli was set free from the innuendos of the words written in books. As by now, he was swimming deep in the ocean of divine wisdom, where he was able to see the mysteries unravel right before his eyes.



At the Valley of Tuwa, the Almighty ordered Moses (as) to remove his sandals. He had now stepped foot in the presence of Allah and it was improper to do so with his shoes on. It was also more modest and proper to walk there barefoot.

Rumi says:

“I asked my mind, ‘What is faith?’. It leaned over and whispered to my heart, ‘Faith is all but propriety (adab).’”

It was for that reason that exceptional figures like Bishr-i Khafi always walked barefoot. It was also a custom of the righteous to remove their shoes when circumambulating the Kaaba.

Moses (as) was ordered to remove his sandals, also for his feet to be charged by the spiritual energy that sacred place generated.

However, it is noteworthy that during the night of *Miraj*, the Almighty told the Prophet (saw) to:

“Keep your shoes on as you walk on the canopy of the Throne (*arsh*). That way, it will be honored with the dust of your shoes and its light will reunite with yours.”

(Bursevi, *Ruhu'l Beyan*, V, 370)

The Prophethood that Came with Two Miracles

After Moses (as) was ordered to remove his shoes, he was also told to throw his staff to the ground. When he did, it turned into a snake. Moses (as) was frightened. However, he was told not to fear as he was in a safe area.

The Qur'an says:

وَأَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا
وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ يَا مُوسَى أَقْبِلْ وَلَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْأَمِينِينَ

“And he was told, ‘Throw down your staff!’

But when he saw it writhing like a snake, he turned in flight and did not return.

Allah said, ‘Approach it, Moses, and do not fear! You are safe!’ (Al-Qasas, 28: 31)

Moses’ (as) staff was first a wisdom (*hikmah*). Then, it became a force (*qudrah*) to carry his food when he could not, and to lean on, or even ride, when he was tired. He kept it close at hand to ward off the threats that may come, when sitting or asleep. He used it to shake the branches of trees with the most exquisite fruits. When he sat in the sun, it provided him the coolest shade. The Almighty had shown Moses (as) His force in the staff. It was through the staff, that the Almighty reinforced Moses. (Abdulqadir Jilani, *al-Fath al-Rabbani*, p. 192)

Once the Almighty declared Moses (as) a prophet and entrusted him with certain duties, He asked:

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَى

“And what is that in your right hand, Moses?” (Ta Ha, 20: 17)

Moses (as) replied:

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ أَتَوَكَّأُ عَلَيْهَا وَأَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلَى غَنَمِي وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرَى

“It is my staff. I lean on it, and bring down leaves for my sheep. I also have other uses for it.” (Ta Ha, 20: 18)

The Almighty then ordered:

قَالَ أَلْقَهَا يَا مُوسَى

“Throw it down, Moses!” (Ta Ha, 20: 19)

Moses (as) immediately chucked the staff out of his hand.

فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى

“So he threw it down, and it became a swift moving snake.” (Ta Ha, 20: 20)

He ran off in fear, until he was told to:

قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَى

“Seize it and do not fear! We will return it to its former state.” (Ta Ha, 20: 21)

Abdulqadir Jilani sheds light on this passage:

“One purpose of the events detailed in these verses, was to familiarize Moses (as) with the might of Allah, so that the Pharaoh’s kingdom would appear small and weak in his eyes.

Another purpose was to teach Moses (as) how to wage war on the Pharaoh and his cohorts. Allah the Almighty prepared him for war by making him witness an extraordinary sequence of events. Prior to that, Moses was shy and reclusive. The Almighty had now expanded his heart, made him a prophet and gave him knowledge and wisdom.”

Some interpreters of the Qur’an say the command for Moses (as) to throw his staff, had more to do with a spiritual message. When Moses (as) was asked about the staff, he cited the uses it had in dealing with worldly tasks. He said it was good simply for making his life easier. But these were all things related to preserving the self. By turning the staff into a snake, Allah showed Moses (as) the true nature of the self. Moses (as) felt terrified, and tried to get away from it as quick as he could. So, in a sense, Moses (as) was told:

“This snake, Moses, is the very nature of being attached to things other than Allah. And when it shows its true face, the person feels frightened and runs away from it.”

Another esoteric meaning behind the command to ‘throw your staff’ is:

“You have now embodied the attribute of *tawhid*. From now on, it just cannot be right for you to rely on and seek help from a mortal being. How could you say that you do such and such things with the staff and reap other benefits from it? The first step on the path of *tawhid* is to abandon causes. In other words, it is to rely on and submit to Allah alone. So, quit all kinds of wishes and requests!”

Abraham (as) was able to slip away from worldly relations by denying help from all mortals, even angels. Instead, he dived into the ocean of submission and reliance on Allah. That ocean’s water put out the fire that was meant to consume him.

In *Tawilat-i Najmiyya*, it is in fact stated:

“A person who has heard Allah’s call and seen the light of His Beauty, abandons everything he had previously leaned on. He now depends on nothing but Allah’s grace and generosity. He slips away from the desires of the ego.”



The Prophet (saw) has said:

“The scholars of my nation are the like the prophets of the Israelites.” (AjJuni, *Kashfu’l Khafa*, II, 64/1744)

This comparison is to praise the value of true Muslim scholars.

Sheikh Abu'l Hasan Shazali recounts a lucid dream he saw:

“The Prophet (saw) was on a throne, with the rest of the prophets seated on the ground around him. Standing around them, were righteous scholars. I stood and watched them, and listened in as they began to talk.

At one stage, Moses (as) asked our Prophet (saw):

‘Messenger of Allah! You once said that the scholars of your people are like the prophets of Israel. Can you now show me one of them?’

‘One of them is over there,’ said the Prophet (saw), pointing to Ghazzali.

Moses (as) then posed Ghazzali a question to which he was given ten answers. Moses (as) complained that it was unwarranted, as he had only asked one question but received ten answers.

‘With all due respect,’ said Ghazzali, ‘the same complaint could also be made about you. The Almighty had asked you ‘What are you holding in your right hand?’ You went on to list a number of attributes of the staff, when all you should have said was, ‘This, my Lord, is my staff.’”

Shazali adds:

“As I was thinking about how majestic the Prophet (saw) looked on a throne with the rest of the messengers sitting on the floor around him, someone gave me real powerful kick. I looked, and it was the custodian of the al-Aqsa Mosque; the man who lights up the mosque’s candles each night. He said:

‘Why are you so shocked, when everything has been created from Muhammed’s (saw) Light?’ When I heard that, I fainted. I regained consciousness only after they had all prayed in congregation. I immediately went about searching for the custodian. But to this day, I have not been able to find him.” (Raghib al-Isfahani, *al-Muhadarat*)



As a second miracle, Moses (as) was told to put his hand inside his garment. When he did, his hand came out pure white, like a bright sun, free of all defects and disease. It was virtually like a projector. He was startled. He was then told:

“If you or others should become fearful of the sight of your hand, place it back inside your garment and it will return to its former appearance!”

This miracle known as *yad-i bayda*, or white hand, is recounted in the Qur’an as follows:

وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجَ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ
آيَةً أُخْرَى. لِنُرِيكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى

“And draw in your hand to your side. It will come out white without disease. That is another sign, so that We may show you Our greater signs to come.” (Ta Ha, 20: 22-23)

أَسْلُوكَ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجَ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ وَاضْمُمْ إِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ
الرَّهْبِ فَذَانِكَ بُرْهَانَانِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ

“Insert your hand into the opening of your garment. It will come out white, without disease. And redraw your arm close to you to quell any fear. Those are two proofs from your Lord to the Pharaoh and his establishment. For, they have been a defiantly disobedient lot.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 32)

With two major miracles, the Almighty designated Moses (as) a prophet and ordered him to convey the religion. The first person he was to deliver the message to, was the Pharaoh:

أَذْهَبْ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى

“Go to the Pharaoh. He has surely transgressed!” (Ta Ha, 20: 24)

However, Moses (as) lamented:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ

“He said, ‘My Lord, I killed someone from among them.’⁹² And I fear they will kill me!” (Al-Qasas, 28: 33)

He asked Allah to appoint his brother Aaron (as) as an aide:

وَأَخِي هَارُونُ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسَلْهُ مَعِيَ
رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَدِّبُونَ

“And my brother Aaron is more eloquent than me. So send him with me as support and reinforcement. I really fear that they will deny me.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 34)

92. As mentioned before, Moses (as) struck the Copt not to kill him but only to fend him off. It just so happened that as a result of God's will, the Copt lost his life.

قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا فَلَا
يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْتُمْ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْغَالِبُونَ

“Allah said, ‘We will strengthen your arm through your brother and grant you both supremacy, so they will not be able to touch you. And through Our signs, you and those who follow you will prevail!’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 35)

It has been narrated that when the Almighty commanded Moses (as) to go and talk sense into the Pharaoh, Moses (as) thought about his wife and sheep and how he had no one to leave them with. So he asked the Lord:

“Who will take care of my family and livestock?”

The Almighty then reminded him that He is the Best Protector, declaring:

“Moses! Now that you have found Me, what more could you ask for? Just worry about executing my command! If I wish, I can make wolves herd your sheep and angels keep guard over your family. Why are you concerned, Moses? Who saved you when your mother cast you in the river? And who reunited you with her soon after? Remember when you accidentally killed someone and the Pharaoh had his men search for you in every hideout, to catch and kill you! Who protected you then?”

Moses (as) was quietly listening, while responding to each question with the words, “You, my Lord, You!” (Ahmad al-Rufai, *Halatu Ahl al-Haqiqati Maa’ Allah*, p. 337)



Moses (as) was now back in Egypt. He was wary and nervous about the Pharaoh’s soldiers. The Almighty revealed, “You and your brother are a two-man army. You cannot appear weak or feel inferior!”

Moses (as) felt that a world of responsibility was now resting on his shoulders. So, he prayed:

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي . وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي . وَاخْلُ عَقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي .
يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي . وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِنْ أَهْلِي . هَارُونَ أَخِي . اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي .
وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي . كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا . وَنَذُكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا . إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ
بِنَا بَصِيرًا . قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَى

“My Lord! Expand my chest. Ease for me my task. And untie the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech. And appoint for me a minister from my family. Aaron, my brother. Increase my strength through him. And let

him share my task, that we may praise and remember You much. You indeed watch over us, always.’

Allah said, ‘Your wishes, Moses, have been granted!’ (Ta Ha, 20: 25-36)

Allah offered solace by assuring Moses (as) he would be protected, just as he had been protected before:

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى. إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَى.
أَنْ أَقْذِفِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَاقْذِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّي
وَعَدُوٌّ لَهُ وَالْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةٌ مِنِّي وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي

“And We had already done you a favor another time. When We inspired your mother to ‘Place him in the trunk and cast it into the river. The river will throw it onto the bank. There, he will be taken by an enemy to Me and an enemy to him.’

And I bestowed upon you love from Me that you would be brought up under My eye.” (Ta Ha, 20: 37-39)

إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَكْفُلُهُ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَىٰ
أُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ وَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنَاكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَفَتَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا
فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِينَ فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يَا مُوسَى

“And We favored you when your sister went and said, ‘Should I direct you to someone who will be responsible for him?’ So We returned you to your mother that she might be content and not grieve. And you killed someone, but We saved you from retaliation and tried you with a severe trial. And you remained among the people of Madyan for years. Then you came, Moses, at a time predestined!”

(Ta Ha, 20: 40)

وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي. إِذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَأَخُوكَ بِآيَاتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا
فِي ذِكْرِي. إِذْهَبَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ

“And I produced you for Myself. Go, you and your brother, with My signs and do not slacken in My remembrance. Go, both of you, to the Pharaoh. He has indeed transgressed.” (Ta Ha, 20: 41-43)



Even though they were now prophets, the Almighty still commands both Moses (as) and Aaron (as) ‘...not to slacken in His remembrance.’ This indicates just how

important *dhikr* is. For each believer, it is necessary to undergo a training of the heart. Just as the heart is the center of faith, it is also the center of *dhikr*. A person finds inner peace only when the remembrance of Allah (jj) settles in the heart.

The Qur'an states:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

"...those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, only through the remembrance of Allah are hearts assured." (Al-Rad, 13: 28)

As the Qur'an indicates in the 28th verse of chapter al-Nisa, man has been created weak. But when religious sentiments rise in the heart, selfish desires, which are the source of all weakness, slowly vanish. Although man is essentially a noble being, he has to live up to this nobility. It is impossible to become an elegant and sensitive Muslim with spiritual finesse, without embarking on a journey of the heart. Allah does not want deeds of worship to simply be formal repetitions of certain physical movements. Much rather, He wants the heart to be involved.

The Qur'an states:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ. الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ

"The believers have certainly succeeded. They who, during their prayer, are humbly focused." (Al-Mu'minin, 23: 1-2)

Otherwise, Allah does not want a prayer that lacks focus, without heart:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ. الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ

"So woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayer." (Al-Ma'un, 107: 4-5)

Allah the Almighty says the following about those who have not finessed their spirit through His remembrance:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مِنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

"Then woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah. They are in clear error." (Al-Zumar, 39: 22)

A heart burdened by the weight of sin and worldly desires is too heavy and not finessed enough to reach Allah, who among other attributes, is also the Finest (*al-Latif*). And it can only shed this weight through *dhikr*.



At long last, Moses (as) and Aaron (as) reunited on the shores of the Nile. They hugged each other, and shortly after Moses (as) said, “We must go to the Pharaoh. Allah (jj) has appointed us both for that duty!”

Then both of them prayed:

قَالَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا نَخَافُ أَنْ يُفْرَطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَنْ يَطْعَى .
قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى

“Our Lord, we are afraid that he will quickly punish us or that he will transgress.”

Allah said, ‘Fear not. I am with you both. I hear and I see.’” (Ta Ha, 20: 45-46)

فَأْتِيَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ . أَنْ أَرْسَلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

“Go to Pharaoh and say, ‘We are the messengers of the Lord of the worlds. Send with us the children of Israel.’” (Al-Shu’ara, 26: 16-17)

However, the Lord also informed them of the approach they should take in delivering the message:

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَيْنًا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى

“And speak to him gently so that it perhaps will make him remember or become afraid.” (Ta Ha, 20: 44)

This verse has inspired Yazid al-Rakkashi to remark:

“My Lord, who commands gentleness even for those who are hostile to You! Who knows how You will treat those who glorify You and call others to Your path!”

Despite knowing in His eternal knowledge that the Pharaoh would not accept the call to *tawhid*, the Almighty still ordered Moses (as) to speak softly. In essence, this command applies to all believers who tell others to do good and stay away from evil.

The Qur’an also praises the gentle tone and conduct the Prophet (as) embodied in inviting others to the truth:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ
لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا
عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

“Through Allah’s mercy, you were lenient with them. They would have disbanded, had you been rude and hardhearted. So pardon them, ask for their forgiveness and consult them. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely on Him.” (Al Imran, 3: 159)

Pharaoh the Fool

The two brothers finally entered the Pharaoh’s court.

“And who are you?” the Pharaoh rashly asked.

“I am the messenger of the Lord of the worlds”, said Moses (as).

The Pharaoh was stunned at first. However, after a brief pause, he became livid and retorted, “I raised you in my palace. For all I have done for you, you thanked me by murdering my baker. With what nerve do you now come here and tell me all this?”

The Qur’an recounts the exchange:

قَالَ أَلَمْ نُزَبِّكَ فِينَا وَلِيدًا وَلَبِثْتَ فِينَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِينَ .
وَفَعَلْتَ فَعَلَتِكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ وَأَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ

“The Pharaoh said, ‘Did we not raise you as a child? You remained among us for years. And then you ended up doing what you did, and proved to be ungrateful!’ (Al-Shu’ara, 26: 18-19)

Moses (as) calmly replied:

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَا إِذَا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ . فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي حُكْمًا وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ . وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

“I did what I did without knowing the consequences. And when I feared you, I fled. Then my Lord granted me wisdom and prophethood, and appointed me a messenger.” (Al-Shu’ara, 26: 20-22)

He added, “None of that would have happened if you had not embarked on a campaign of terror, killing babies and separating me from my mother. And now, it just so happens that Allah has endowed me with wisdom and knowledge, and made me a prophet.”

The Pharaoh quickly changed the subject.

قَالَ فَمَنْ رَبُّكُمْ يَا مُوسَى

“The Pharaoh said, ‘So, who is the Lord of you two, Moses?’” (Ta Ha, 20: 49)

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“The Pharaoh asked, ‘And what is the Lord of the worlds?’” (Al-Shu’ara, 26: 23)

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى

“Moses said, ‘Our Lord is He who has formed and guided everything.’” (Ta Ha, 20: 50)

And added:

قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ

“He is the Lord of the heavens and earth and that between them, if you are willing to admit.” (Al-Shu’ara, 26: 24)

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَى. قَالَ عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ لَا يَضِلُّ
رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَى. الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا
وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْ نَبَاتٍ شَتَّى

“The Pharaoh said, ‘Then what is going to happen to those generations before us?’

Moses said, “Their knowledge is recorded with my Lord. My Lord neither errs nor forgets. It is He who has made the earth as a bed for you, inserted roadways, sent down rain from the sky and produced thereby all sorts of various plants.” (Ta Ha, 20: 51-53)

قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهُ أَلَا تَسْتَمْعُونَ. قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأُولِينَ .
قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمْ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُونٌ. قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ
وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

“The Pharaoh said to those around him, ‘Do you hear what he is saying!’

Moses said, ‘He is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.’

Pharaoh said, ‘Your so-called ‘messenger’ must be mad!’

Moses said, ‘He is the Lord of east and west, and that between them. If only you were to reason.’” (Al-Shu’ara, 26: 25-28)

The Pharaoh then threatened Moses (as) and Aaron (as) that they would be imprisoned and tortured to death.

قَالَ لَئِنِ اتَّخَذْتَ إِلَهًا غَيْرِي لِأَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُونِينَ. قَالَ أَوْلَوْ جِئْتِكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّبِينٍ. قَالَ فَأْتِ بِهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ. فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ

“The Pharaoh said, ‘If you take a god other than me, I will place you with those in prison!’

Moses said, ‘Even if I had a clear proof?’

The Pharaoh said, ‘Then bring it, if you are a man of truth!’

So Moses threw his staff, and suddenly it was a serpent for all to see.”

(Al-Shu'ara, 26: 29-32)

The man who claimed to be god was terrified by what he was seeing.

“Please contain it”, he begged Moses (as). “I will set all the children of Israel free. Just stop the snake!”

So, Moses picked the snake up, and it, once again, became a staff.

The Pharaoh took a deep breath and asked, “Do you have any more?”

So:

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ

“He drew out his hand, and it turned white for all to see.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 33)

The Pharaoh was, again, petrified. The two miracles had brought him to the verge of accepting Moses' (as) call. However, his vizier, Haman took notice; and had a few choice words to incite the Pharaoh.

“For goodness sake, you are god!”, he said. “You cannot yield to him. Everybody knows you as god. It would cause anarchy if you were to take a step down and become one of the ordinary folk. Just keep composed. We will come up with a solution!”

A council of 500 advisers immediately convened to discuss what to do.

قَالَ لِلْمَلَإِ حَوْلَهُ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ. يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ

“The Pharaoh said to his ministers, ‘He must be a learned magician. And he wants to use his magic to drive you out of your land. So, now, what do you suggest?’ (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 34-35)

The Battle between Miracle and Magic

The miracles shown by Moses (as) had really unsettled the Pharaoh. He was forced to swallow his pride, cast his claim of being god aside, and turn to people around for advice. They suggested:

قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَبْعَثْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ. يَا تُؤَكُّ بِكُلِّ سَحَّارٍ عَلِيمٍ

“Postpone the matter about him and his brother and send gatherers to the cities, to recruit every learned and skilled magician.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 36-37)

The Copts of the time were highly skilled in magic and sorcery. Thus, the Pharaoh immediately accepted the offer.

Allah the Almighty declares:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا آيَاتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَأَبَى. قَالَ أَجِئْتَنَا لِتُخْرِجَنَا مِنْ أَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يَا مُوسَى. فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِثْلِهِ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَا نُخْلِفُهُ نَحْنُ وَلَا أَنْتَ مَكَانًا سُوًى

“And We certainly showed the Pharaoh Our signs, all of them, but he denied and refused. He said, ‘Have you come here, Moses, to drive us out of our land with your magic? If so, we will bring you magic like it. So, set a time for us. We will be there and so will you, at a place agreed on.’” (Ta Ha, 20: 56-58)

Moses (as) said:

قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمَ الزَّيْتَةِ وَأَنْ يُحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى.
فَتَوَلَّى فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَتَى

“Moses said, ‘We will meet on the day of the festival when people assemble at mid-morning.’

So the Pharaoh went away, put together his plan, and then came to confront Moses.” (Ta Ha, 20: 59-60)

فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ لِمِيقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَعْلُومٍ. وَقِيلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُجْتَمِعُونَ

“So, the magicians were assembled for the appointment on a renowned day. And the people were urged, ‘You surely have to be there!’” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 38-39)

The next day, every one, young and old had gathered, anxious to see who would win.

لَعَلَّنَا نَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ إِنْ كَانُوا هُمُ الْغَالِبِينَ. فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوا لِفِرْعَوْنَ أَئِنَّا لَنَا أَجْرًا إِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ. قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

“They said, ‘We might follow the magicians if they win!’

And when the magicians arrived, they said to the Pharaoh, ‘Is there a reward for us if we win?’

He said, ‘Yes, indeed. You will then be among those close to me.’ (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 40-42)

The Pharaoh was nervous and wanted to be assured of the outcome.

“Will you be able to beat Moses?” he asked the magicians.

“We are at the peak of the art of magic”, the chief sorcerer said. “No one on earth is a better practitioner of it, than us! You cannot find anyone better. We are at the top of the game. It would take the skies to crack open and an invincible force to descend, for us to be defeated!”

However, before the contest began, Moses (as) warned the magicians.

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ وَإِنَّكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا
فَيُصْحِتْكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ افْتَرَىٰ

“Moses said to the magicians summoned by the Pharaoh, ‘Shame on you! Do not invent a lie against Allah or He will annihilate you! And He has always failed those who invent falsehood.’” (Ta Ha, 20: 61)

This forced the magicians to think.

فَتَنَازَعُوا أَمْرَهُم بَيْنَهُمْ وَأَسْرَوْا النَّجْوَىٰ. قَالُوا إِنَّ هَذَانِ لَسَاحِرَانِ يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ
يُخْرِجَاكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيقَتِكُمُ الْمُثَلَىٰ

“So, they disputed over their affair among themselves and held a private conversation.

They said, ‘These are nothing but two magicians who want to drive you out of your land with their magic, and do away with your honorable profession.’” (Ta Ha, 20: 62-63)

Moses (as) then issued a challenge.

فَأَجْمِعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ اتُّخُوا صَفًّا وَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ اسْتَعْلَىٰ

“So, decide on your plan and come forward in line. Whoever overcomes the other, will today be the winner!” (Ta Ha, 20: 64)

However, despite everything, out of courtesy and their deep-felt respect for Moses (as):

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ إِنَّمَا أَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَإِنَّمَا أَنْ نَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَلْقَىٰ. قَالَ بَلْ أَلْقُوا

“They said, ‘Moses, should we throw first or you?’

He said, ‘Rather, you throw!’

And suddenly, through their magic, their ropes and staffs seemed to him as if they were moving like snakes.” (Ta Ha, 20: 65-66)

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ أَلْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُلْقُونَ. فَأَلْقَوْا حِبَالَهُمْ
وَعَصِيَّهِمْ وَقَالُوا بَعْزَةٌ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغَالِبُونَ

“Moses said to them, ‘Throw what you have got!’

So, they threw their ropes and their staffs and said, ‘By the might of Pharaoh, we will be the winners!’ (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 43-44)

فَإِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيَّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَىٰ. فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ
خِيفَةً مُوسَىٰ. قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَىٰ. وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا
صَنَعُوا إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدٌ سَاحِرٍ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيْثُ أَتَىٰ

“And suddenly, because of their magic, their ropes and staffs seemed to him as though they were moving like snakes. And Moses felt a little apprehension. Allah said, ‘Fear not! You are superior. And throw what is in your right hand. It will swallow up what they have crafted. And they have crafted nothing but a trick of magic; and the magician will not succeed, no matter where he is!” (Ta Ha, 20: 66-69)

Moses (as) then became composed and expelled his fears.

فَلَمَّا أَلْقَوْا قَالَ مُوسَىٰ مَا جِئْتُمْ بِهِ السِّحْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَيَبْطِلُهُ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُصْلِحُ عَمَلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“And when they had thrown down what they had, Moses said, ‘What you have brought is nothing but magic! And Allah will certainly expose how worthless it is. Allah does not fulfil the work of corrupters.” (Yunus, 10: 81)

It is thus understood from that verse that magic and sorcery are nothing other than to deceive the eyes and the mind for the purposes of evil and corruption.

فَأَلْقَى مُوسَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ

“Then Moses threw his staff, and at once, it devoured all their trickeries.”

(Al-Shu'ara, 26: 45)

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَلِقِ عَصَاكَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ

“And We inspired to Moses, ‘Throw your staff!’

And, at once, it devoured all their false tricks.” (Al-Araf, 7: 117)

The Magicians Accept Defeat

Under the watchful eyes of the Pharaoh and the public, the magicians had thrown a few sticks and ropes, which curled up and appeared as though they were snakes. Nevertheless, when Moses (as) threw his staff, it turned into a dragon that gobbled up every tool of magic in the arena. The magicians knew this was no human feat. It had to be a miracle. Otherwise, once the show was over and the magic ended, the ropes and sticks would have remained in the arena. However, not only was their magic destroyed, the sticks and ropes had also disappeared. Thus:

فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“The truth was established, and what they were doing, was abolished.”

(Al-Araf, 7: 118)

But while the staff had swallowed every object in its path, when it was all over, its appearance remained unchanged. This was one way the Almighty willed to show the magicians that unlike their performances, based on skill and talent and which could be taught to others, this was not a show. The extraordinary event they had just observed in the staff was nothing but Allah's power come to life. This was why their elaborate magic never stood a chance. Hence, all along, the chief sorcerer was in two minds whether Moses (as) was a fraud or in fact a man supported by divine powers. So, before the spectacle began, he told one of his colleagues to:

“As all this takes place, you keep your eyes on Moses...and tell me what you see!”

During the event, the man closely observed Moses (as), and reported what he saw to the chief:

“As the staff was doing what it did, Moses (as) turned pale and looked frightened!”

“Then it must be the work of Allah”, the chief sorcerer said. “No magician is afraid of his own magic, just as an artist is never frightened by his art! Quite the opposite...he performs his work with ease.”

The chief sorcerer then professed his belief in Moses (as). So did the other magicians. (Abdulqadir Jilani, al-Fath al-Rabbani, p. 38)

The Qur'an says:

فَأَلْقَى السَّحْرَةَ سَاجِدِينَ. قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ. رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ.
قَالَ آمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرِكُمْ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَسَوْفَ
تَعْلَمُونَ لَأَقْطَعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَا تُصَلِّبُنَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

“So the magicians fell down in prostration to Allah.

They said, ‘We have believed in the Lord of the worlds. The Lord of Moses and Aaron.’

The Pharaoh said, ‘You have believed in Moses before I gave you permission? He must be your leader who has taught you magic! But soon, you are going to find out. I will cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and crucify you all!’

(Al-Shu'ara, 26: 46-49)

It is stated elsewhere:

قَالَ آمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرِكُمْ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ
فَلَأَقْطَعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَا تُصَلِّبُنَاكُمْ فِي جُذُوعِ النَّخْلِ
وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ أَيُّنَا أَشَدُّ عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَى

“The Pharaoh said, ‘You believed him before I gave you permission? Indeed, he is your leader who has taught you magic. So, I will surely cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and crucify you on the trunks of palm trees. You will then know which of us is more severe in giving punishment and more enduring!’”

(Ta Ha, 20: 71)

Relationships based on self-interest last only until those interests come to an end. Had the magicians continued to support the Pharaoh, they would have been held in high regard and perhaps drowned in luxuries other Copts could have only dreamt of. Nevertheless, their hearts had now opened to faith. They could now see,

without any shadow of doubt, that the joy of eternity was infinitely more valuable than passing luxuries. So, they responded to the Pharaoh's threats with unshakable resolution:

قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْتِرَكَ عَلَىٰ مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ
مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا

“They said, ‘Never will we prefer you over what has come to us with clear proofs and over He who created us! So give whatever verdict you want! But know that your ruling is only valid in this life!’” (Ta Ha, 20: 72)

Another verse reads as:

قَالُوا لَا ضَيْرَ إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ

“So, no harm. To our Lord we will return.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 50)

The point is they could have well lived without a hand and foot. These were part of their bodies, which, in any case, were destined to perish in soil after death. The body is mortal, yet the spirit is immortal. One could not possibly prefer the mortal to the immortal. Once the magicians perceived the clear miracle, they responded to the Pharaoh in a way he never saw coming.

“Your tyranny will not harm us”, they said. “All your harm belongs to the world while the hereafter is eternal!”

They continued to speak out:

إِنَّا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطَايَانَا وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ

“We have certainly believed in our Lord that He may forgive our sins and the magic you compelled us to do! And Allah is better and more enduring.” (Ta Ha, 20: 73)

إِنَّا نَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطَايَانَا أَنْ كُنَّا أَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“We are quite hopeful that our Lord will forgive our sins, as we were the first to believe!” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 51)

They finally prayed:

رَبَّنَا أفرغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا وَتَوَفَّنَا مُسْلِمِينَ

“Our Lord, pour patience on us and let us die as Muslims!” (Al-Araf, 7: 126)

The Pharaoh had them all killed. The people who had entered the contest that morning as magicians had died the same day, and reunited with the Lord, as martyrs.

The Qur'an mentions the encounter between Moses (as) and the magicians four times, each with slightly different wording and details on different aspects of the incident.⁹³ The fact that a single event has been recounted four times goes to show how important it is, and alludes to many mysteries, as well as wisdoms, we should try to pick out from between the lines.

Remarkably, despite facing death in just a few moments, the magicians did not pray to Allah to save them but instead pleaded to have the opportunity to die as Muslims. All they were worried about was taking their final breaths with a conviction of faith, without giving into any weaknesses.

About the final breath, the Qur'an urges:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تُقَاتِهِ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

“O you who have believed! Fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims!” (Al Imran, 3: 102)

The only way to heed to this command is to live by the way of Allah (jj) and His Messenger (saw), and seek refuge in divine grace about the shape our final breaths will take. The way to stick to this path, all the way until it takes us back to the Lord, is again pointed out in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ

“O you who have believed! If you support Allah, He, too, will support you and plant your feet firmly on the ground.” (Muhammad, 47: 7)



Rumi offers a spiritual insight into the encounter between Moses (as) and the magicians:

“The magicians were brought to the path of tawhid because of the courtesy and politeness they showed to a great prophet right before the contest began. And they were punished for trying to compete with him.”

Without a doubt, the respect the magicians had shown Moses (as) opened a window in their hearts to belief. It is one of the greatest virtues in life to direct love and hate to where they belong.

Rumi continues to shed light on a deeper aspect of the encounter:

93. See al-Araf, 7: 109-126; Yunus, 10: 76-82; Ta Ha, 20: 56-73 and Al-Shu'ara, 42: 34-51.

“The wretched and tyrant Pharaoh threatened the magicians with cutting their hands and feet and crucifying them to death. He hoped it would send shivers up their spine and force them to yield. But little did the Pharaoh know that by gaining insight into divine truths and mysteries, the magicians had conquered all forms of fear. Even if they were to be crushed like wheat in a press, they now had the prudence to tell themselves apart from their shadows.”

In other words, they were now wise enough to know that the body is merely the spirit’s shadow. Before even hearing the threats, they had already shed that shadow by losing themselves in the Lord (*fana fillah*).

“So, this life is nothing but a sleep, a dream. Do not be fooled by its extravagance and dazzle! Would you be afraid if you saw a dream where you were killed by a thousand cuts? This life, my friend, is nothing but that dream!”

Lady Mashita

Mashita was a maid to the Pharaoh’s daughter. One day, before reaching for a hairbrush to comb the daughter’s hair, she said ‘in the name of Allah! The daughter overheard this and rushed to inform her father.

The Pharaoh summoned Mashita and asked for an explanation. With the energy of faith bursting from her heart, she bravely responded, “You are mortal like us. How can you be god?”

“So, you believe in Moses?” the Pharaoh angrily retorted.

He then had Mashita undergo a slow and brutal torture. However, she stood her ground. So, they decided to bring in her five-year-old daughter.

“If you do not accept Pharaoh as god”, they said, “we will slit her throat!”

Mashita still remained firm. So, they slit her daughter’s throat in front of her eyes and even smeared the blood on her face. However, she just tenderly kept on repeating the words:

“Allah is One! Allah is One! And Moses is His Messenger!”

The Pharaoh and his men were now quivering with rage. This time, they brought her three-month-old baby and held him out to her. The baby was hungry, and instinctively reached out to Mashita for some milk. Nevertheless, the men pulled him away, and yelled, “Unless you turn back from your way, we will throw your baby in the oven!”

Mashita remained patient. She watched, as they hurled her baby into the fire. It is narrated that the baby spoke from among the flames and urged her mother to:

“Keep patient! There is only a step between you and paradise!”

Many people who were present to see that, professed their faith in Moses (as).

Not long after, Mashita was martyred. She reunited with her kids in paradise.

Ubayy ibn Kab (ra) narrates that on the night of *Miraj*, the Prophet (as) smelt a beautiful scent and asked Jibril (as) what it was. He said:

“It is the fragrance coming from the graves of Mashita, her husband and two children.” (Ibn Majah, Fitan, 23/4030)

Lady Asiya Martyred

Asiya was saddened and deeply angry with her husband for torturing Mashita to death. She even went so far as to insult him. It did not take much for the Pharaoh to realize that his own wife was also a follower of Moses (as). Asiya did not hide it.

“Yes!” she exclaimed. “I, too, believe in the Lord of Moses!”

It is reported that the Pharaoh forced Asiya to lay on her back, with her arms and feet tied to four poles, and had a millstone placed on her belly. The soldiers then began torturing her. Her body eventually succumbed. She was martyred.

As Asiya was being tortured, Moses (as) happened to pass by. She looked at him from a distance and made a slight gesture to point to the pain she was going through. Moses (as) prayed. From that point on, Asiya (as) no longer felt any pain.

According to another report, Asiya was abandoned in the middle of a scorching desert. The angels provided her shade, until she gave her final breath.

The Qur’an mentions her with praise:

وَصَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَةٌ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ
بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

“And Allah presents for the believers an example in the Pharaoh’s wife, when she said:

‘My Lord! Build me a house near You in paradise. Save me from the Pharaoh and his deeds. And save me from the wrongdoers.’ (Al-Tahrim, 66: 11)

It is reported that Asiya made the above prayer while being tortured. A voice then told her to, “Look up!” When she looked up into the skies, she saw that all the veils had been lifted, and her pearl mansion in paradise was glimmering back at her. She kept watching it and smiling. And the pain was no more.

Asiya’s virtue is commemorated by Suleyman Celebi who, in his famous ode *Mevlid*, depicts her as being present alongside angels and houris to congratulate lady Aminah, after she gave birth to the Prophet (saw):

And Asiya was one of those faces aglow

...

They said never has a mother been graced

With a child so pretty, a child so great

The Tower

Meanwhile, the Pharaoh's tyranny was becoming worse by the day, as more and more people began to accept Moses' (as) call. Now, he ordered the construction of a sky-scraping tower. It took seven years to build, and one could only get to the top on horseback.

The Pharaoh's idea was to climb to the top and supposedly, speak to Moses' God! He lacked the slightest clue as to what *tawhid* really meant. His image of God rested on shapes and forms encountered in the natural world. It was anthropomorphic. This notion falsely held that God had to come in a certain shape. The religion of the Copts was similar to that of the ancient Greeks. It had multiple gods; one assigned to the earth, another to the sky, another for love, and so forth.

The Pharaoh thought he could ascend the tower, observe the skies and announce to the people that, try as he may, he could not come across Moses' God! With a shallow mindset, he assumed he could cast doubt in people's minds by declaring, "Even we could not bring you news from beyond despite the greatness of our civilization and all the technological means we have at our disposal! So, how can Moses claim he can?"

The Qur'an states:

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا هَامَانَ ابْنِ لِي صَرْحًا لَعَلِّي أَبْلُغُ الْأَسْبَابَ.
 أَسْبَابَ السَّمَاوَاتِ فَأَطَّلِعَ إِلَىٰ إِلَهِ مُوسَىٰ وَإِنِّي لِأَظُنُّهُ كَاذِبًا وَكَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَ
 لِفِرْعَوْنَ سُوءَ عَمَلِهِ وَصَدَّ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا كَيْدُ فِرْعَوْنَ إِلَّا فِي تَبَابٍ

“And the Pharaoh said, ‘Haman! Build me a tower into the paths of the skies, the paths into the heavens, so that I may see the God of Moses, even though I think he is a liar!’

And thus was made his evils look good to the Pharaoh, and he was averted from the right way. And the Pharaoh's plan led to nothing except ruin.” (Al-Ghafir, 40: 36-37)

It has been narrated that the Almighty ordered Jibril (as) to knock the tower down. So, he struck it with his wing and the tower fell in three pieces. Thousands of soldiers, as well as workers preparing bricks and mortar, died.

This failure only made the Pharaoh angrier. The Copts intensified their abuse of the Israelites.

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ أَتَدْرُ مُوسَى وَقَوْمَهُ لِيُفْسِدُوا
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَيَذَرَكَ وَآلِهَتِكَ قَالَ سَنُقْتِلُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ
وَنَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ قَاهِرُونَ

“And the prominent among the Pharaoh’s people said:

‘Are you just going to let Moses and his people cause corruption in the land, and abandon you and your gods?’

The Pharaoh said, ‘We will kill their sons and spare their women, to show them just who has the power!’ (Al-Araf, 7: 127)

The Israelites complained to Moses (as), who advised them to hang on:

قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ اسْتَعِينُوا بِاللَّهِ وَاصْبِرُوا إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ
يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ.

“Moses said to his people:

‘Seek help through Allah and be patient. The earth belongs to Allah. He makes whom He wills, inherit it. And the best outcome is for the righteous.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 128)

However, slowly, the Israelites had begun giving Moses (as) attitude. They were restless, agitated and were bothering their prophet. It was because they had a materialist outlook:

قَالُوا أُوذِينَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَأْتِيَنَا وَمِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا قَالَ
عَسَى رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي
الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ

“They said, ‘We were harassed both before you and after!’

He said, ‘Perhaps, your Lord will destroy your enemy and grant you succession in the land, to see how you will act.’ (Al-Araf, 7: 129)

The Almighty thus indicated that the future would belong to the believers.

But as the reign of terror continued, Moses (as) prayed for it come to an end. Shortly after that, one trouble after another began to rain on the Copts.

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّنِينَ وَنَقْصِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ.
فَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوا لَنَا هَذِهِ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَطَّيَّرُوا بِمُوسَى
وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَلَا إِنَّمَا طَائِرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“And We certainly seized the Pharaoh’s clan with years of famine and loss of produce, that they perhaps would be reminded. But when good came to them, they said, ‘This is ours by right!’ And if a bad condition struck them, they saw an evil omen in Moses and those with him. Unquestionably, their fortune is with Allah, but most of them do not know.” (Al-Araf, 7: 130-131)

One Miracle after Another

وَقَالُوا مَهْمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهِ مِنْ آيَةٍ لِنَسْحَرَنَّ بِهَا فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ.
فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالْدَّمَ
آيَاتٍ مُفَصَّلَاتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُجْرِمِينَ

“And they said, ‘No matter what sign you bewitch us with, we will not believe in you!’

So, We sent upon them a flood, locusts, lice, frogs and blood as distinct signs. But they were an arrogant and criminal lot!” (Al-Araf, 7: 132-133)

During each plague, the Copts would acclaim Moses (as) for how great a man he was. However, as soon as they were over, they would turn to Moses (as) and sarcastically remark that it was bound to end, anyway.

Troubles come when tyranny reaches its peak. As indicated in the above verse, that was also the case with the Copts.

1. Flood

The Almighty sent down heavy rains that flooded the Copts’ homes. They were sunk up to their necks and had to keep standing, as anyone who sat down would drown. They were at the point of total destruction. However, remarkably, the flood did not affect the Israelites.

So, without much choice, the Copts rushed to Moses (as) and begged him to, “Pray to Your Lord to lift this trouble from us! If He does, we will accept your call and release your people from Egypt!”

So, Moses (as) prayed. Soon, the waters abated, and it was followed by a fertile year for crops and fruits. That led the Copts to remark, “We were fools to think the

flood was a catastrophe. It turns out it was a blessing in disguise and had nothing to do with Moses!”

2. Locusts

This time, the Almighty sent a swarm of locusts into Egypt. They ate away every crop and fruit that had bloomed following the flood. They destroyed everything in their path. Nevertheless, again, they left the Israelites untouched.

The Copts appealed to Moses (as). “Pray”, they said, “and we will do whatever you wish!”

Moses (as) prayed once more. The locusts scattered. The Copts turned back on their word.

3. Fleas and Lice

Now, the Copts found themselves trying to fend off a sudden plague of fleas and lice. The pests would even fill their plates during meals. They felt helpless. So, like they did before, they rushed to Moses (as). The plague was over. However, the Copts’ rebellion was not.

4. Frogs

This time, Moses (as) went to the Nile. He struck the river with his staff and all the frogs emerged from its banks to raid the city. Soon, they were everywhere. The Copts could hardly move.

“This time, we are really remorseful”, they told Moses (as). “Send these frogs away and, we promise, we will send you to the Promised Land!”

The frogs were released but the Israelites, not so.

5. Blood

The Copts were not coming to their senses. So, the Almighty turned the Nile into a river of blood. They could not find any water to drink. However, this was only for the Copts. For the Israelites, the Nile remained pure. Following Moses’ (as) prayer, the Nile let out its blood and returned to the way it was.

However, so did the Copts.



Rumi takes a Sufi look at this incident:

“A Copt, almost dying of thirst, rushed to the home of an Israelite.

'I am your friend and relative', he said. 'And today, I need you. Fill a bowl of water from the Nile with your very own hands for your old friend to drink from. If you get the water for yourself, it will not turn into blood. It will be pure, and clear of all magic!'

The Israelite got a bowl of water from the Nile, just so that the Copt would see the miracle behind it. He drank half of it, and held out the rest to the Copt.

'Go on, drink', he said. The elated Copt brought his mouth forward. However, the water turned into blood. The Israelite then took the bowl towards him and the water became pure.

The Copt became angry. He sat down until he regained his composure.

'Tell me', he then said. 'How does one untie this knot? What is the secret?'

"The Nile is clear and pure only to those who follow the way of Moses', he answered. 'You may drink to your heart's content, only if you get off the Pharaoh's track and let Moses (as) lead you."

"If you want to see the moonlit night", he added, "make peace with the moon". (Here, the 'moonlit night' refers to the miracle, while the 'moon' is Moses (as)).

The Israelite continued.

"Your grudge against the true servants of Allah has made you blind and deaf, and cast thousands of curtains on your vision! You walk blindly in the valley of deviance, with your eyes closed to the truth! Melt your piles of sin in the fire of repentance! Then you will drink your share from the glass of those who have found wisdom. How silly are to you think there would be a loophole in Allah's command, when He has banned the Nile to those who disbelieve! How dare the Nile disregard the order of God and give a pagan a drink!



In the face of all these miracles:

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ذَرُونِي أَقْتُلْ مُوسَى وَلْيَدْعُ رَبَّهُ إِنِّي أَخَافُ
أَنْ يُبَدِّلَ دِينَكُمْ أَوْ أَنْ يُظْهِرَ فِي الْأَرْضِ الْفَسَادَ

"And the Pharaoh said, 'Let me go, so I can kill Moses; and let's see then, if he can call upon his Lord! I fear that he will change your religion or cause corruption in the land.'" (Al-Ghafir, 40: 26)

The tone of the Pharaoh's voice suggests he did want to kill Moses (as), if only he was not prevented by those around him. They urged the Pharaoh, "You should not be intimidated by Moses. You are god! If you were to go ahead and kill him, you would cast doubt into people's hearts. They would think you were helpless!"

However, the Pharaoh's words also reveal just how scared he was of Moses (as). Deep down, he knew Moses (as) was a prophet. He was just too arrogant, conceited and stubborn to accept it.

Moses (as) simply responded:

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ إِنِّي عُذْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مُتَكَبِّرٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ

“I have sought refuge in my Lord and yours, from every arrogant soul who does not believe in the day of account.” (Al-Ghafir, 40: 27)

Scholars of the Qur'an have therefore suggested that in his prayer, Moses (as) at the same time pinpoints the two main reasons why the Pharaoh just would not believe:

- a. He denied the afterlife,
- b. And he was arrogant.

An arrogant person likes to see everybody else below him. Arrogance is therefore something the Prophet (saw) has strictly banned:

“Whoever carries a grain of faith in his heart will not enter hellfire. And whoever carries a grain of arrogance in his heart will not enter heaven.” (Muslim, Iman, 147)

Faith is so precious that thanks to it, a person is sooner or later granted divine amnesty and taken to the bounties of paradise. Arrogance, on the other hand, is an attribute of Satan; and it is too vile to be allowed through the gates of heaven.

The Prophet (as) has also said:

“It suffices as a sin to look down on a fellow Muslim!” (Muslim, Birr, 32; Abu Dawud, Adab, 35; Al-Tirmidhi, Birr, 18)

Luqman (as) advises his son to avoid it:

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

“And do not turn your cheek in contempt toward people and do not walk with a swagger. Allah does not like one who is deluded and boastful.” (Luqman, 31: 18)

Elsewhere, the Qur'an says:

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا

“And do not walk on the earth with a swagger. You can never tear the earth apart or be as high as the mountains.” (Al-Isra, 17: 37)

Allah the Almighty explains the wisdom as to why He destroyed the Pharaoh and his cohorts, who had fallen headfirst in the swamp of conceit and arrogance:

وَمَا نُرِيهِمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ إِلَّا هِيَ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أُخْتِهَا وَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

“Each sign We showed was greater than the previous. And We seized them with affliction that perhaps they might return to faith.” (Al-Zukhruf, 43: 48)

During the plagues sent by Allah, the Copts would become as gentle as lambs. However, as soon as they were over, they would turn into beasts. They were dishonest and hypocritical.

وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ لِئِن كَشَفْتُمْ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

“And when the punishment descended upon them, they said, ‘Moses, pray for us to your Lord by what He has promised you. If you can remove the punishment from us, we will surely believe you, and send with you the Children of Israel.’ (Al-Araf, 7: 134)

وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا السَّاحِرُ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ إِنَّنَا لَمُهْتَدُونَ.
فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابَ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُونَ

“And they said, ‘Magician! Pray for us to your Lord by what He has promised you. We will come round!’ But as soon as We removed the affliction, they broke their word.” (Al-Zukhruf, 43: 49-50)

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الرِّجْزَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ هُمْ بِالْعُوهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُونَ

“But when We removed the punishment from them until another destined time, they, at once, broke their word.” (Al-Araf, 7: 135)

The Pharaoh’s Propaganda

The Pharaoh felt helpless and was becoming more afraid, by the hour, that the people would accept the religion of *tawhid* altogether. So, he set up a giant tent by the Nile, from which he personally addressed the public for two years.

“Do not let Moses fool you”, he would proclaim. “Along with the idols you worship, I, too, am your god!”

وَنَادَى فِرْعَوْنُ فِي قَوْمِهِ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَلَيْسَ لِي مُلْكُ مِصْرَ وَهَذِهِ الْأَنْهَارُ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِي أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ. أَمْ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ مَهِينٌ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُبِينُ

“And the Pharaoh called out to his people, saying: ‘My people! Can’t you see that the kingdom of Egypt and these rivers flowing beneath me, belong to me? Or am I not better than this trivial man who can hardly make himself understood?’”

(Al-Zukhruf, 43: 51-52)

The Pharaoh wished to portray himself as a rich and powerful man in charge of a splendid empire, while Moses (as) as an insignificant other who could barely express himself. He would try to discredit Moses (as) with arguments like:

فَلَوْلَا أُلْقِيَ عَلَيْهِ أَسْوِرَةٌ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ مُقْتَرِنِينَ

“Then why has not come with bracelets of gold or in the company of angels?”

(Al-Zukhruf, 43: 53)

In the end, the Copts were duped:

فَاسْتَخَفَّ قَوْمَهُ فَاطَاعُوهُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ

“So he bluffed his people, and they obeyed him. They were certainly a defiantly disobedient lot.” (Al-Zukhruf, 43: 53)

The Exodus

The Pharaoh and his cohorts used their earthly supremacy to terrorize the believers. The miracles they had seen and the minor punishments they had suffered had not reformed them in the slightest. Their tyranny reached a point, where even Moses (as) felt the need to curse them:

وَقَالَ مُوسَى رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ آتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئَهُ زِينَةً وَأَمْوَالًا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِكَ رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلَى أَمْوَالِهِمْ وَاشْدُدْ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوا حَتَّى يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ. قَالَ قَدْ أُجِيبْتُ دَعْوَتَكُمْ فَاستَقِيمَا وَلَا تَتَّبِعَانَّ سَبِيلَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“And Moses said:

‘Our Lord! You have certainly given the Pharaoh and his establishment splendor and wealth in the worldly life. Our Lord, is it so that they may lead

people astray from Your way? Our Lord! Obliterate their wealth and harden their hearts so that they will not believe until they see the painful punishment’.

Allah said, ‘Your prayer has been answered. So remain on the right track and do not follow the way of those who do not know.’ (Yunus, 10: 88-89)

Soon, the Copts contracted a skin disease. This was followed by three days of drought. Each family had its own trouble to deal with. Finally, the Pharaoh felt he had no other choice than to let the Israelites go. However, it was clear that once the danger had subsided, he would turn back on his promise.

Therefore, Moses (as) had no time to waste. So, in line with the divine command, he led the Israelites out of the city towards Suez in the dark of night. The next morning, every girl in the Pharaoh’s family died from plague. The Pharaoh was already angry; and the death of his daughters had enraged him all the more.

“This is the work of Moses!” he screamed.

The burial of the daughters had won Moses (as) some precious time. By the time the Pharaoh realized that the Israelites were gone, it was too late.

The Almighty reveals:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي إِنَّكُمْ مُتَّبِعُونَ

“And We inspired to Moses, ‘Travel by night with My servants, for you will be pursued.’ (Al-Shu’ara, 26: 52)

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي فَاصْرَبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا
فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا تَخَافُ دَرْكًا وَلَا تَخْشَىٰ

“And We had inspired to Moses, ‘Travel by night with My servants and strike for them a dry path through the sea. Do not fear being overtaken by the Pharaoh nor be afraid of drowning.’ (Ta Ha, 20: 77)

When he got hold of the news, the Pharaoh panicked:

فَأَرْسَلَ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ. إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَشِرْذِمَةٌ قَلِيلُونَ.
وَإِنَّهُمْ لَنَا لَغَائِظُونَ. وَإِنَّا لَجَمِيعٌ حَادِرُونَ

“The Pharaoh then sent gatherers among the cities, and said, ‘They are just a small band. And they have stepped on our nerves, when we are certainly a vigilant nation.’ (Al-Shu’ara, 26: 53-56)

The Pharaoh quickly mobilized the army and charged out of the city to track Moses (as) down:

فَاتَّبَعُوهُمْ مُشْرِقِينَ. فَلَمَّا تَرَاءَ الْجَمْعَانِ قَالَ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَى
إِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُونَ. قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ

“So they pursued them at sunrise. And when the two groups saw one another, the companions of Moses said, ‘We are surely caught!’

Moses said, “No! My Lord is with me and He will guide me.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 60-62)

Moses (as) was now cornered between the Red Sea and the Pharaoh's army.

The Sea of Redemption and Retribution

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ
فَانْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ

“Then We inspired to Moses, ‘Strike the sea with your staff!’ And it parted, and each portion was like a great towering mountain.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 63)

The children of Israel continued walking on those the paths, through massive walls of waves. At one point, they even asked Moses (as) to, “Open up windows through the waves so we can all see each other!” Moses (as) prayed and their wish was granted.

By now, the Pharaoh had reached the shore. When he saw that the sea had split, he turned around and said, “Look! The sea has cracked open from my grandeur... to make it easier for me to catch my slaves!” As always, the Pharaoh was too foolish and lost to acknowledge that this was in fact a miracle of Moses (as).

He then commanded his soldiers to, “Advance! We will kill them all!”

However, as soon as he said that, he felt hesitant and afraid. It is reported that at that point, Jibril (as) appeared in front of him on a white horse and said, “Come on... what are you waiting for?” Mikail (as) went to the back end of the army and urged the soldiers, “Get a move on...do not remain behind!”

Soon, the entire army was on the march towards the point of no return.

The Almighty says:

وَأَرْزَلْنَا ثَمَّ الْآخِرِينَ

“And We advanced the pursuers towards them.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 64)

The Pharaoh and his army entered the roads that the Red Sea had cleft open. However, not long after, they met God's wrath, and as the waves came tumbling down.

وَأَنْجَيْنَا مُوسَى وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ. ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخِرِينَ

“And We saved Moses and those with him, all together. Then We drowned the others.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 65-66)

فَأَنْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ

“So We took retribution from them. We drowned them in the sea because they denied and were heedless of Our signs.” (Al-Araf, 7: 136)

فَلَمَّا آسَفُونَا انْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ.
فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ سَلَفًا وَمَثَلًا لِلْآخِرِينَ

“And when they angered Us, We took revenge from them and drowned them all. And We made them a precedent and an example for people to come.” (Al-Zukhruf, 43: 55-56)

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“Indeed, in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 67)

With God's grace, the Israelites were saved. That day was the 10th of Muharram. As a show of thanks, they the spent the day fasting. In the Qur'an, the Lord reminds the Jews of His favor:

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُدَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ. وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمْ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ

“And recall when We saved your forefathers from the people of the Pharaoh, who afflicted you with the worst torment, slaughtering your newborn sons and sparing your females. And in that was a great trial from your Lord. And recall when We parted the sea for you and saved you, while drowning the Pharaoh's army, as you looked on.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 49-50)

A Last Gasp for Faith

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتَبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ
وَجُنُودُهُ بَعْثًا وَعَدُوًّا حَتَّى إِذَا أَذْرَكَهُ الْعَرَقُ قَالَ آمَنْتُ أَنَّهُ لَا
إِلَهَ إِلَّا الَّذِي آمَنْتُ بِهِ بَنُو إِسْرَائِيلَ وَأَنَا مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“And We took the Children of Israel across the sea. The Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them in tyranny and enmity, only until he began to drown. He then said, ‘I believe there is no god except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the Muslims.’ (Yunus, 10: 90)

The Pharaoh was now just a couple of breaths away from death in the whirls of the Red Sea, and made a last ditch attempt to clutch on to the lifeline of faith. However, the Almighty said:

الآنَ وَقَدْ عَصَيْتَ قَبْلُ وَكُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ. فَالْيَوْمَ نُنَجِّيكَ بِدَنِكَ
لِتَكُونَ لِمَنْ خَلْفَكَ آيَةً وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا لَعَافُونَ

“Now? And you had disobeyed before and were of the corrupters. So, today We will save your body that you may be a sign for those to come. But many people are heedless of Our signs.” (Yunus, 10: 91-92)

About this verse, scholar Zamakhshari has said:

“Your corpse will wash ashore, naked and intact; and your dead body will be preserved for later generations to see and take a lesson.”

In recent years, the Pharaoh’s corpse was in fact discovered washed up on the shores of Red Sea, lying face down in a fetal position, as if to fall prostrate. The corpse is now on display at the British Museum, as a living lesson in history for all to see. This is another miracle the Almighty has revealed in the Qur’an, which will be on show until the arrival of the final hour.

The Pharaoh’s body did not decay, despite remaining in the Red Sea for millennia. It was preserved by Allah the Almighty who, in the Qur’an, tells us how He assured the Pharaoh that He would. The body was found roughly 3,000 years later and taken to a museum in England to be kept as a lesson for humanity.



The Pharaoh’s body on display at the British Museum in London

On the Other Side of the Red Sea

Moses (as) now led the Israelites towards Canaan. On the way, they passed by a tribe that worshipped the statue of a cow.

“Moses!” said the Israelites. “Make an idol like that for us, too, so we can worship it!”

Moses (as) counseled them. “Allah (jj) has saved you from tyranny. The Copts were killing your sons and taking your daughters as slaves. Will you now forget all that and rebel?”

The Almighty states:

وَجَاوَزْنَا بِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَتَوْا عَلَى قَوْمٍ يَعْكُفُونَ عَلَى أَصْنَامٍ لَهُمْ
قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى اجْعَلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ

“And We took the Children of Israel across the sea. Then they came upon a people devoted to some idols. They said, ‘Moses! Make us a god like theirs!’”

He said, ‘You are indeed an ignorant bunch!’ (Al-Araf, 7: 138)

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ مُتَّبِعُونَ مَا هُم فِيهِ وَبِاطِلٌ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ. قَالَ أَعْيَرَ اللَّهُ أَنْبِيَاءَهُمْ إِلَهًا
وَهُوَ فَضَّلَكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ. وَإِذْ أَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ
الْعَذَابِ يُقْتُلُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

“What those worshippers are engaged in is bound to perish, and what they are doing will come to nothing!

He said, ‘Should I find you a god other than Allah when He has preferred you over the worlds?’

And recall when We saved you from the people of the Pharaoh, who was subjecting to the most brutal torment, killing your sons and keeping your women alive! And in that was a great trial from your Lord.” (Al-Araf, 7: 139-141)

Now, Moses (as) mobilized an army of 12,000 soldiers each at the command of Joshua and Caleb, and sent them on a campaign back to Egypt. No one was left in the country except for the ill, the old and children. The army returned with great spoils. They sold what they could not carry. The Copts were now obliterated. The Qur’an alludes to this in the following:

فَأَخْرَجْنَاَهُمْ مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ. وَكُنُوزٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ

“So We removed them from the gardens and springs. And treasures and a place of comfort.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 57-58)

وَأُورِثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضَعُونَ مَشَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِي
بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنَىٰ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا
وَدَمَّرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ فِرْعَوْنُ وَقَوْمُهُ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْرِشُونَ

“And We made the oppressed inherit the east of the land and the west, which We had blessed. And the good word of your Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel, for what they had patiently endured. And We destroyed all that the Pharaoh and his people had produced and what they had built.” (Al-Araf, 7: 137)

كَذَلِكَ وَأُورِثْنَاهَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

“And so. We made the Children of Israel inherit it.” (Al-Shu'ara, 26: 59)

كَمْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ. وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ. وَنَعْمَةٍ كَانُوا
فِيهَا فَآكِهِينَ. كَذَلِكَ وَأُورِثْنَاهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ. فَمَا بَكَتْ
عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنظَرِينَ

“And how much they left behind of gardens and springs. Of crops and noble sites. And of comfort wherein they were amused. Thus! And We made another people inherit it. The heaven and earth did not weep for them, nor were they reprieved.” (Al-Dukhan, 44: 25-29)

Allah evocatively illustrates societies that have been caught by His wrath meet a pitiful end and end up in the dustbin of history:

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ هَلْ تُحِسُّ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا

“And how many generations have We destroyed before them? Do you see any of them or hear from them a sound?” (Maryam, 19: 98)

The Tih Valley and the Trial of War in Jericho

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مُلُوكًا وَآتَاكُمْ مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

“And mention when Moses said to his people, ‘Remember the favor of Allah upon you when He appointed prophets among you, gave you possessions and that which He had not given anyone in the world.’” (Al-Maidah, 5: 20)

This verse is strictly about the Israelites at the time of Moses (as). God’s pledge to give the Israelites the Promised Land, as well as the reminder that He had blessed them like no one else before, is therefore valid only for the people of that period of time in history. There are otherwise hundreds of passages in the Qur’an and in the prophetic tradition that identify the Prophet (saw) as God’s exceptional gift to humanity, both past and present, as well as future. As for who will inherit the Promised Land, the Qur’an lays it bare:

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزُّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ

“And We have already written in the Psalms after the previous Reminder [Torah] that the land will be inherited by My righteous servants.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 105)

Here, Allah assures us that the tyrants and their tyranny cannot rule forever; the good is essential, while evil is just its offshoot and bound to perish, and that power will sooner or later fall into the hands of the righteous. This is Islam’s universal worldview.



Moses (as) was now leading the Israelites to Canaan, the Promised Land. He appointed a representative from each Israelite tribe, before sending Joshua and Caleb to spy on the inhabitants of Canaan, who at the time were the Amalekites. The two men found that the Amalekites were a powerful nation. However, in order not to demoralize and frighten the Israelites, the pair decided not to tell them. It also was what Moses (as) had ordered them to do. However, a few Israelites managed to find out and the word got around. As a result, they refused to fight.

يَا قَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا تَرْتَدُّوا عَلَى
أَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ. قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى إِنَّ فِيهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِينَ وَإِنَّا لَنَنْ
نَدْخُلُهَا حَتَّى يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِن يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِنَّا دَاخِلُونَ.

“Moses said, ‘My people! Enter the Holy Land which Allah has designated for you; and do not turn back and become losers!’

They said, ‘Moses! The people there are immensely powerful! And we will never enter unless they leave. But if they do leave, we will then enter!’” (Al-Maidah, 5: 21-22)

قَالَ رَجُلَانِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمَا ادْخُلُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَابَ فَإِذَا
دَخَلْتُمُوهُ فَإِنَّكُمْ غَالِبُونَ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ.

“Two blessed men from those who feared Allah said, ‘Enter upon them through the gate. For if you do so, you will prevail! And rely on Allah, if you are believers.’ (Al-Maidah, 5: 23)

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى إِنَّا لَنْ نَدْخُلَهَا أَبَدًا مَا دَامُوا فِيهَا فَادْهَبْ
أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هَهُنَا قَاعِدُونَ

“They said, ‘Moses, we will certainly never enter, as long as they are there! So go and fight with your Lord! We are staying right here!’ (Al-Maidah, 5: 24)

The Israelites had quickly forgotten the time they were crushed under the Pharaoh's thumb. They had now been saved, and were enjoying a bit of luxury which they did not want to lose. They had an insatiable desire to live in this world for as long as they could. They did not wish to work. So, they requested Moses (as) to be fed from heaven, after which they were given manna and quail. Furthermore, Moses (as) had struck twelve springs out of a rock, so they would not have to make an extra effort to find drinking water.

The Almighty declares:

وَوَضَعْنَا عَلَىٰ كُفْرِهِمُ أَلْهَابًا وَيَقْبَهُ رَبُّهُمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا
رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

“And We shaded you with clouds, and sent you manna and quails, saying ‘Eat from the good things with which We have provided you.’ But they could never wrong Us. They only wronged themselves.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 57)

وَإِذِ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ
فَانفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَشْرَبَهُمْ كُلُوا
وَاشْرَبُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْنُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ

“And recall when Moses prayed for water for his people, so We said, ‘Strike the rock with your staff!’ And there gushed forth from it twelve springs, and every tribe knew where to get its water from. We said, ‘Eat and drink from the provision of Allah, and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption.’

(Al-Baqarah, 2: 60)

وَقَطَعْنَاهُمْ اثْنَيْ عَشْرَةَ أَسْبَاطًا أُمَّمًا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ إِذِ اسْتَسْقَاهُ قَوْمُهُ
 أَنِ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانْبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ
 مَشْرِبَهُمْ وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنَّٰنَ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ
 مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

“And We divided them into twelve distinct tribes. And when his people implored Moses for water, We inspired to him, ‘Strike the rock with your staff!’

And there gushed forth from it twelve springs. Every people knew its watering place. And We shaded them with clouds and sent down upon them manna and quails, saying, ‘Eat from the good things with which We have provided you.’ But they could never wrong us. They only wronged themselves.” (Al-Araf, 7: 160)

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ قَدْ أَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ عَدُوِّكُمْ وَوَعَدْنَاكُمْ
 جَانِبَ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّٰنَ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ. كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا
 رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِي وَمَنْ يَحِلِّ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ
 هَوَىٰ. وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَىٰ

“O Children of Israel! We delivered you from your enemy. We made an appointment with you at the right side of the mount. And We sent down manna and quails, saying:

‘Eat from the good things with which We have provided you and do not transgress, or My anger will descend upon you! And he upon whom My anger descends, certainly perishes. But I am indeed the Perpetual Forgiver of who repents, believes, does good and then follows guidance.’” (Ta Ha, 20: 80-82)

The Israelites were an unthankful and impatient people, who continued to be a burden on Moses (as). The Qur’an gives a clear picture of their level of ingratitude:

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَضْرِبَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا
 تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّائِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَا قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي
 هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ إِهْبَطُوا مِضْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مَا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلِيلَةُ
 وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاؤُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ
 النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ

“And when you said, ‘Moses, We will not put up with one kind of food. So pray for us that your Lord may bring forth for us things that the earth grows: its greens, cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions!’ He said, ‘Do you seek to trade in what is superior with that which is inferior? Go down to any town and you will get what you ask for!’

So they were struck with abasement and poverty; and they earned Allah’s wrath. That is because they would defy the signs of Allah and kill the prophets unjustly. That is because they would disobey and transgress.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 61)



قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ إِلَّا نَفْسِي وَأَخِي فَافْرِقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ
الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ. قَالَ فَإِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً يَتِيهُونَ
فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ

“Moses said, ‘My Lord! I have no control over anyone except myself and my brother. So separate us from the defiantly disobedient people!

Allah said, ‘The land is now forbidden to them for forty years! They will wander throughout. So, do not grieve over those who are defiantly disobedient.’

(Al-Maidah, 5: 25-26)

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي
مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ
اللَّهُ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ

“And Allah had already taken a covenant from the Children of Israel, and We delegated from among them twelve leaders. And Allah said:

‘I am with you. If you establish prayer, give alms, believe in My messengers, support them and loan Allah a goodly loan, then I will remove from you your misdeeds and admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow. But whoever of you disbelieves after this, has certainly strayed from the sound way.’ (Al-Maidah, 5: 12)

However, the Israelites would not relent. They were brazenly ungrateful to the blessings Allah had given them and were constantly giving attitude to a prophet of the caliber of Moses (as). They were impudent enough to say, “Go with your Lord, Moses, and fight! We will follow you once you gain victory!”

For that reason, Allah banished them to the wilderness of the Tih Valley, where they would roam without direction for the next forty years. That was until they were all dead, and were succeeded by another entirely new generation.

It was this energetic and faithful young generation that would defeat the Amalekites and enter the Promised Land. After long years, it had now been captured along with the areas to the east of River Jordan. Moses' (as) promise had now been fulfilled.

The Revelation of the Torah

Moses (as) informed the Israelites that now they had settled in the Promised Land, it was only a matter of time until the Almighty sent down a book.

He left behind his brother, Aaron (as) as deputy, and told him to, "Mind the people and make sure they do not fall into error! Allah has summoned me to Mount Sinai. I will fast there for thirty days and return with a revelation."

However, the brazen Israelites were mistrustful about their own prophet. So, they said to him, "Take a few witnesses from us!" As a result, seventy people were chosen to go with Moses (as) to the mountain.

It was when Moses (as) prayed to the Almighty to reveal the promised book that he was commanded to fast for thirty days. This is the month of Dhilqadah. Later, the first ten days of Dhilhijjah were also included to complete the fast to forty days. Moses (as) was then given a book and tasked to guide his people with it.

The Almighty declares:

وَوَاعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ ثَلَاثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتَمَّمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرِ فِتْمٍ مِّقَاتُ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً

“And we made an appointment with Moses for thirty days and perfected them with another ten. So, the term of his Lord was completed to forty nights.”

(Al-Araf, 7: 142)

Moses (as) had been invited to Mount Sinai, also known as Mount Tur, for forty days, to reach an even higher state of spiritual maturity through fasting, prayers and meditation, which he needed, to accomplish the tasks that were to follow. Those forty nights were going to prepare Moses (as) to speak with God. To get away from the clamor of the crowd around him, Moses (as) isolated himself from the rest; and he soaked up the night's silence by delving into the ocean of meaning behind the appearances that would take him to the Lord. This was needed to purify the spirit and lighten it up to shine up the road that awaited him.

It is understood that the first thirty days were of abstinence and purification, in which Moses (as) fasted and committed himself to deeds of worship. In addition, the

revelation of the Torah, as well as Moses' (as) conversation with the Almighty, took place in the final ten days. In that forty-day period, Moses (as) had acquired the high spiritual state that was required to speak with God.

The Qur'an refers to this period not as forty days, but forty nights. This is based on the lunar calendar, where each day begins with nightfall. However, there is more to it. Nights possess a distinct quality. Many divine manifestations have occurred at night, including the first revelation of the Qur'an and the Prophet's (saw) night journey, the *Miraj*.

Moses' (as) forty-day seclusion on Mount Sinai carries further signs:

To reach the morning of spiritual enlightenment, saints need to do some hard time in the troublesome hours of night. Inspiration often comes at night; and each triumphant dawn is preceded by a night of trouble.

So, in a way, Moses' (as) first thirty days coincide with the night, whereas the last ten days correspond to dawn. It was during final moments of this dawn that he was given the privilege to speak to God and observe other divine signs.

Moses (as) fasted on Mount Sinai for thirty days and night straight, without eating or drinking for once (*sawm-i wisal*). But despite that, he neither felt hungry nor thirsty. Yet, while traveling to meet Khidr, he felt hungry only after half a day; and told his friend to take out what food they had brought. This was because Moses' (as) meeting with Khidr was part of a trial. As is the case with all trials, this one also came with hardship. It only took him a few hours to get hungry. Nevertheless, his journey to Mount Sinai was not a trial. This time, he was on a journey to meet the Lord. It was a reunion with Him. The splendor of where he was, made him forget about all physical urges, like eating and drinking. It held him back from everything apart from the Lord.

Due to Allah (jj) having spoken with him, Moses (as) is called *Kalimullah*, literally 'the one whom God has spoken to.' However, this talk did not take place through a physical medium such as the tongue. Rather, Moses (as) spoke to the Almighty beyond space and time, through God's pre-eternal attribute of Speech (*Kalam*). None of God's qualities is like those of the created. For instance, He is All-Knowing (*Alim*); yet His way of knowing is unlike ours. Allah is Powerful, but His power is distinct from ours. Similarly, Allah speaks but not like us. We use our tongues and letters to speak. Allah needs neither. Letters are created, whereas Allah's speech is not. It is beyond letters and all other mediums. In fact, when Allah spoke to Moses (as), neither Jibril (as) nor the seventy others on Mount Sinai took notice of it.

Moses (as) was also shown many scenes from the spiritual realm. This was not an event of his own choosing. It is said that he was directly presented –without any medium- 4,200 words, on top of 14 others, of a nature unknown to us. With the

delivery of each word, Moses (as) shook; and his body and nature underwent major changes.

In reference to this event, the Qur'an makes it clear that:

وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا

“And Allah spoke to Moses with direct speech.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 164)

To comfort his heart, the Almighty (as) instilled Moses (as) with thousands of words. It was so that he could find some consolation. Moses (as) was a prophet who had gone through turbulent times his entire life. Now, he was tasked with bringing law and order to a rampant and materialistic people like the Israelites. It was going to be tough.

The Wisdom of the Number Forty

Forty is an exceptionally important number in spiritual training.

a. It took forty days for Adam's (as) mud to ferment. It is narrated that:

“Allah kneaded the soil from which Adam was created, for forty days, with His Hand of Might.” (Tabari, Tafsir, III, 306)

Each day represents a time frame, whose nature is unknown.

b. A baby stays in the womb as a drop of sperm for forty days, a clot for the next forty days and a lump of flesh for another forty. It is after these stages that the spirit is breathed into the baby. A hadith narrated by Ibn Masud (ra), and which is mentioned both in Bukhari and Muslim, says:

“The creation of each of you in the womb is completed in forty days. You then remain in there as a drop for the same period. For the same period, you remain as a clot, and a lump of flesh for the same period after that. Allah the Almighty then sends an angel with four words to inscribe: the baby's livelihood, his deeds, his time of death, and whether he will be righteous or sinful. After that, the spirit is breathed in.” (Al-Bukhari, Qadar, 1; Badu'l Khalq, 6; Muslim, Qadar, 1/2643)

c. Forty days is important not only to prepare prophets to receive divine revelation but also to mold the hearts of saints to receive spiritual inspiration.

The Prophet (saw) says:

“Springs of wisdom will flow off the tongue of a person who sincerely turns to his Lord for forty mornings.” (Al-Suyuti, al-Jami' al-Saghir, II, 137/8361)

The Sufi practice of *cile* or *erbain*, the forty-day period of intense meditation which is considered essential to spiritual progress, is based on the above words of the Prophet (saw), and the time Moses (as) spent on Mount Sinai as told by the Qur'an.

It takes forty days for the spirit to rein in the ego. Likewise, it takes forty days for the ego to escape it. So, are the laws of God. They take forty days to fully appear.

People of wisdom have also drawn attention to the number four and its multiples. For example, the universe rests on four elements: earth, water, air and fire. The Throne of God has four corners and is carried by eight angels. Moses (as) was ordered to spend forty days fasting and worshipping; and only after that, was he privileged with being spoken to by the Almighty.

The Request to See Allah

As Moses (as) spoke with God, all the veils before his eyes had lifted. He was given a clear vision of the Throne (*arsh*) that transcended space and time. He was hearing the squeak of the pen scribing on the Protected Tablet (*lawh-i mahfuz*). However, neither Jibril (as) nor the seventy Israelites saw or heard any of it, as Moses (as) had now reached an exceptionally high station.

Moses (as) took so much pleasure out this experience that he wanted even more. He was overcome by entirely different and such strong emotions that he now wished to see the Almighty.

However, Allah the Almighty pronounced:

لَنْ تَرَانِي "You cannot see Me!"

When Moses (as) insisted, the Almighty said, "Take a look at this mountain! If it is able to remain in one piece, then, you too, will be able to see Me!" (This is Mount Zubayr in the region of Madyan).

One report suggests that the Almighty showed Moses (as) just a grain of light behind seventy curtains. That light reflected on the mountain, which instantly exploded. Moses (as) could not endure the glory of Allah's power and splendor. He fainted from fear.

The Qur'an recounts:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَى لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنْظُرْ
إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَانِي وَلَكِنْ أَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ
تَرَانِي فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَى صَعِقًا فَلَمَّا
أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“And when Moses arrived at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, ‘My Lord! Show me Yourself that I may look at You.’

Allah said, ‘You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me!’”

But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He made it level, and Moses fell unconscious. And when he awoke, he said, ‘Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first of the believers!’” (Al-Araf, 7: 143)

Sufis have pointed to an inner meaning in the above event:

Moses (as) wished to gaze at the truth that underpinned the infinite realm of spirit with his human perception. However, the response he got was not what he wished. He thought that his perception was one with the eye of his heart. He assumed his heart was unique. Based on that, he craved to see his Lord.

However, as the light reflected on the mountain, Moses (as) became terrified and passed out. As he lay on the ground, a voice said to him:

“That privilege, Moses, is not for you but for an orphan to come after you!”

Moses (as) gave in and said, *“My Lord! I exalt and glorify You. Only Muhammed Mustafa, who You have personally declared Your beloved and graced with the highest of all ranks, has a way to You. I repent for having coveted something that is not mine! And I am the first to believe that the most sublime gaze of certainty (mushahadah) is reserved for and exclusive to Muhammed Mustafa!”*



Even after Moses (as) returned from Mount Sinai, Allah's light continued to reflect on his face. Hence, he had to cover his face for three days.

The Prophet (saw) has in fact said:

“After Moses (as) returned from that profound state of peace, anyone who looked at this face would die. So, he covered his face and, for some time, spoke to people from behind a cloth.” (Al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Mansur fi al-Tafsir abi al-Mazur*, v. III, p. 116)

Urwah ibn Ruwaym tells the following:

“For a while after he returned from Mount Sinai, Moses (as) was unable to approach his wife, from the sheer light reflecting off his face. So, he kept his face covered. But his wife complained, ‘I have been your wife for forty years. It should not be hard for you to look at me so I could take in some of that light!’ So, he lifted the cloth. Instantly, the light surrounded her, like the sun, and she was unable to open her eyes. She put her hands on her face and fell prostrate to the Lord.” (Al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Mansur fi al-Tafsir abi al-Mazur*, v. III, p. 116)

Wahb ibn Munabbih narrates:

“Moses (as) was aglow with an incredible light for three days after he spoke with the Lord.” (al-Suyuti, *al-Durr al-Manzur fi al-Tafsir bi al-Ma’sur*, v. III. p. 116)

Just a ray of divine manifestation on Mount Sinai was enough to knock Moses (as) out. The reflection on his face was so intense that he had to cover it for three days. During his Night Journey, the Prophet was taken past the Lote Tree, the *Sidratu’l Munteha*, which marks the apex of the highest heaven, and spoke to the Almighty at a small distance the Qur’an describes as “two bow lengths or nearer” (قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ).⁹⁴ Yet, unlike Moses (as), he did not return with any reflection of light on his face. Saints have explained why that was the case:

Moses (as) underwent that experience while still in spiritual motion, moving from one state to another higher (*talwin*). The Prophet (saw), on the other hand, had already settled in the highest state of peace (*tamkin*)⁹⁵ and spiritual observation (*mushahadah*). The Night Journey simply marked a change in mode from one kind of spiritual observation to another. It is for that reason that the Prophet (saw) has said:

“I am not like any of you. I spend the night with my Lord, who feeds and nourishes me.” (Ali al-Muttaqi, *Kanz al-Ummal*, 3/32, 42)

“I have moments with my Lord that neither an angel nor a prophet can access.” (Al-Munawi, *Fayd al-Qadir*, IV, 8)⁹⁶



On the Almighty’s words, “You, Moses, can never see me!”, saints have further explained:

“As long as you exist, Moses, that is to say, unless you die in Me, I shall remain hidden to you. Only if you lose yourself in Me, will you be able to see Me!”

Just as the stars in the sky are invisible when the sun is out, a river is lost in the sea after flowing into it, a kohl bears nothing of its stoniness when applied around the eye and a grain of wheat sheds itself after entering the body as bread, the body of a person who spiritually loses himself in the Lord, dies; and becomes estranged from the person.

Rumi was among many others who eagerly awaited death, so it could liberate him from the ego’s captivity. He famously called death *shab-i arus*, the wedding night.

94. See, al-Najm, 53: 9

95. *Talwin* refers to the spiritual progression from one stage to another. This continues until reaching *tamkin*, which is for the heart to settle and delve deeper in the station of reunion with the Lord.

96. See, al-Maqqisi, *Sırların Çözümü ve Hazinelerin Anahtarları*, p. 58-59.

In the moment of spiritual ecstasy, Hallaj-i Mansur exclaimed, “Kill me, my friends...for death is the only thing that can save me!”

In Sufism, this is called *wahdat-i wujud*, oneness of existence, or *wahdat-i shuhud*, 11: oneness of perception. This is a temporary state. Its nature is known only to those who experience it.



An indescribably sweet feeling had come over Moses (as), after having spoken to God through His pre-eternal attribute of Speech. In a moment of rapture, he insisted he wanted to see God. However, when the mountain exploded, he fainted. When he came round to himself, he repented. Hearing God’s words had made Moses (as) forget he was still in the world. He felt as though he had died and woken up in paradise, in God’s court.

It is narrated that the mountain that received a small ray from God’s light smashed into pieces. Every single piece flew to a different direction. It virtually turned to flour, and each particle flew as far as the seas. The waters in which its particle fell became sweet and cured the ill.

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِنْ
خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“If We had sent down this Qur’an upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and ripped apart from fear of Allah. And We present people these examples to people that perhaps they will give thought.” (Al-Hashr, 59: 21)

إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا
وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا

“We did offer the trust to the heavens, earth and mountains but they declined from fear. But man accepted it. He is indeed unjust and ignorant.” (Al-Ahzab, 33: 22)

After the event on Mount Sinai, Moses (as) began receiving the Torah. It was inscribed on seven or ten tablets, and comprised of forty sections. Each letter of the Torah was brought down by a different angel, including Jibril (as). They presented Moses (as) the revelation on top of Mount Sinai.

A Conversation on Mount Sinai

The Prophet (saw) informs us of an exchange that took place on the mountain between Allah and Moses (as):

“Moses (as) asked the Almighty about six qualities he believed he had and a seventh, which he disliked:

‘My Lord! Which servant of Yours is the most righteous?’

‘One who constantly remembers Me and never forgets!’

‘And which servant is the most guided?’

‘One who keeps on the path of guidance I have shown!’

‘And who is the most just?’

‘One who judges himself in the way he judges others!’

‘Who is the most knowledgeable?’

‘One who can never get enough of it!’

‘Who is the most honorable?’

‘One who forgives when he has the power to punish!’

‘And which servant is the richest?’

‘One who is content with he is given!’

‘And who is the poorest?’

‘One who thinks little of what he is given and craves for more!’” (Ali al-Muttaqi, *Kanz al-Ummal*, XV, 899/43549)

The Golden Calf

Shortly after their safe passage across the Red Sea, the Israelites saw a tribe worshipping an idol bearing an ox’s head. They had asked Moses (as) for something similar to worship; and he responded by advising them they were in error in making that request, and how evil and senseless it was to ascribe partners to Allah. Afterwards, they felt bad and repented.

However, after Moses (as) left Aaron (as) as deputy and headed to Mount Sinai, a hypocrite named Samiri made the most of the opportunity, and sculpted an idol made from the gold he had gathered from the Israelites.

“This”, he then exclaimed, “...is the god of Moses, but too bad Moses has forgotten about it!”

Samiri was an artisan. He had sculpted the calf with such prowess that when the wind blew into it, it would bellow as if it was alive. He managed this with the holes he had opened up inside the idol which, like a flute, would echo different sounds

depending on the strength of the wind. When the calf sounded, Samiri would turn and say, "Look! Your god is speaking to you!"

Samiri managed to convince many Israelites into believing that the golden calf was their god. Aaron (as) pleaded to them. However, they just would not listen.

The Qur'an recounts:

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَارُونُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهِ
وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِي

"And Aaron had already told them before the return of Moses: 'My people! This is a tribulation, do not fall for it! Your Lord is the Most Merciful, so follow me and obey my order.'" (Ta Ha, 20: 90)

قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفِينَ حَتَّىٰ يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ

"They said, 'We will never stop being devoted to the calf until Moses returns!'" (Ta Ha, 20: 91)

قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنْ بَعْدِكَ وَأَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِيُّ

"Allah said to Moses, 'We have tried your people after you departed, and Samiri has led them astray!'" (Ta Ha, 20: 85)

وَاتَّخَذَ قَوْمُ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ خُلِيِّهِمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ خُوَازِ أَلْمَ يَرَوْنَ
أَنَّهُ لَا يُكَلِّمُهُمْ وَلَا يَهْدِيهِمْ سَبِيلًا اتَّخَذُوهُ وَكَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ

"And after Moses left, the people made from their ornaments a calf, a body that made a lowing sound. Did they not see that it could neither speak to them nor guide them to a way? They took it up, and they were wrongdoers." (Al-Araf, 7:

148)

وَلَمَّا رَجَعَ مُوسَىٰ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا قَالَ بِئْسَمَا خَلَقْتُمُونِي
مِنْ بَعْدِي أَعَجَلْتُمْ أَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ وَأَلْقَى الْأُلْوَاحَ وَأَخَذَ بِرَأْسِ أَخِيهِ يَجُرُّهُ
إِلَيْهِ قَالَ ابْنَ أُمَّ إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضَعُّونِي وَكَادُوا يَقْتُلُونِي فَلَا تَشْمِتْ
بِئِي الْأَعْدَاءِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

"And when Moses returned to his people, angry and grieved, he said:

‘Evil has been your conduct in my absence! Would you hasten on the edict of your Lord?’ He threw down the tablets and seized his brother by the head, pulling him towards himself.

His brother said, ‘Son of my mother! These people thought I was weak and they were about to kill me. So do not let the enemies gloat over me, and do not take me with the wrongdoing lot.’ (Al-Araf, 7: 150)

قَالَ يَا هَارُونَ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا. أَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي.
قَالَ يَا ابْنَ أُمَّ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ
فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي

“Moses said, ‘Aaron! What prevented you from stopping them, when you saw them going astray? Have you disobeyed my order?’

Aaron said, ‘Son of my mother, do not seize me by my beard and head. I only feared that you would say, ‘You caused division among the Children of Israel, and you did not await my word!’” (Ta Ha, 20: 92-94)

Moses (as) and Aaron (as) were brothers from the same parents. However, Aaron (as) pleads to Moses (as) as ‘son of my mother’ to appeal to his compassion. For a mother always carries greater compassion than both a father and siblings. In addition, their mother was a righteous believer, much loved and respected by both.

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِإِخِي وَأَدْخِلْنَا فِي رَحْمَتِكَ
وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

“Moses said, ‘My Lord! Forgive me and my brother, and admit us into Your mercy. For You are the most Merciful of the merciful.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 151)

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَى إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ
رَبُّكُمْ وَعَدًّا حَسَنًا أَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَهْدُ أَمْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ
غَضَبٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُمْ مَوْعِدِي.

“So Moses returned to his people, angry and grieved. He said: ‘My people! Did your Lord not make you a good promise? Was that too long for you to wait or did you wish your Lord’s wrath upon yourselves, when you broke your promise to me?’” (Ta Ha, 20: 86)

قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلَكِنَا وَلَكِنَّا حَمَلْنَا أَوْزَارًا مِنْ زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ
فَقَذَفْنَاهَا فَكَذَلِكَ أَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ. فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ
خَوَازٍ فَقَالُوا هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهُ مُوسَى فَنَسِيَ

“They said, ‘We did not break our promise to you by will! But we were burdened with the weight of people’s ornaments, so we threw them into the fire, and so did Samiri. And he extracted a calf which had a lowing sound, and said, ‘This is your god and the god of Moses, but he forgot!’” (Ta Ha, 20: 87-88)

For their evil deed, Moses (as) asked the Israelites to repent; and informed them that the condition of their repentance was a deep remorse and death. However, after hearing that, they said, “Better we keep patient and wait for the divine verdict!”

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ
بَاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ فَتُوبُوا إِلَى بَارئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ
لَكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

“And recall when Moses said to his people, ‘My people! You have indeed wronged yourselves by adopting the calf to worship! So, repent to your Creator and kill yourselves. That is best for you in the sight of your Creator.’

He then accepted your repentance. He is truly the Forgiver and the Merciful.”

(Al-Baqarah, 2: 54)

For each person who had worshipped the golden calf, another was assigned with a sword at hand, waiting for the signal to execute. Some were even relatives of one another.

وَلَمَّا سُقِطَ فِي أَيْدِيهِمْ وَرَأَوْا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ ضَلُّوا قَالُوا لَئِن لَّمْ
يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“And when regret overcame them and they saw that they had gone astray, they said, ‘If our Lord does not have mercy upon us and forgive us, we will surely be among the losers.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 149)

Both Moses (as) and Aaron (as) were thereupon overcome with compassion, as they tearfully begged the Lord to forgive them. Their prayers were accepted.

وَالَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهَا وَآمَنُوا
إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“But as for those who committed misdeeds and then repented and believed, indeed your Lord, thereafter, is Forgiving and Merciful” (Al-Araf, 7: 153)

Allah the Almighty declared:

ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“Then We forgave you after that so perhaps you would be grateful” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 52)

Now, Moses (as) called Samiri to account.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَا سَامِرِيُّ. قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي

“Moses said, ‘And what is your case, Samiri?’

He said, ‘I saw what they did not see, so I took a handful of dust from the track of the messenger and threw it. And that is what my soul enticed me to do.’

(Ta Ha, 20: 95-96)

Scholars of the Qur’an note that the messenger Samiri says that he saw was Jibril (as) who was on the way to see Moses (as). Samiri noticed that the ground Jibril (as) walked on came to life and turned green. So, he picked up a handful of dust from the path and threw it in the fire, in which he melted the gold.

قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَنْ تُخْلَفَهُ وَانظُرْ إِلَى إِلَهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا

“Moses said, ‘Now, go away! It has been decreed that from now on you will say, ‘No contact.’ And you have an appointment in the hereafter you will not fail to keep. And look at your ‘god’ to which you remained devoted. We will surely burn it and blow it into the sea with a blast.” (Ta Ha, 20: 97)

So it goes that, after receiving Moses’ (as) curse, Samiri contracted a heavy and contagious illness that forced him to keep away from people for the rest of his life.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ سَيِّئًا لَهُمْ غَضَبٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَذِلَّةٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُفْتَرِينَ

“Indeed, those who took the calf for worship will obtain anger from their Lord and humiliation in the life of this world. That is how We recompense the slanderers.” (Al-Araf, 7: 152)



وَلَمَّا سَكَتَ عَنْ مُوسَى الْعُغْصُ أَخَذَ الْأَلْوَاحَ وَفِي
نُسخَتِهَا هُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِلَّذِينَ هُمْ لِرَبِّهِمْ يَرْهَبُونَ

“And when the anger subsided in Moses, he picked up the tablets. And in their inscription was guidance and mercy for those who are fearful of their Lord.”

(Al-Araf, 7: 154)

The Almighty had called on Moses (as) to bring to His presence seventy people on behalf of those who regretted having worshipped the calf, and asked them all to collectively repent. Moses (as) heeded the order by taking seventy Israelites with him to Mount Sinai. However, the ingrate group, this time, sarcastically asked to see God. They were then caught by a severe earthquake, which brought them to their knees and made them faint. Again, Moses (as) prayed to Allah, and the wrath was lifted.

The Qur’an recounts:

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَى لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّى نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ
وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ. ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“And recall when you said, ‘Moses! We will never believe you until we see Allah outright!’ So, the thunderbolt took you while you were looking on. Then We revived you after your death that perhaps you would be grateful.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 55-56)

وَإِخْتَارَ مُوسَى قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِينَ رَجُلًا لِمِيقَاتِنَا فَلَمَّا أَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ
قَالَ رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ وَإِيَّايَ أَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ
مِنَّا إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا فِتْنَتُكَ تُضِلُّ بِهَا مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَهْدِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ أَنْتَ وَلِيُّنَا
فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْغَافِرِينَ

“And Moses chose seventy men for Our appointment. And when the earthquake seized them, he said:

‘My Lord, if You had willed, You could have destroyed them before. Would You destroy us for what the foolish among us have done? This is not but Your

trial, by which You send astray whom You will and guide whom You will. You are our Protector, so forgive us and have mercy upon us. And You are the best of forgivers” (Al-Araf, 7: 155)

Moses (as) carried on praying:

وَاکْتُبْ لَنَا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدْنَا إِلَيْكَ

“And decree good for us in this world and in the Hereafter. We have indeed turned to You” (Al-Araf, 7: 156)

قَالَ عَذَابِي أُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ أَشَاءُ وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَسَأَكْتُبُهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ. الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ مَعَهُ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“Allah said:

‘I send My punishment on whomever I wish, but My mercy embraces all things. And I have written it for those who fear Allah, give alms, believe in Our signs and follow the messenger, the unlettered prophet, who they will find mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel, who bids them to do what is right and forbids them from what is wrong, makes lawful to them all the good things and forbids them from all things vicious, and relieves them of their burdens and the shackles that were upon them. Those who believe in him, honor him, and help him and follow the light that has been sent down with him, they are the ones who will be saved.’” (Al-Araf, 7: 156-157)

Qatadah ibn Numan (ra) narrates the following from the Prophet (saw):

“Moses (as) asked Allah (jj), ‘My Lord. I see that the tablets of the Torah speak about the best nation to be raised from among humankind, who enjoin good and forbid evil. My Lord, let that nation be mine!’”

The Almighty replied, “That is the nation of Ahmad (Muhammad)!”

‘My Lord’, said Moses (as). ‘The tablets speak of a nation who will come last on earth but will enter paradise first! Please, let them be my nation!’

‘That is the nation of Ahmad’, said Allah (jj).

'My Lord', pleaded Moses (as). 'The tablets mention a nation who keep their book in their hearts and recite it off by heart, when nations before them could only read their books from in front of them, and once the books went missing, were unable to remember any of it! It is clear that you have gifted this nation with an exceptional skill to memorize and protect! I beg You My Lord, let them be my nation!'

'That is the nation of Ahmad', Allah (jj) told him.

'My Lord! The tablets cite a nation. They believe in the previous books, as well as the last, and wage war on all kinds of deviances. Let them be mine!' prayed Moses (as).

'They', said Allah (jj), 'are the nation of Ahmad'.

'My Lord! The tablets speak of a nation who are rewarded between 10 and 700 times just for intending on doing something good, even if they never get around to doing it! Let that be my nation!'

However, Allah the Almighty again said, 'They are the nation of Ahmad'.

After hearing all this, Moses (as) put the tablets aside and prayed:

'In that case, my Lord, make me a member of his nation, too!'" (Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, II, 259)

As for us, we were born into this world as members of the nation of Muhammad (saw) for free, without having to work for it. We cannot possibly thank Allah enough for that. However, like everything else, this also comes at a price. We need to be fully aware of the responsibility that comes with being a member of the Muhammedan nation and lead lives that are worthy of the privilege. Only through this, can we be given a chance to be near him in the hereafter and, in turn, give him a chance intercede for our sins and open for us the gates of heaven.



The Israelites behaved but not for long. They complained that the Torah's laws were too strict and they could not cope. They had forgotten about the promise they made, when they repented. So, as a further warning, the Almighty raised Mount Sinai above their heads. They became terrified. They fell prostrate in fear, waiting for the mountain to come crashing down on them at any second:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ
وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ. ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“And recall when We took your covenant, and We raised the mount over you saying, ‘Take what We have given you with resolution and remember what is in it that perhaps you may become righteous’. Then you turned away after that. And if it was not for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have been among the losers.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 63-64)

Yet, the Israelites continued their ways. Those who went one step too far, were punished.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اٰغْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ.
فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

“And you already knew about those who transgressed on the Sabbath. And We said to them, ‘Be despised apes!’ And We made it a deterrent punishment for those who were present and those to come after them. And a lesson for those who fear Allah.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 65-66)

The Israelites who persisted in evil were turned into apes and subsequently destroyed. However, this incident offers nothing to support the claim that man comes from apes. Besides, these people perished and they were destroyed there and then, without bearing forth any offspring.

Allah the Almighty states:

فَبِمَا نَقَضْتُمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا دُكِّرُوا بِهِ وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَائِنَةٍ مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
مِنْهُمْ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and hardened their hearts. They distort words from their proper usages and have forgotten a portion of what they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few. But pardon them and overlook their misdeeds. Indeed, Allah loves those who do good.” (Al-Maidah, 5: 13)

There was only one copy of the Torah. Nobody knew it off by heart. This copy was lost during the Babylonian captivity. Once the Israelites were released from Babylonia and returned to Canaan, they rewrote what they could remember of it. The Torah today is therefore incomplete and distorted, with sections devoted to the life and times of Moses (as).

The Sacrifice of the Cow

A wealthy Israelite by the name of Amil had died in suspicious circumstances. It would turn out that he was murdered by his cousin. A couple of possible motives have been suggested. Either he was a poor and stingy man, who coveted Amil's wealth; or that Amil had married a woman he wanted to marry himself.

However, after secretly killing Amil, the man left his body on the border of two villages, so the villagers could blame one another for the murder.

The body was soon discovered and people came to Moses (as) to ask him to find the killer and have him executed in retribution. Moses (as) was left in two minds as to who may have done it. He prayed for an answer; and Allah commanded him to sacrifice a cow. When the Israelites were told of the command, they retorted:

“What does a murder have to do with a cow? Are you kidding us?”

By making that complaint, the Israelites had, without knowing, brought a test upon themselves that would show their lack of submission to the Almighty.

“I am only conveying what my Lord has commanded”, said Moses (as).

The Qur'an recounts:

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقْرَةً قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُؤًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ. قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ. قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقْع لَوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّاطِرِينَ

“And recall when Moses said to his people, ‘Allah commands you to slaughter a cow!’

They said, ‘Do you take us in ridicule?’

He said, ‘I seek refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant.’

They said, ‘Call upon your Lord to make it clear to us what it is.’

Moses said, ‘He says, ‘It is a cow which is neither old nor virgin, but in between.’ So, do what you are commanded!’

They said, ‘Call upon your Lord to show us its color.’

He said, ‘He says, ‘It is a yellow cow, bright in color, pleasing to observers.’”

The Jews eventually found a cow that matched the description. However, it belonged to a widow, who was reluctant to sell it, as she had a small child, and the cow was their only source of income. She therefore asked for 1,000 coins.

It was a high price to pay. However, Moses (as) told them to give the lady the money she was asking for and buy the cow. Yet, by the time they returned, the lady had raised the price to 2,000.

The people thought that was too steep a price for a cow. So, they returned to Moses (as) and asked:

قَالُوا اذْعُ لَنَا رَبِّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشَابَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ
لَمُهْتَدُونَ. قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَا ذَلُولَ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ
مُسَلَّمَةً لَا شِيبَةَ فِيهَا قَالُوا الْآنَ جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبْحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ

“Call upon your Lord to make it clear to us what it is. All cows look alike to us. And Allah willing, we will then know which one to get.”

He said, ‘He says, ‘It is a cow neither trained to plow the earth nor to irrigate the field, one free from fault with no spot upon her.’

They said, ‘Now you have come with the truth.’ So they slaughtered her, but they could hardly come around to it.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 70-71)

They could hardly get around to doing it because this description was once again pointing at the widow’s cow. In addition, the lady had now raised the price to 10,000. She then, once again, changed her mind and said:

“If you are going to slaughter the cow, then you need to fill its pelt with gold and return it to me! I will only sell it, if you promise me you will!”

The Israelites again turned up next to Moses (as). However, he told them to:

“Buy the cow, whatever it takes!”

So, the men thought the sooner they bought the cow, the better, as there might be no end to the lady’s demands.

Allah declares:

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادَّارَأْتُمْ فِيهَا وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ

“And recall when you slew a man and disputed over it. But Allah was to expose what you were concealing.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 72)

Yet, the Israelites withheld the gold and did not pay.

“The slain man will not come back to life”, Moses (as) assured them, “unless you pay the lady!”

They were left with no other choice than to fill the cow’s pelt with gold and return it to the widow.

فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى
وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ

“So, We said, ‘Strike the slain man with part of it.’ Thus does Allah bring the dead to life, and shows you His signs that you might reason.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 73)

The Almighty had ordered the Israelites to strike the corpse with part of the slaughtered cow, to simply draw all their attention to the miracle that was about to unfold. The event, in fact, turned into a ceremony, with all Israelites, young and old, looking on. Otherwise, the Almighty certainly does not need a tool bring the dead back to life.

Eventually, they touched the corpse with the cow’s tongue. The bloodied and bruised body then stood up, and explained how he was murdered. He ended the statement with the words:

“It was my cousin so-and-so, who killed me, and so-and-so was his accomplice!” He then laid down and died once more.

The two young men were instantly executed.

The Lessons of This Story

- Each objection the Israelites raised only made their task more difficult. When the divine command first came, they could have gotten away with slaughtering any cow. Instead, they just kept on asking questions, as if to suggest they did not wish to comply with the order. However, they only made it harder for themselves. The constant objections they made without knowing their limits, came with heavy consequences.

- It is impermissible to ask unnecessary questions, as is the case in trying to get to the bottom of issues like fate and destiny, which man is simply unequipped to deal with. There comes a point when one can do no more than to submit to what Allah has said about the matter. Unwarranted questions and objections come with added tasks and restraints, which end up increasing the weight of responsibility.

The Prophet (saw) has in fact stated:

“Leave me to myself, as long as I leave you to yourselves. People before you were destroyed for no other reason than asking their prophets unnecessary questions and

disputing the answers they got. For that reason, do what I command you to do, to the best of your abilities. And if I ban you from something, then avoid it at all costs." (Muslim, Hajj, 412)

- The Israelites were asked to slaughter a cow, as they had previously worshipped a calf. It was for them to completely understand that the species had no divine powers. Man's inner instincts for servanthood can at times mislead him to search for god inside the universe he inhabits and the limited scope of his understanding.

- The Israelites kept dragging their feet to find the killer, which only added to the tension, with certain groups blaming each other for the crime. With the sacrifice of the cow, calm was restored.

- The event also dispelled the doubts many Israelites had about life after death.

The Prophet's (saw) Encounter with Moses (as) on the Night Journey

During the *Miraj*, the Prophet (saw) came across Moses (as) a number of times. And on one of those occasions, the Prophet (saw) was stopped by Moses (as), after he returned from the Almighty's presence with fifty daily prayers. He said:

"My experience with the Israelites tells me that your nation will not be able to deal with that!" He suggested the Prophet (saw) return to the Lord and ask for some leniency.

This encounter repeated itself five times. Each time the Prophet (saw) returned to the presence of the Almighty, the daily prayers were reduced, up until he was left with five.⁹⁷

The most important lesson here is the need to draw lessons from history and the experiences of past people.

Korah

Korah, or Qarun, was either Moses' (as) uncle or cousin. After Moses (as), no person recited the Torah better. He was a poor man, who depended on the help of others to get by. Through the prayers of Moses (as), he became a master in alchemy, which is the skill to turn base metal into gold.

Prior to becoming a believer, Korah was the representative of the Israelites in the Pharaoh's court. He was not a particularly just man. He oppressed those under him. However, after accepting Moses' (as) call, he devoted himself to worshipping, and sought knowledge and wisdom.

97. See, Bukhari, Salat, 1; Muslim, Iman, 263.

However, one day, Satan appeared to Korah in human form. In time, they became friends. When their friendship matured, Satan found a ripe opportunity to make an offer.

“Listen, Korah”, he said. “Instead of living off charity, let us go and work for a day. We can still reserve six days a week to worship the Lord and seek knowledge!”

Korah liked the idea. So, together, they headed downtown to work for a day. With the pay they got, they managed for the next six days, which they spent doing what they had done before.

But Satan had already got a compromise; and was quick to make another offer:

“Look, Korah”, he said. “We were able to make to do without relying on anyone else. I suggest we now work for half a week and worship the Lord in the other half! That way, we can even help the poor with the extra money we make!”

Korah had already made one compromise; and this sounded like an even better idea. So, they got to working. However, now, Satan had free reign to drive home another idea.

“Let us work more and earn more!” he said. “We will make more poor souls happy. Plus, we will still have time to devote to the Lord!”

The love of the world that had slowly sipped into Korah’s heart had then completely submerged it. Before long, he became an extremely rich man, thanks to the art of alchemy he had learned from Moses (as). He was now gripped with greed and ambition, and lost every good quality he had. He was adrift in arrogance and conceit. Yet, to begin with, he had only become wealthy through a skill that Moses (as) had taught him.

The Qur’an says:

إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ وَآتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ
لَتَنْتُوهُ بِالْعُضْبَةِ أُولِي الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ

“Korah was from the people of Moses, but he tyrannized them. And We gave him treasures whose keys would burden a band of strong men. His people said to him, ‘Do not boast! Allah does not like boasters!’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 76)

Korah’s heart was enamored with the world and he had become sick of Moses’ (as) advices. He did not want to hear any of it. When Aaron (as) and his tribe, the Levites, were given the responsibility of performing sacrificial rites, Korah could no longer hide his anger.

“Moses!”, he protested. “You have chosen your brother, Aaron to perform the sacrificial rites. You have given me nothing, even though no one can recite the Torah as well as I can! I am clearly superior to Aaron! How do you expect me to put up with this kind of injustice?”

“It was not me who chose Aaron”, Moses (as) said calmly. “It was Allah!”

However, Korah was adamant. “I will not acknowledge Aaron, unless you show me a proof!”

So, Moses (as) gathered leaders of each tribe of Israel.

“Lay down your walking sticks”, he told them. “Leave them inside the temple. And whoever’s walking stick turns green, deserves the duty of performing the sacrificial rites!”

The only walking stick that started branching out leaves was Aaron’s (as). Moses (as) then turned to Korah and asked, “So, do you still think it was me who chose Aaron?”

As much as he knew the truth of the matter, Korah still fell weak to his ego. As he walked out in anger, he remarked, “This is pure magic!”

The Almighty had ordered the Israelites to wear a blue stripe on their clothes. Korah remonstrated, saying:

“That can only be worn to separate slaves from their masters!”

By now, Korah’s hatred for Moses (as) had reached fever pitch. The fire of jealousy deep within his ego was melting him alive. To draw people towards him, he began holding lavish feasts, where he would talk about how superior he was to the rest.

One day, Moses (as) asked Korah to calculate his alms and pay up, as had been commanded by Allah.

“Are you now coveting my wealth?” Korah exclaimed. “This is all my hard earned money!”

The Almighty then addressed him with the words:

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا
أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

“Seek the home of the hereafter through what Allah has given you, and do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you.

And do not desire corruption in the land. Allah certainly does not like corrupters.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 77)

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيَتْهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرَ جَمْعًا وَلَا يُسْأَلُ عَنْ ذُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ. فَخَرَجَ عَلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا يَا لَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَارُونُ إِنَّهُ لَذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ. وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيَلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِمَنْ آمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَلَا يُلَاقَاهَا إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ

“He said, ‘I was only given it because of my knowledge!’

Did he not know that Allah had destroyed generations greater than him in power and wealth? But the criminals will not even be asked about their sins!

So, he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, ‘Oh, if only we had what Korah had! He is a man of great fortune!’

But those who had been given knowledge said, ‘Shame on you! The reward of Allah is better for he who believes and does good. And no one is granted it, except the patient!’” (Al-Qasas, 28: 78-80)

The Slander

One day, Korah gathered the Israelites. He also called Moses (as) to attend. Once he came, Korah said:

“Now, Moses! Do tell us about Allah’s commands! What becomes of a convicted thief or an adulterer?”

“A thief’s hand is cut, while an adulterer is stoned to death!” Moses (as) said.

“And if you were found guilty of the crime?” Korah asked.

“The same goes for me”, replied Moses (as).

Korah now went on to execute a sinister plan. He called out to a woman in the crowd and said, “Come! Come and explain the evil deed you committed with Moses!”

The slander had made Moses (as) furious. By this time, the woman had moved through the crowd and was standing right next to them. She wanted to speak but could not. She became tongue-tied.

Moses (as) angrily asked, “Speak, woman! For the sake of Allah who split the sea and revealed the Torah, speak the truth! Do I know you? And do I have any relation to you?”

The woman regretfully said, “The truth, Moses, is that Korah gave me a lot of money and bribed me to defame you!” With deep remorse, she then repented.

Moses (as) fell prostrate.

“My Lord”, he prayed. “Punish them!”

With that prayer, the ground cracked open to swallow up Korah and his followers, as well as his entire wealth. They all sunk to the bottom of the earth.

Allah the Almighty declares:

فَحَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبِدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ فَمَا كَانَ لَهُ مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَنْصُرُونَهُ
مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُتَّصِرِينَ

“And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And he had no company to help him other than Allah. Neither could he help himself!” (Al-Qasas, 28: 81)

What destroyed Korah was his love for the world and jealousy of others. The Qur’an, in fact, teaches us, in the form of a prayer, the need to seek refuge in the Almighty from those who foster feelings of jealousy:

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ. مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ. وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ.
وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ. وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ

“Say, ‘I seek refuge in the Lord of daybreak. From the evil of that which He created. And from the evil of darkness when it settles. And from the evil of the blowers in knots. And from the evil of an envier when he envies.’” (Al-Falaq, 1-5)

All that awaits the jealous is defeat. In fact, when the people saw the miserable end of Korah and his men, they immediately regretted what they had hoped for earlier.

وَأَصْبَحَ الَّذِينَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَقُولُونَ وَيُكَانُّ اللَّهُ يَنْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ
لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَوْلَا أَنْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا وَيُكَانَّهُ لَا
يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ. تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

“And those who had wished for his position the previous day began to say, ‘Oh, how Allah gives to and withholds from He wills! If Allah had favored us, He would have caused the earth to swallow us, too! Oh, how the disbelievers do not succeed!’

We assign that home of the hereafter to those who do not boast upon the earth and desire corruption. And the best outcome is for the righteous.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 82-83)

The story of Korah lays bare the terrible outcome that awaits the jealous and the arrogant, and those who lose themselves in the world and forget about the hereafter.

Also, in regards to the slander incident, Sufis have commented:

Moses’ (as) heart was anguished by his accidental killing of the baker back in Egypt. Even the Almighty had said to his face that **“...you killed someone!”** (Ta Ha, 20: 40). In a way, the Almighty had admonished him for killing the Copt without being told or allowed to do so.

It was a thorn in Moses’ (as) side; and there came a time, when it began to pierce his heart. It was never his intention to play the oppressor. But the act he committed of his own doing, ended up bringing upon him allegations of things he had never done.

The elders have therefore said:

“Unless you curb your passion to do things that do not rest on divine commands, they will clean you up with your own sword, and you will become the victim of your own device!”

The Meeting with Khidr (as)

In the years that followed the Pharaoh’s drowning in the Red Sea, Moses (as) captivated listeners with his eloquent and impassioned speeches. His people were left in awe of the depth of his knowledge and wisdom. One day, one of them asked:

“Prophet of Allah! Is there anyone on the face of this earth more knowledgeable than you?”

“Not that I know of”, Moses (as) replied.

However, the moment he said those words, it was revealed to him that:

“I have a servant where the two seas meet, whom I have given a special kind of knowledge (*ladunni*). Take one of your select followers and go to him!”

The person referred to was Khidr (as).

“How can I find that person, my Lord?” Moses (as) asked.

The Almighty told him to put a salted, dead fish in his saddlebag; and said that the spot where the fish would come to life and jump back in the sea, is where Khidr (as) would be waiting.

Moses (as) immediately set out on the road, taking his nephew Joshua with him.

The Qur'an recounts:

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِفَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا

“And how about the time when Moses said to his servant, ‘I will not stop walking until I reach the junction where the two seas meet!’” (Al-Kahf, 18: 60)

A depiction by Rumi brings to light the wisdoms that underlie this incident:

“Listen up, generous one! Take a look at just who is showing so much spiritual enthusiasm: a person spoken to by Allah! But lend an ear to what he is saying:

‘Even though I have so many ranks, I feel as though I do not exist. So, I am looking for Khidr to shine a light on my spirit, for places beyond!’

When Moses (as) decided to go and find Khidr, his people exclaimed:

‘What? You are leaving your people behind to track down a man much lower than you? You are a prophet, who has been set free from both fear and hope. You have nothing to worry about. Why do you want to waste your time and effort in searching him? What you search for is within you. You well know that. You are a prophet as high as the skies. How long must you walk on the ground?’

However, Moses (as) said to them:

‘Please, do not stand between the sun and the moon! I am the crescent of prophet-hood while he is the sun of sainthood. There are prophets greater than I but no saint is greater than Khidr.’

He continued speaking:

‘So, I will now go to where the two seas meet, to find a saint who is the king of the times.

I will use Khidr as a means to reach the truth and wisdom. I will cover long distances, if that is what it takes to see him.

With the wind of divine help behind me, I will fly to him with wings of resolution. I will find him, even if it takes me thousands of years. Is not this trip worth finding that gem?’”



So, when Moses (as) and Joshua:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنِهِمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا

“...reached the junction where the seas meet, they forgot their fish. It slipped away and found its way into the sea.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 61)

According to one report, the pair had taken a break and Moses (as) was having a nap, when Joshua saw the fish suddenly come back to life and make a splash into the sea. But he forgot to tell Moses (as). After a while, Moses (as) woke up, and urged Joshua:

“Let’s get a move on. We probably still have a fair distance to cover!”

So, they walked a few more hours, until they sat underneath a tree.

فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتَاهُ آتِنَا غَدَاءَنَا لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبًا

“So, when they had passed beyond it, Moses said to the young man:

‘Bring us our meal. This journey has certainly taken a lot out of us!’ (Al-Kahf, 18: 62)

It was only then that Joshua remembered.

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوَيْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْحُوتَ وَمَا أَنسَانِيهِ إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أَذْكُرَهُ وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا. قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغُ فَارْتَدَّ عَلَى آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا. فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا آتِيَنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا

“The young man said, ‘You know, what? I forgot the fish at the rock we took a break on! And it was no one but Satan, who made me forget to tell you! Amazingly, it just found a way back into the sea!’

Moses said, ‘That is what we have been waiting for!’

So they followed their footprints and returned. And they found a servant from among Our servants to whom We had given mercy from us and taught knowledge from Our presence.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 63-65)

The Qur’an refers to this ‘knowledge from Allah’s presence’ with the word *ladunn*. This is from which the special kind of wisdom, known in Sufism as ‘*ladunn*’, gets its name. Sufi knowledge is reserved to certain able people. Its essence is piety, while its aim is spiritual perfection (*ihsan*). In other words, this type of knowledge has to do with the heart. Every person has a responsibility to seek this knowledge, as much as his aptitude and capacity allow. One has to develop his capa-

bilities for the sake of his own salvation. This is possible only through purifying and refining the soul. The wisdom referred to as *ladunn* is a knowledge given by Allah at the end of this spiritual training. It cannot be learnt from books. This is indicated by the way in which Allah describes Khidr (as) as possessing a knowledge:

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا

“...taught to him from Our presence.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 65)

Allah also declares:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمُ اللَّهُ

“Fear Allah, and Allah will teach you.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 282)

Ali (ra) is also reported to have said:

“Inner knowledge is certain secrets and wisdoms from the mysteries of Allah (jj), which He instills in whoever’s heart He wills.” (Al-Suyuti, al-Jami’ al-Saghir, II, 52)



Moses (as) at last found the man he was told to seek, wrapped in his mantle on top a rock. He greeted him and said:

“I am Moses!”

“So you are the prophet of the sons and daughters of Israel!”, said Khidr (as).

“Are you the man about whom Allah says is the most knowledgeable among all men and women?” Moses (as) asked him.

“You see, Moses”, he said, “I have been given a knowledge you do not have. And you have been given a knowledge I do not have!”⁹⁸

Moses (as) asked Khidr (as) to teach him what he knew. This meant learning the inner wisdoms of events that appeared strange to the naked eye, and impossible to make sense of through reason.

قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِي مِمَّا عَلَّمْتَ رُشْدًا

“Moses said to him, ‘May I accompany you, so that you can teach me the wisdom you have been taught?’” (Al-Kahf, 18: 66)

Nevertheless, Khidr (as) responded:

98. See, al-Bukhari, Tafsir, 18/2, 3, 4; Anbiya, 27; Muslim, Fadail, 170/2380.

قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا. وَكَيْفَ تَصْبِرُ عَلَىٰ مَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ خُبْرًا

“You will not be able keep patient with me. And how are you supposed to keep patient about what your knowledge does not encompass?” (Al-Kahf, 18: 67-68)

With that, Khidr (as) had offered his first glimpse of insight. He informed Moses (as) about his psychological frame of mind, as well as his own manner of conduct. In the end, his diagnosis would prove to be true. Moses’ (as) share in this journey was to acknowledge his place and learn a lesson in patience. In a way, Khidr (as) was implying:

“It is not within your means to put up with me. But you are excused, as the highest level of this special kind of knowledge has not been given to you.”

Nevertheless, Moses (as) assured him:

قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنِ شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا وَلَا أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا

“You will find me, if Allah wills, patient, and I will not disobey you in any order.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 69)

In response, Khidr (as) laid down a condition:

“If you are to follow me, then do not ask me questions about anything, unless I reveal its secret! That is to say, do not even make an inquiry, let alone get into to an argument with me!”

قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ أُحَدِّثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا

“He said, ‘Then if you follow me, do not ask me about anything until I tell you about it!’ (Al-Kahf, 18: 70)

So their famous journey began. The Qur’an explains their incredible voyage as follows:

فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا قَالَ أَخَرَقْتَهَا لِتُغْرَقَ أَهْلُهَا
لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا إِمْرًا. قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا.
قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا

“So they set out, until they embarked on a ship, and Khidr put a hole in it.

Moses said, ‘Did you put a hole in the ship to drown the people on it? You have certainly done a grave thing!’

Khidr said, ‘Did I not tell you that you would be unable to keep patient with me?’

Moses said, ‘Do not blame me for something I forgot. And do not make things difficult for me.’ (Al-Kahf, 18: 71-73)

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“And that was the first time during the journey that Moses (as) was forgetful. Just as that happened, a sparrow came and landed on the side of the deck, and stuck its beak in the water. Khidr (as) then said to Moses (as):

‘Compared to Allah’s knowledge, the combined knowledge of you, I and entire creation, is no greater than the drop that bird has snatched out of the sea!’” (Al-Bukhari, Tafsir, 18/2-4)

فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا لَقِيَا غُلَامًا فَقَتَلَهُ قَالَ أَقْتَلْتَنِي بِنَفْسِي بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ
لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُكْرًا. قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا. قَالَ إِنْ
سَأَلْتُكَ عَنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا تُصَاحِبْنِي قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِنْ لَدُنِّي عُذْرًا

“So they set out once again, until when they met a boy and Khidr killed him.

Moses said, ‘How could you kill an innocent soul, when it has not killed anyone? You have certainly done something deplorable!’

Khidr said, ‘Did I not tell you that you would be unable to keep patient with me?’

Moses said, ‘If I ask you about anything else after this, then do not keep me as a companion. I have surely run out of excuses!’” (Al-Kahf, 18: 74-76)

In other words, Moses (as) was telling Khidr (as) that he had exhausted all possibilities of making another apology.

فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّى إِذَا أَتِيَا أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ اسْتَطَعَمَا أَهْلَهَا فَأَبَوْا أَنْ يُضَيِّفُوهُمَا فَوَجَدَا
فِيهَا جِدَارًا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقُضَ فَأَقَامَهُ قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَاتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا.
قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ سَابِقُكَ بِتَأْوِيلِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

“So, again, they set out, until when they came to a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to take them in as guests. And there, they found a wall that was about to collapse, and Khidr fixed it.

Moses said, ‘You surely could have at least asked for a payment!’

Khidr said, “This the end of the road for us. Let me now give you an insight into the things about which you could not keep patient.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 77-78)

أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسَاكِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَعِيبَهَا
وَكَانَ وَرَاءَهُمْ مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا. وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ
أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنَيْنِ فَخَشِينَا أَنْ يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا. فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ
يُبَدِّلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِنْهُ زَكَاةً وَأَقْرَبَ رُحْمًا.

“As for the ship, it belonged to poor people working at sea. I wanted to damage it, as behind them was a king who seized every undamaged ship by force. As for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared that he would overburden them by transgression and disbelief. So we intended that their Lord should give them a child, purer and more merciful, in exchange.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 79-81)

وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ
أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا فَآرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِنْ
رَبِّكَ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

“And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city. Beneath the wall, there was a treasure for them, and their father was a righteous man. So as a mercy, your Lord willed⁹⁹ that that they reach maturity and take out their treasure. I did not do any of that out of my own choosing. And that is the insight into all that you could not keep patient about.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 82)

Regarding the treasure hidden in the wall, Abu Dharr (ra) narrates the following from the Prophet (saw):

“The treasure mentioned by Allah (jj) was a golden tablet, straight and smooth, inscribed with the words:

99. In explaining the wisdom underlying the three incidents, Khidr (as) speaks of three agents or executors of each action. In the first, he says ‘I wanted to’, in the second, ‘We intended’ and in the third, ‘your Lord willed it’. Sufis say that these point to the three different types of disposal saints are given. The first is where God gives the saint freedom to do something and creates the desired result. As evidence, they cite these words from the Prophet (saw):

“God has many servants, ragged and scruffy, looked down on by people and banished from every corner. But if they were to swear that something was going to happen, God makes that thing happen.” (Muslim, Birr, 138/2622)

The second is where the person does something that falls in line with God’s will.

And the third are actions that are direct results of God’s command.

‘I am amazed at a person who becomes distraught and depressed, even though he believes in fate. I am amazed at a person who is able to laugh, even though he remembers hell. And I am amazed at a person who is unmindful, even though he remembers death. There is no god but Allah and Muhammed is His messenger.’” (Ibn Kathir, Qisasul Anbiya, p. 424)



So, it appears that while questions are considered half of knowledge in general, they are prohibited when it seeking the knowledge of *ladunn*. Here, the ego is trained not so much to become proactive but rather to become spiritually capable.

To give an example to explain the above encounter, Sinan the Architect’s knowledge and expertise were greater than all the artisans who worked in the construction of Suleymaniye Mosque. But it is still no fault on part of Sinan that he may not have known the art of processing a marble as well as a marble cutter. At the end of the day, the artisans are all under Sinan’s command.

So, while it may be remarkable that a prophet of the caliber of Moses (as) was told to seek knowledge from Khidr (as), it is not unreasonable. It is not a deficiency on part of Moses (as) that he was advised to seek the knowledge of *ladunn* from its master. It was also to show Moses (as) that he knew only as much as had been taught by Allah and there were many other sciences he had not mastered. And the fact that Moses (as) was made to acquire this knowledge from someone below him, also shows that even prophets are helpless in the face of what they do not know. Only the Prophet (saw), who is aptly described as *Dhuljanahayn*, ‘the two-winged’, would combine the outer knowledge of Moses (as) and inner knowledge of Khidr (as). Thus, this was also to give both of them an idea of the greatness and perfection of the rank of the final prophet to come. And this is the subtler wisdom behind the encounter.

The story of Khidr (as) also shows that the human mind can only make sense of a thing or an event, if it knows its cause and reason. Without these, the mind is left in the dark about the wisdom underlying the event and is unable to put it into perspective.

On the other hand, Moses (as) was a prophet who had a law (*sharia*) to uphold and apply, while Khidr (as) acted in line with the special kind of knowledge he had been given. Thus, Moses (as) kept on remonstrating to Khidr (as), only because he was sensitive to protect the boundaries of divine law. He was responsible only with the external state of affairs, and his knowledge was bound to the present, the here-and-now. And he judged matters in that perspective.

But through his knowledge of *ladunn*, Khidr (as) had insight into the future and knew how things would pan out in the long run. And, in a sense, he made Moses

(as) watch the screen of fate and see it for himself. So, there is really no contradiction between their seemingly conflicting approaches. Khidr (as) was simply acting according to a knowledge that defied reason and judgement.

So, it is clear that there are truths within the universe that are impossible to grasp through reason. It is therefore incorrect to just rely on reason to find the truth. Just as eyes can only see up to a certain distance and ears can only hear sounds at a certain range, the human mind also has its limits in making sense of events, as well as understanding the truth. Once reason oversteps that boundary, the understanding totally breaks down, at which point the heart must surrender to the Truth.

Ghazzali, for one, came to realize that it was impossible to unlock divine mysteries through reason, as there came a point where it could go no further. Therefore, it was necessary to make the rest of the journey with the heart.

In his major work, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, Ghazzali exposes the weakness of reason by refuting the philosophers' arguments. And there, he explains his own frame of mind:

"I stretched my reason to the point it almost tore open, and realized, that after a certain point, it simply fails to move beyond. And I then understood that there is no other way to grasp and unravel divine mysteries than through seeking spiritual inspiration from the Prophet (saw).

So I prayed and begged the Almighty. And after years of contemplation, abstinence and dhikr, I made it to the spirituality of the Prophet (saw) and was saved."

In fact, this is how the events featured in the story of Khidr (as) appear to the naked reason:

On the surface, putting a hole in the ship was tyranny to its poor owners. But in reality, it was to prevent their only means of livelihood from falling in the hands of tyrants.

Again, at first glance, the killing of the boy was murder. But in essence, it was to save both the boy, as well as his parents, from eternal dismay.

It also appears illogical for the pair to repair a wall in a town, from which they were basically told to get out. But it was only to hide and protect what rightfully belonged to two innocent orphans.

The answers to these riddles are solved only through a knowledge of *ladunn*, which is a science of the heart. For the same reason, the secret of fate cannot be exposed through reason alone. Understanding the mystery of fate is far beyond the capabilities of reason.

Regarding this story, the Prophet (saw) has said:

“May Allah have mercy on Imran’s son Moses! Who knows of the many more bizarre and extraordinary things Khidr could have taught him, if only he kept patient!”
(Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 27; Ahmad ibn Hanbal, V, 118)

Rumi offers a wonderful example to show how this special kind of wisdom is a matter of providence and given only to those with able hearts:

“It was only Jacob (as) who saw the extraordinariness in the face of Joseph (as). The brothers were unable to see that light. Their hearts were far removed from what was required to see Joseph in the way he really was.

The food for spirit is love, while the soul only craves for food.

And when Jacob (as) saw his own qualities in Joseph (as), his heart inclined towards him.

For Jacob (as), Joseph (as) had a certain pull. That is why he was able to smell his shirt from a long distance. But the brother, who brought the shirt all the way from Egypt, was unable to smell it.

Many a scholar has no share of wisdom. He has committed every knowledge to memory but has been unable to commit himself to the Lord.¹⁰⁰

Three Good Men

The Israelites also had righteous people. Three of them feature in the below story relayed by the Prophet (saw):

“There lived three men before you, who set out on a journey together. The dark fell and they entered a cave to spend the night in. Then, a rock rolled down from the mountain and blocked their exit.

After discussing what to do, they decided that nothing could save them except praying to the Lord with a mention of the good deeds they had done in the past.

So, the first one prayed:

‘My Lord! I had an elderly mother and father. I would never feed either my kids or livestock, before feeding them. One day, I had drifted afar to collect some wood. And by the time I returned, it was night, and my parents were fast asleep. I still prepared dinner for them. But I was in two minds about whether to wake them up. In the end, I decided it was best not to. But, at the same time, I did not feel comfortable feeding my kids before them. So, with a bowl of milk in my hand, I waited all night for them to wake up. My kids were tugging at my legs, crying from hunger. Then morning broke. My parents woke up and had their milk.

100. For more detail on this, see Osman Nuri Topbas, *İmandan İhsana Tasavvuf*, p. 341-368.

My Lord! If I did that only for Your sake, then please remove this rock out of our way!

The rock then slightly made way but the gap was still too small to pass through.

The second man then prayed:

'My Lord! My uncle had a daughter. I loved her as much as a man could possibly love a woman. I wanted to be with her but she refused. A few years later, a drought hit and she came to me for help. I told her I would give her 100 coins, if she surrendered to me. She was helpless, and had no other choice than to agree. So, the time came, we were alone; and just as I was about to reach for her, she said:

'Fear Allah and do not force me without right!'

Your fear then came upon me, and I pulled back from the woman I dearly loved, even though she had been cornered. And I gifted her the money I had given.

My Lord! If I did that solely for Your sake, then let this rock make way!

The rock moved but the gap was still too small to pass through.

And then, the third man prayed:

'My Lord! I hired a few workers to do a job, and paid them all. But one of them left without collecting his pay. So, I invested his money and increased it on his behalf. After some time, the man returned to ask for his payment. I said to him:

'These camels, cows and sheep that you see are the profits of your pay. Take them all. They are yours!'

'Are you having me on?' asked the man.

'I am only telling you the truth', I assured him.

So, the man went away and drove all the livestock with him. He did not leave a single one behind.

My Lord! If I did that only for Your sake, then take this rock away from the mouth of the cave!

Finally, the rock slipped away, and the men continued their journey." (Al-Bukhari, Buyu, 98; Ijarah, 12, Muslim, Dhikr, 100)



This serves as proof for the Sufi practice of seeking help (*tawassul*) through good deeds. From another vantage, it also shows that grace comes to those who put the pleasure of Allah above all things else.

For that reason, a person must avoid following his own desires, and instead, follow the orders of his Creator. He must contentedly submit to Allah's will; for contentedness and submission are the ultimate fruits of love.

The greatest rank a person could ever reach is for Allah to be pleased with him. And in essence, this is simply a reward for being pleased with Allah to begin with.

The Qur'an describes this as:

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

"Allah is pleased with them and they with Him" (Al-Bayyinah, 98: 8)

And this is a state of mind only the righteous have.

Moses' (as) Neighbor in Paradise

It is narrated that Moses (as) one day prayed to Allah and asked, "My Lord, who will be my neighbor in heaven?"

He was told:

"A butcher living in such-and-such place, who is close to me. But aside from being a butcher, he has another, more important job, which would prevent him from coming if you were to invite him. That man, Moses, will be your eternal neighbor!"

Once more, Moses (as) set out to meet him. He arrived at the man's shop; and without revealing his identity, said:

"I have come to you as a guest!"

The butcher saw that the guest had a comforting expression that was different than the rest. He welcomed him with a warm smile and took him to his home. He lodged Moses (as) at the most comfortable part of his house, and offered him meat he cooked with his own hands. He then urged Moses (as) to start eating without waiting for him, as he had a very important job to take care of. In the meantime, he cut some of the cooked meat into very fine pieces. He then stood up, and carefully lowered a woven basket hanging on the wall. Inside, was a frail woman, who had become almost as tiny as a bird from old age. He then began to feed her the small pieces of meat he had prepared. After the meal, he softly wiped her mouth and cleaned her. He then hugged and caressed her, like a baby, and delicately put her back in the basket. All along, the old lady was murmuring a few words, almost inaudible and certainly impossible to make out.

Moses (as) had noticed the same basket inside the man's butcher shop. He curiously looked on.

When the butcher returned, he noticed Moses (as) had not yet begun eating.

“Why have you not started, my dear friend?” he jovially asked.

“I will not start”, Moses (as) said, “until you explain to me the secret of that woven basket.”

“That woman inside the basket”, the butcher said, “is my mother. She is old and weak; and I have no one to take care of her. There are times when I have to leave her on her own. But I worry that a creepy-crawly or some other pest will bother her. So, I place her in that basket and hang it up on the wall. Sometimes, I take her with me to the shop. My entire peace of mind comes from looking after her. I prepare her two meals a day and attend to all her needs, with my entire heart and soul!”

“She kept on murmuring something. What was she saying?” Moses (as) asked.

The butcher replied, “Every time I attend to her, she prays, ‘May you become a neighbor to Moses in paradise!’ I smile every time I hear that, to think how far-fetched it would be for an ordinary man like me to be a neighbor to such a great prophet.”

It was then that Moses (as) revealed his identity.

“Well, my good friend, I am Moses! The Lord sent me to you, so I could meet my neighbor in paradise. And I now see the deed that has taken you there!”

The butcher shed tears of joy and kissed the hands of Moses (as) out of respect and excitement. Together, they proceeded to have their meal in peace and comfort.

The Virtues and Appearance of Moses (as)

About him, the Almighty has declared:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ آذَوْا مُوسَى
فَبَرَّأَهُ اللَّهُ مِمَّا قَالُوا وَكَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَجِيهًا

“O you who have believed! Be not like those who abused Moses, then Allah cleared him of what they said. He was distinguished in the sight of Allah.”

(Al-Ahzab, 33: 69)

Moses (as) is a prophet of high honor and value in the sight of Allah.

One indication of that is that he interceded on behalf of his brother, Aaron (as) and prayed to Allah to make him his aide. Allah instantly accepted his prayer and made Aaron (as) a prophet alongside him.

The Qur’an says:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا

“And out of Our mercy, We gave him his brother Aaron as a prophet.”

(Maryam, 19: 53)

Abdullah ibn Umar (ra) narrates that the Prophet (saw) once divided some stuff among the people, when a man, unhappy with what he got, retorted, “This is an unfair division that has not taken Allah’s pleasure into account!”

When news of this was delivered to the Prophet (saw), he became visibly angry, and said:

“May Allah have mercy on Moses! He kept patient, despite having to put up with a lot more than this.” (Al-Bukhari, Anbiya, 28)

Moses (as) features prominently in the Qur’an, and on many occasions, his name is mentioned alongside the Prophet (as). And similarly, the Torah is often cited alongside the Qur’an itself.



Regarding Moses’ (as) appearance, Ibn Abbas (ra) relays the following from the Prophet (saw):

“I saw Mary’s son Jesus, Moses and Abraham. Jesus had a red complexion, with curly hair and a broad chest. Moses was bulky man with straight hair.”

The companions then asked about Abraham (as). The Prophet (saw) then said:

‘Just take a look at his friend’.

He was referring to himself.” (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, I, 296)

There are number of reports regarding his death. The most accepted one is that he passed away at the age of 120 and was buried near Jerusalem.

Peace be upon him...



JUDAISM TODAY

Judaism's Conception of God

Jews say they believe in one God. However, certain parts of the Torah in circulation today show that their belief in God is tainted by anthropomorphism, which is where gods are thought to resemble humans or other created beings. This falls at odds with the belief that God is transcendent and beyond imagination.

In Judaism, God carries the names Yahweh and Elohim. Jewish scholars refer to the parts of Torah that feature the name Yahweh, as Yahwist texts. These are believed to have been written around the 10th century BC and they clearly depict an anthropomorphic god. Likewise, the parts of the Torah that mention the name Elohim are known as Elohist texts. Reports say these were written around the 7th century BC and were later merged with the other parts, to form the Torah as we know it today.

For Jews, Yahweh is also a national god. Yahweh exclusively chose the Jewish nation and reserved His interest and favor only to them. True, other nations and beings have also been created but they have no value like the Jews do. Due to this belief, Judaism is unable to establish a universal world order that could embrace entire humankind in equal measure.

Later Jewish scholars have said that the Torah's portrayal of God as having human traits should be interpreted in light of metaphor. They say it was only because God wanted to communicate with Jews in a manner they could understand; and that it is, therefore, only natural that God is described through anthropomorphic qualities.

Yet, too many passages of today's Torah contradict the above approach, in that they depict God as having not only human qualities but also deficiencies. Some examples include:

After seeing humans commit so much evil, God regrets ever having created them and destroys them with the Great Flood. However, this time, he feels remorse over destroying them and promises to never do the same again. (Genesis, 6/5-7; 8/21-22)

Here, God is ascribed with human deficiencies such as erring and remorse.

Similarly, when the Israelites rebel against Him, God decides to annihilate them completely. Nevertheless, prophets step in and try to convince God not to go ahead with it. Not only does God change his mind, he also deeply regrets ever having thought about destroying them in the first place. (Exodus, 37/9-12, 14; Amos, 7/2-6)

Moreover, in the Book of Jeremiah, God reacts to the never-ending rebellions of the Israelites with the words:

“I am tired of repenting!”¹⁰¹ (Jeremiah, 15/6)

Again, the words:

“The Lord made the heavens and the earth in six days, and rested on the seventh” (Genesis, 2/3) This is another instance of ascribing weakness to God.

The fact is that resting, regretting or tiredness are deficiencies that can belong only to created beings, like humans and animals.

What is more bizarre is that today’s Torah features the below passage, which really has no place in a book that claims to have its source in divine revelation:

“The sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose.” (Genesis, 6/2)

The Book of Genesis also speaks of how God, accompanied by two angels, goes to visit Abraham, has a meal with them, washes his feet and takes a rest. Afterwards, God sends the angels to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah but he hesitates about telling Abraham this. After thinking the matter over, he decides to tell him. Afterwards, Abraham enters into a long bargain with God, trying to convince him not to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah due to the good people there. (Genesis, 18/1-15)

The Torah also tells a curious story of Jacob’s struggle with Yahweh. Accordingly, Jacob is returning from his uncle’s village to Canaan with his family. As they are passing through the desert, Jacob is intercepted by a man, who he wrestles with until the break of day.

However, towards the end, the man realizes he cannot beat Jacob, and says:

“From now on, you shall be known not as Jacob but as Israel; for you have struggled with God and men, and defeated them both!” (Genesis, 32/22-32)

The Torah also says Jacob injured the socket of his thighbone during the bout. For that reason, Jews do not eat the sinew of the thighbone on meat.

The fact that God assumes a human form to wrestle with Jacob is clearly anthropomorphic. This indicates a belief that is remote from *tawhid*. It is a belief which implies that God is imperfect and carries defects.

A similar notion can also be found in Hinduism, which holds that god appears on earth in the form of a human or animal. Hindus refer to this as an ‘avatar’.

101. Some later versions of the Old Testament translate this as, “I am tired of showing compassion.”

Jewish scholars have sought to offer various readings of these Old Testament passages. The interpretations of the Torah say that the man Jacob wrestled with was not God but rather an angel who appeared as God. However, even this presumes that a created being has the power to assume God's form. One could not possibly interpret that.

The Torah further quotes Jacob as supposedly saying:

"I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been spared" (Genesis, 32/30) which, again, defies all interpretation. Here, the meaning is too clear to require a re-read. It is also obscure as to why the Torah talks about this alleged incident. While every story needs to serve a purpose, it is unclear exactly what purpose this story serves.

As mentioned above, the Torah paints a picture of a god who is far from transcendent and afflicted with human flaws. Below are a few more examples:

"Moses heard all the families standing in the doorways of their tents whining, and the Lord became extremely angry. Moses was also very aggravated. Moses said to the Lord:

'Why are you treating me, your servant, so harshly? Have mercy on me! What did I do to deserve the burden of all these people? Did I give birth to them? Did I bring them into the world? Why did you tell me to carry them in my arms as a mother carries a nursing baby? How can I carry them to the land you swore to give their ancestors? Where am I supposed to get meat for all these people? They keep whining to me, saying, 'Give us meat to eat!' I cannot carry all these people by myself! The load is far too heavy! If this is how you intend to treat me, just go ahead and kill me. Do me a favor and spare me this misery!" (Numbers, 11/10-15)

These passages ascribe tyranny to God and also portray Moses as displaying a rebellious attitude, when he should be humbly praying to the Lord. How could this be possibly reconciled with a book that claims divine origin?

Also similar is the below passage:

"Then Adam and his wife heard the sound of the Lord as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord among the trees of the garden. However, when the Lord could not see them, he called to Adam, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'" (Genesis, 3/8-10)

All these passages can be interpreted many times over. However, they will do nothing other than confirm that the Torah has been altered and distorted.

Many scholars today say the Torah's anthropomorphic conception of God was influenced by the pagan deities of ancient Egypt and Babylonia, and that these beliefs left an impression not only Jews in general but also on the authors of the Torah.

The Torah

Today, the Torah refers to the first five books of the Old Testament: *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*. Together, they comprise the most important part of the Jews' sacred book.

These books give an account of history, beginning from creation all the way to the death of Moses (as). They also contain rulings pertaining to religious law.

Yet, the final chapter of Deuteronomy also speaks about Moses' (as) death, burial and the mourning of his people. So, given that the Torah was revealed to Moses (as) when he was alive, how can the book describe an event before it has taken place?

Jews, again, offer an interpretation. Some say that God informed these events to Moses (as) and he wrote them down in the Torah before he died. Others say that these were written by Joshua, who became the leader of the Israelites after Moses (as) passed away.

The second part of the Jewish holy book that comes after the Torah is known as *Nevi'im*, which means 'prophets'. This contains twenty-one books. There is also a third part, *Ketuvim*, meaning 'writings', which contains another thirteen sections. So, with the Torah (5), *Nevi'im* (21) and *Ketuvim* (13), the Jewish holy book has a total of 39 sections. Jews call this collection *Tanakh* (T=Torah, N=Nevi'im and K=Ketuvim). Christians refer to it as the Old Testament.

The tally of thirty-nine is according to the Christians. The Jews acknowledge this collection as consisting of twenty-four sections or even twenty-two, which is the same as the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Yet, in essence, both Jews and Christians recognize the same content. The difference in tally only stems from the fact that Christians view each section as a separate book, while Jews merge a number of chapters together and view them as one.

It is said that the sections that follow the Torah were added during the time of prophets that came after Moses (as): Book of Joshua, of Samuel, and so forth. This continued until the number of books reached 39.

It was not until around 90 and 100 AD, during the Council of Jamnia, that the Old Testament, including the Torah, was completed and officially accepted. This is approximately 1,300 years after Moses (as). At Jamnia, today's Old Testament was chosen from among many other copies, and canonized.

The Talmud

Jews believe that in addition to the written Torah, Moses also received an oral revelation from God, called the Talmud. Jews see the Talmud in the same light as the Torah, and they do not consider a person a proper Jew, unless he believes in it.

The Talmud consists of interpretations and clarifications of the Torah attributed to Moses. At first, these interpretations were passed on verbally. Later, they were written down and called the *Mishna*. This contained explanations on how to put religious commands into practice. Religious schools in Palestine and Babylonia further worked on the Mishna to produce the Talmud. And today, there are two of them: the Jerusalem Talmud and the Babylonian Talmud. These were compiled during the 4th and 5th centuries CE.

Literally, Mishna means to repeat, while Talmud is to instruct. From that vantage, Talmud is a collection of instructions on how to go about performing the commands of the Torah, where the rulings are very general. For instance, the Torah says:

“You will not sow your land on the seventh year!”

Or, “You will not work on Saturday!”

Yet, it does not provide any further details. And that is where the Talmud comes in.

However, it is not just the manner in which the Talmud was put together, that shows heavy human intervention. It also shows in the Talmud’s content.

The Talmud is dominated by the idea that Jews are the superior race. The ‘Ten Commandments’ only bind the Jews, and carry no weight or meaning for other people.

This is also the governing theme of all Jewish holy books: that Jews are God’s chosen nation. In the account of history given in the Old Testament, this gets in the way of the message that is meant to be conveyed. The most glaring example is the fact that the stories are swamped in too much detail, with long and tedious genealogies. In a word, the Jewish holy book is the history of Jews and the story of their interaction with God. Judaism is a national religion, bereft of the force to guide entire humankind to happiness, and lacking the capacity to become a universal religion.

The Conception of Prophethood

Judaism has a total of forty-eight prophets. The first of them was Abraham; and there are no prophets before him. Of these forty-eight, sixteen are known as canonical prophets, who are accredited by the Old Testament as being scribes or writers. Seven of them are women.

The Torah says there are true prophets, as well as false. Aside from these forty-eight prophets, those who make the claim are false prophets. The Jews do not recognize them.

According to Judaism:

1. A true prophet must call people to serve God and must not follow any other deity except God himself. (Jeremiah, 14/14, 23/21, 32)

2. A true prophet must also give news about the future, and his predictions must turn out to be correct. (Deuteronomy, 18/20-22)

Apart from these, there are no other conditions for being a prophet, like the five attributes laid down by Islam. So, a Judaic prophet may be deceitful, a tyrant, engage in illicit sexual activity, lie or be a selfish person who only thinks about his own benefit, and so forth.

And in actual fact, the way in which Jews speak about their prophets contradicts the two conditions listed above. For example, today's Torah accuses prophet Aaron of making the golden calf and ordering people to worship it (Exodus. 32/1-5, 24, 35). The Jews see Aaron not so much as a prophet but a helper of Moses and a priest. Although they explain this by saying Aaron was forced and pressured by his people to make the golden calf, this still cannot be reconciled with the idea of prophethood. Prophets unwaveringly stand by the truth, and in doing so, are reinforced with support from God. The Holy Qur'an has sternly rejected this slander against Aaron (as), and given the true version of events. Aaron (as) was not an idol maker. He was rather a prophet who tried to stop it being made, for which he was almost lynched to death by a mob of Israelites leaning towards paganism.¹⁰²

So, just like its belief in God, the Judaic conception of prophethood is riddled with peculiarities. It ascribes certain traits to prophets that defy their nature. Adam (as), Idris (as), Noah (as) and others are not even regarded as prophets but are seen as carrying a lesser duty; though the Book of Exodus says that, time and again, they did receive divine revelation. Similarly, while David (as) and Solomon (as) are acknowledged only as kings, they, too, at times, get messages from God.

Jews also ascribe bizarre and unacceptable actions to prophets.

- a. Noah, after the Great Flood, is depicted as an alcoholic, who grows grapes and makes wine out of them to drink. One day, he drinks so much that he passes out inside his tent. As he is sleeping, his youngest son Ham walks in to find him lying naked. He runs out to tell his brothers, Sam and Yafes, who enter the tent and put a blanket on their father. When Noah wakes him up, he gets the feeling that Ham has

102. See, Al-Araf, 7: 150; Ta Ha, 20: 90-94.

done something bad. However, he curses not Ham, but Ham's son Canaan. For this reason, the name Canaan is among the most disliked by Jews. (Genesis, 9/20-29)

b. The Torah alleges that Lot slept with his daughters. After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot and his two daughters are spared, and they take refuge inside a cave. Lot falls asleep; and the daughters say to each other:

“Our father is old, and there is no man around to give us children. So, let's get him drunk and sleep with him!” (Genesis, 19/30-36)

c. Jacob tricks his twin Esau to receive his father's blessings. (Genesis, 27) Jacob again tricks his father-in-law to spare the best sheep in the flock to himself. (Genesis, 30/32-42, 31/7-16)

d. David is a king with many wives. Still, after seeing the wife of his commander Uriah, he lusts after her and ends up sleeping with her. Then he moves to have Uriah killed in battle. As a punishment, his first son to be born out of this relationship dies. The second child is Solomon. The Old Testament speaks of this alleged incident; and regarding David, merely says, “The thing David did, had displeased the Lord.” (II. Samuel, 11/2 – 12/22)

e. Solomon has a thousand wives. However, in the later stages of his life, he has affairs with pagan women and worships idols. Solomon is also criticized as doing something “...that had displeased the Lord.” (I. Kings, 11/1-7)

On top of these, the family members of some prophets are also smeared. Jacob's son, Judah sleeps with her daughter-in-law (Genesis, 38/12-26). Jacob's other son, Reuben, has an affair with his father's concubine (Genesis, 35/22). One of David's sons also sleeps with his father's concubine, while another sleeps with his stepsister (II. Samuel, 16/15, 20-23).

Of course, these are all vile slanders Jews have made up. However, far worse is the fact that they have murdered a number of prophets, such as Zachariah (as) and his son John (as).

About this, the Qur'an says:

فَبِمَا نَقَضْتُمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفِّرْتُمْ بآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلْتُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَقَوْلِهِمْ
قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

“And We cursed them for their breaking the covenant, their disbelief in the signs of Allah, their killing of the prophets without right, and for saying, ‘Our hearts are wrapped’. Rather, Allah has sealed them because of their disbelief, so they do not believe, except for a few.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 155)

In the opening chapter Fatihah, the Almighty refers to the Jews as:

“...those who have drawn His anger”.

The Conception of the Afterlife

The Torah itself has no clear information about life after death. It is only the chapters that follow that speak of how sinners will go to hell, while the pious will enter heaven. Belief in the afterlife is almost non-existent in the early phases of Jewish history. In reference to Moses who is about to die, the Torah says “...you are going to rest with your ancestors.” (Genesis, 47/30; Deuteronomy, 31/16).

Jews later began debating what happens to the dead. They were led to believe they all end up in the land of the dead, which they refer to as *sheol*.

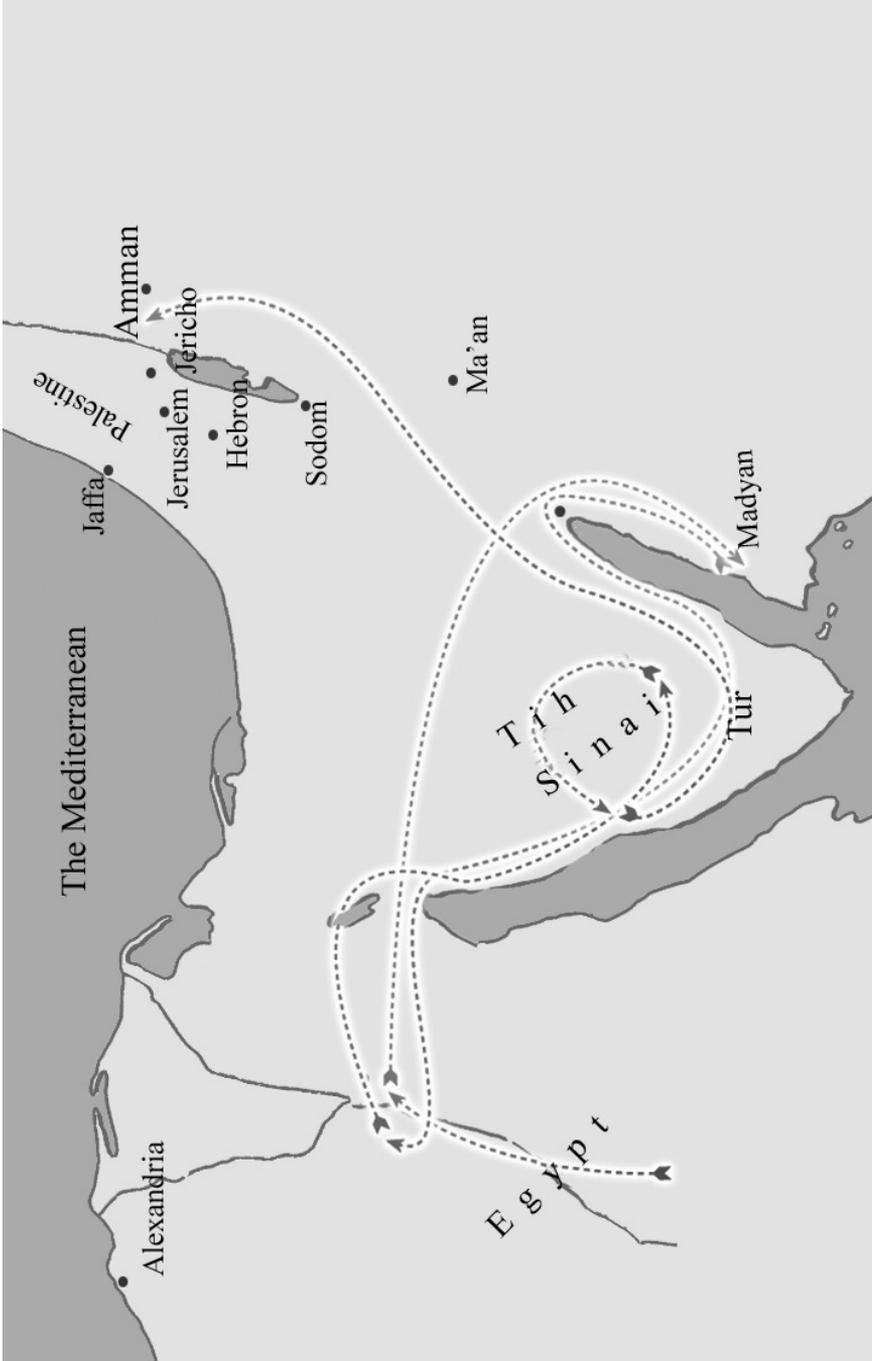
The themes of rebirth after death, eternal reward and punishment receive their first clear mention in the Book of Daniel, 12/2. Daniel lived between 586-538 BC in Babylonia, during the time of Jewish captivity.

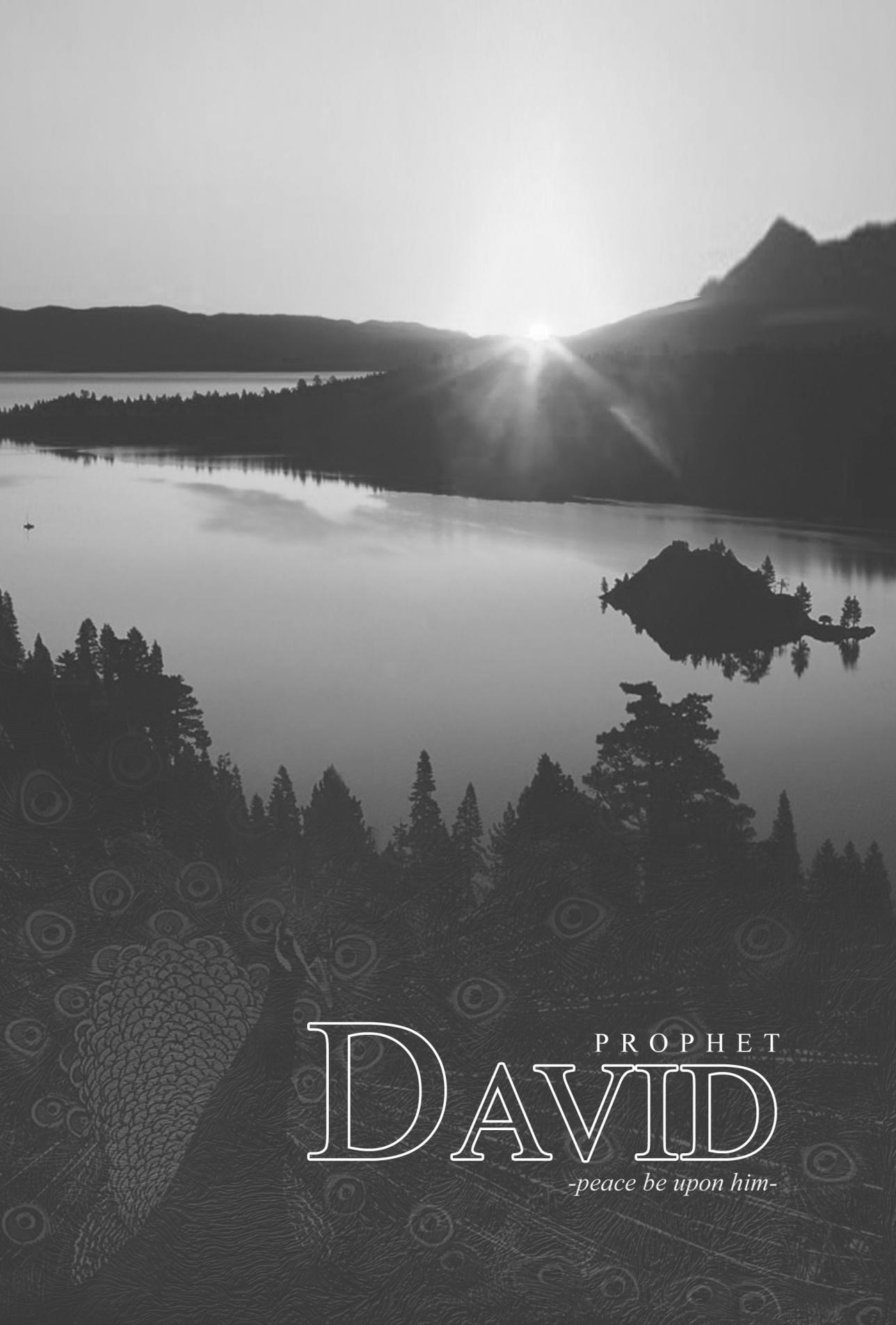
Beliefs relating to the afterlife are dealt with mainly in the Talmud. There, it is said that Jews will live in paradise forever. The sinners among Jews, however, will be put in hell; but only for twelve months, before they are released to enter paradise.

As for non-Jews, they will be punished in hell until eternity. That is because from a Judaic perspective, every non-Jew is a pagan. (Rosh Hashanah, 17a)



Prophet Moses





PROPHET
DAVID

-peace be upon him-

*The Prophet whose Hymns Sent Mountains,
Birds and Wild Animals into Rapture*

DAVID

-peace be upon him-

David (as) was born in Jerusalem and died at around the age of 100. He is a descendant of Jacob's (as) son Judah. David (as) was both a prophet and king, and according to historians, he reigned from 1015 to 975 BCE.

The Qur'an mentions David's (as) name 16 times. David (as) received the divine book the Psalms, or *Zabur*, in Hebrew.

Saul, Goliath and the Ark of the Covenant

The prophets after Moses (as) regulated the lives of the Israelites according to the Torah. However, given half a chance, especially during times when there was no prophet, the Israelites would distort the Torah's message according to their own whims and fancy. This, as a result, corrupted both their beliefs and morals until another prophet came and set them straight. Afterwards, however, they would once again resort to mischief.

At the time, the Amalekites, headed by the powerful king Goliath (*Jalut*) ruled the area between Egypt and Syria. The Almighty had sent Goliath to the Israelites as an affliction. His army had heavily defeated Israel, and snatched away many of its children and women as slaves.

Goliath had also managed to take the Ark of the Covenant, a chest that contained many holy relics since the time of Moses (as). For further insult, he threw the Ark into a pile of filth. The Qur'an refers to the Ark as *Tabut*.

The Israelites had lost their homes and wealth; and had been driven out of the their land. They were restless and especially saddened by the loss of the Ark. The only thing they could think of was to get it back.

Reports suggest that at the time, they had a prophet by the name of Samuel (as). They asked him for a king who could save them. So, Samuel (as) began to pray; and soon, Allah (jj) ordered him to declare a man called Saul (*Talut*) as king. But a certain group of Jews objected.

"Saul is not from the line of kings", they said.

Until then, the prophets of Israel came from the lineage of Jacob's (as) son Levi, while kings hailed from the line of his other son, Judah. Saul was from neither.

The Qur'an recounts:

لَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الْمَلَأِ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مُوسَى إِذْ قَالُوا لِنَبِيِّ لَهُمْ ابْعَثْ لَنَا
مَلِكًا نُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَالَ هَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ أَلَّا تُقَاتِلُوا
قَالُوا وَمَا لَنَا أَلَّا نُقَاتِلَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَقَدْ أُخْرِجْنَا مِنْ دِيَارِنَا وَأَبْنَاءِنَا فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ
عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ تَوَلَّوْا إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ

“Have you not considered when the Children of Israel gathered after Moses and said to a prophet of theirs, ‘Send to us a king, and we will fight in the way of Allah!’ He said, ‘What if you were ordered to fight but then refrained?’ They said, ‘Why should we not fight in the cause of Allah when we have been driven from our homes and away our children?’ But when they were commanded to fight, they turned away, except for a few. And Allah well knows the wrongdoers!”

(Al-Baqarah, 2: 246)

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ بَعَثَ لَكُمْ طَالُوتَ مَلِكًا قَالُوا أَنَّى
يَكُونُ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ عَلَيْنَا وَنَحْنُ أَحَقُّ بِالْمُلْكِ مِنْهُ وَلَمْ يُؤْتَ سَعَةً
مِنَ الْمَالِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاهُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَزَادَهُ بَسْطَةً فِي الْعِلْمِ
وَالْجِسْمِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤْتِي مَلِكَهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“And their prophet said to them, ‘Allah has truly sent to you Saul as king.’ They said, ‘How can he be king over us while we are worthier of it than him and he has not been given any wealth?’ He said, ‘Allah has indeed chosen him over you and profusely increased him in knowledge and stature. Allah gives His sovereignty to whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.”

(Al-Baqarah, 2: 247)

The Israelite leaders assumed that kingship belonged to people of great wealth. This idea, however, is against common good and the principle of justice. The able, not the wealthy, deserve to rule. This ability depends on one's spiritual power, knowledge and experience, as well as strength and courage.

Fakhruddin Razi notes that Samuel (as) rejected the complaints of the Israelites on four grounds:

1. It was the Almighty who chose Saul as king.

2. A king must be qualified with two things:
 - a. He must know the art of politics and governance.
 - b. He must be strong, both physically and spiritually.
3. Power is with Allah (jj) alone; and He gives it to whoever He wills.
4. Through grace, Allah (jj) makes a poor man rich; and only He knows who deserves to be king. (Fakhruddin Razi, Tafsir, VI, 147)

But the Israelites, who disapproved of Saul as king, then said:

“If he is truly king, then he should bring us a sign!”

And then:

وَقَالَ لَهُمْ نَبِيُّهُمْ إِنَّ آيَةَ مُلْكِهِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَكُمُ التَّابُوتُ فِيهِ
سَكِينَةٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَبَقِيَّةٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ آلُ مُوسَىٰ وَآلُ هَارُونَ
تَحْمِلُهَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ إِنِّي فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةٌ لِّكُمُ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ

“Their prophet said to them, ‘A sign of his kingship is that the Ark, which contains an assurance from your Lord and a remnant left by the family of Moses and Aaron, will come to you carried by the angels. That is indeed a sign, if you are true believers.’” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 248)



There are a number of reports about the Ark of the Covenant. It is narrated that the Ark was first sent down to Adam (as), who gave it to Seth (as); and it was later passed on to Abraham (as), Jacob (as) and ultimately Moses (as), who kept the tablets of the Torah and other important relics inside it. During battles, the Ark was placed in front of the army to boost the soldiers’ morale and strengthen their belief.

The Almighty had angels collect the Ark and place it in front of Saul’s house. For now, the Israelites were silenced. They had seen proof of the legitimacy of Saul’s rule. But they were about to face another test.

The Trial

After becoming king, Saul mobilized an army and set out on a campaign against Goliath.

It was the middle of summer, and the soldiers needed water more than any other time. However, Samuel (as) had received an instruction from the Almighty. He informed Saul, who then turned to the soldiers and said:

“Allah is about to test you with a stream of water. Whoever drinks from it to his heart’s content, will be expelled from the army!”

The soldiers kept marching and ultimately reached the banks of a river. They were only allowed to drink a handful of it.

According to Ibn Abbas (ra), this was the Jordan River. (Ibn Kathir, Qisasu'l Anbiya, p. 511)

When Saul got to the river, he had an army of 80,000 men. Only 4,000 of them obeyed the order. However, seeing 76,000 soldiers discharged, most of the others also fled. Only 313 soldiers were left. This is the same number of companions who fought the Battle of Badr. (Bukhari, Maghazi, 6)

Baraa (ra) narrates:

“As companions of Prophet Muhammed (saw), we would say, ‘The number of those at Badr were the same as Talut’s soldiers who passed the river: 313.’ (Bukhari, Maghazi, 6)

Yet, even though most of the soldiers drank from the river like men possessed, it did not quench their thirst. They instead got thirstier. Their lips became parched and they collapsed in pain. As for those who obeyed the order, they found out that a handful of water was all they needed. Plus, the whole episode reinforced their faith and revitalized their strength.

The Qur’an says:

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِنْهُمْ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا اللَّهَ كَمَ مِنْ فِتْنَةٍ قَلِيلَةً غَلَبَتْ فِتْنَةٌ كَثِيرَةً بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

“When Saul went forth with the soldiers, he said, ‘Allah is about to test you with a river. Whoever drinks from it is not of me. Whoever does not, is indeed of me, excepting those who drink a bit of it from their hands.’ But they drank from it, except a few. When he crossed the river along with his fellow believers, they said, ‘We have no power today against Goliath and his army!’ But those certain of meeting Allah said, ‘How many a small group has overcome a large group with the permission of Allah! And Allah is with the patient.’ (Al-Baqarah, 2: 249)

Here, the Qur'an draws attention to the importance of military discipline. Victory on the battlefield solely depends on loyally carrying out the commander's orders. It has nothing to do with having more soldiers; yet, everything to do with being on the right, having faith and spirituality. The crown of victory is placed not on the heads of armies with greater quantity, but on those with greater quality. The most lucid examples are the battles fought during the time of the Prophet (saw), and more recently, the War of Gallipoli.

David (as) and the Victory

Among those who passed the river was an eighteen-year-old young man. His name was David (as). According to Qadi Baydawi, he had enlisted in Saul's army along with his father and thirteen brothers.

David (as) was a shepherd by trade. He was known for his courage and skill in using his slingshot. One day, he told his father:

"When I sing praises of the Lord, all the mountains and stones join me in chorus!"

"Good news to you!" said his father. "It is a sign of greater things to come!"

As David (as) had a strong and beautiful voice, he was introduced to Saul. The king made him his helper. Soon, David (as) also joined the army that was about to go into battle against the Amalekites.

There was, however, another reason why David (as) was taken along. The Almighty had informed Samuel (as) that David (as) would be the one to slay Goliath. The prophet had then relayed that message onto the king.

On the way, three stones called out to David (as), saying:

"Pick us up! It is with us that you will kill Goliath!" David (as) collected the three stones, which then transformed into one big stone.

In the meantime, Saul had announced that, "Whoever kills Goliath may take my daughter's hand in marriage!"

At last, the enemy was within sight of Saul's 313 men. The Qur'an states:

وَلَمَّا بَرَزُوا لِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَفْرِغْ عَلَيْنَا صَبْرًا
وَتَبَّتْ أقدامَنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

"And when they went forth to face Goliath and his soldiers. They said, 'Our Lord, pour patience upon us, plant our feet firmly on the ground and give us victory over the disbelievers.'" (Al-Baqarah, 2: 250)

Here, the Qur'an indicates three things a person going into battle must have:

1. Patience in the face of hardships.
2. Courage and firmness.
3. Remain in a state of prayer in full confidence that divine help will come.

When the two armies met, Goliath called for an Israelite to take him on in a duel, one-on-one. David (as) stepped forward. Soldiers from both sides were stunned. Goliath was a giant of a man with enormous strength. He sized up David (as) from head to toe and jeered:

“You poor, little soul! What on earth are you thinking?”

“I am thinking of taking you on,” said David (as).

Goliath laughed it off and began mocking him. But it was all said and done, and he thought he may as well go ahead and kill the young Israelite.

Yet, the next thing he knew, he had fallen off his horse lying motionless on his back. David (as) had shot him down with his sling. A single stone had struck Goliath right on the forehead. He was dead.

Despite his physical advantage, the burly Goliath who assumed his strength made him invincible, was defeated in a flash. By this, the Almighty had shown that things happen ultimately through His will and not external reasons. The incident had sent the message that those who appear strong in the eyes of people, may in fact be weak, while those who people think are weak, may in fact be strong with the help of Allah (jj). However strong the deniers of the Lord may appear, once the Lord's will decides to take its course, they become weaker than even toddlers. Think of the example of Abrahah.

This incident also carries a more subtle wisdom. After Saul, the Almighty wanted David (as) to become king, and for his son Solomon (as) to be his heir. By making him kill Goliath, the Almighty had allowed David (as) to prove his worth, strength and courage to the entire Israelites, which would pave the way for him to become king.

The Almighty declares:

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُدُ جَالُوتَ وَاتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ
لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

“So they defeated them by permission of Allah. David killed Goliath; and Allah gave him kingship and prophethood, and taught him what He willed. And if it were not for Allah vanquishing some people through others, the earth would have been corrupted, but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 251)

Here, the Qur’an points to a divine law and order that is in force in this life on earth. If Allah (jj) did not make sultans and kings enforce justice, the powerful would undoubtedly always oppress the weak. This is why it has been narrated:

“A sultan is the shadow of Allah on earth.” (Haythami, Majmau’z Zawaid, V, 196; Daylami, Musnad, II, 343).

Uthman (ra) has said:

“Allah certainly uses a sultan to prevent an evil, which He does not prevent through the Qur’an.” (Ibn Kathir, Qisasu’l Anbiya, p. 516)

Moreover, God has pinned the establishment of social order between people to certain factors. Some people are rich, while others are poor. Some people are strong, while others are weak. Some are healthy, while others are ill. And there are some who believe in God, while there are others in denial. This is only so that the relations they institute among one another will allow them to live as a society. Just as positive and negative currents spark electricity, the conflict and battles between positive and negative people carry many wisdoms. The above verses of the Qur’an allude to some principles of divine order. And the verse that follows declares:

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“These are the signs of Allah which We recite to you in truth. And you are certainly one of the messengers.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 252)



Saul had all the spoils of war burnt. Under the law of Moses (as), war spoils were regarded impure and had to be thrown into the flames.

Saul was greeted in Jerusalem by Samuel (as).

“God has given you the victory He had promised”, the prophet told him. “Now, it is time for you to fulfil your promise!”

Saul then wed her daughter to David (as).

Following the death of Saul, David (as) became king. A short while later, he was also appointed prophet. Thus, he became the first person to be made a king and a prophet at once. He was given supremacy in spiritual finesse and ability. As declared in the Qur’an, he was also given one of the four divine books, the Psalms (*Zabur*).

وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا
بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّنَ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا

“And your Lord knows best whoever is in the heavens and the earth. We certainly gave some prophets an advantage over others, and We gave David the Psalms.” (Al-Isra, 17: 55)

For his entire life, David (as) ruled with justice. He would walk around the city in disguise, to inquire about what people thought of his policies and practices, and whether they were happy. Never did he come across a single person who spoke ill of or complained about his actions. (Qurtubi, Tafsir, XIV, 266). All the people had wholeheartedly obeyed him.

The Qur'an states:

إِصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَاذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا دَاوُدَ ذَا الْأَيْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ

“Be patient over what they say, and remember our servant David, the man of strength. He was repentant.” (Sad, 38: 17)

David (as) would also inquire about the best times to worship God. One day, he asked Jibril (as):

“What time has the most virtue?”

He replied, “All I know is that the Throne trembles near the break of dawn.” (Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Zuhd, p. 70; Ibn Abi Shaybah, Musannaf, XIII, 240)

David (as) would sleep for only a third of the night and spend the rest of the time worshipping the Lord.

Allah (jj) states:

إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحْنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ وَالطَّيْرَ مَحْشُورَةً كُلٌّ لَهُ أَوَّابٌ

“And we did make the mountains glorify Allah with him at evening and dawn. And the birds, flocked together, echoing him in chorus.” (Sad, 38: 18-19)

فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعَلَّمْنَا وَسَخَّرْنَا
مَعَ دَاوُدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ

“And we made the mountains and birds glorify Us with David. And we have done such things.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 79)

The Almighty had gifted David (as) with a beautiful and booming voice. When he recited the Psalms, wild animals would flock around him to listen. Allah (jj) had also taught David (as) the art of making armors and endowed him with exceptional skill to do so. The Qur'an states:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يَا جِبَالُ أَوِيبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ وَالنَّارَ لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ أَنْ أَعْمَلَ
سَابِغَاتٍ وَقَدِّرْ فِي السَّرْدِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“And We certainly gave David a grace from Us bounty. ‘O mountains! Chime in with him, and the birds as well.’ And We made iron soft for him, commanding him, ‘Make full coats of armor, keep the measure in arranging the links, and work righteously. I see best what you do.” (Saba, 34: 10-11)

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَكُمْ لِتُحْصِنَكُمْ مِنْ بَأْسِكُمْ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ شَاكِرُونَ

“And We taught him how to fashion coats of armor to protect from the enemy in battle. Will you then be grateful?” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 80)

By making armors, not only could David (as) protect his soldiers from an enemy onslaught, he could also make a living from his own labor. Despite being a king who ruled over a vast and wealthy dominion, David (as) preferred to live off his own work. The Prophet (saw) has in fact said:

“No one earns anything better than what he does through his own labor. Allah’s prophet, David also lived off his own work...” (Bukhari, Buyu, 15; Anbiya, 37)

David (as) was a majestic king reinforced with divine help, and given command over many guards and a massive army. He was also a prophet given accurate foresight, a divine book and law, as well as wisdom and eloquence. Allah (jj) declares:

وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَضَّلَ الْخِطَابِ

“We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and discernment in speech.” (Sad, 38: 20)

According to scholar Suddi, the term *faslu'l-khitab*, ‘discernment in speech’, is the ability to grasp a situation and pass an accurate judgment. Mujahid suggests it is to be a realist in words and judgment, and to be a finisher when it comes to action.

The Almighty addressed David (as) in the following:

يَا دَاوُدُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاكَ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَ النَّاسِ
بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ
سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ

“David, We have indeed made you a successor upon the earth. So, judge between the people in truth and do not follow your desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah. Those who go astray from the way of Allah will be severely punished for having forgotten the Day of Account.” (Sad, 38: 26)

The Prophet-King David (as) divided his day into four:

The first portion for worship.

The second to rule on legal matters.

The third to give sermons to the people.

And the fourth to sort out his personal affairs.

David's (as) Trial

David (as) underwent a number of tests, which informed him about his human weaknesses and possible blunders. After each, he immediately repented; and as a result, he was forgiven and taught about the hazards on the road to eternity.

One day, David (as) was immersed in worship when two men suddenly appeared by his side. He (as) felt a little apprehensive because when he retreated to meditate and pray, no one was allowed to come near him. But it seemed these two men had come out of nowhere to enter a heavily guarded precinct with tightly locked doors. Nonetheless, David (as) tried telling them to come and see him later, as it was his time for worship. They remarked:

“All times are time for worship”, and added:

“Do not be afraid! We are simply to men with a dispute. We have come to you for a verdict. Be just in your ruling!”

“Then, go ahead”, said David (as). One of the men proceeded to explain.

“My brother here has 99 sheep, whereas I have just the one. Despite that, he has coveted my one sheep and has worn me down!”

David (as) saw a blatant injustice. He was worked up; and without even hearing the other man out, he said:

“If he really wants to take your one sheep, then your brother is a bully! Only those who do not believe in Allah (jj) commit such injustice. And good men are only a few!”

The two men laughed and went away.

David (as) was haste in passing judgment. He decided on the matter without hearing the other side of the story. The verdict may change, either partly or entirely, once the other person is allowed to voice his case. It may turn out that the person, who appeared right, is in fact wrong. Thus, as soon as the men left, David (as) became aware of his mistake; and realizing that this was a test from the Almighty, he fell prostrate and repented. As a result, he was forgiven.

These incidents take place to make prophets understand their helplessness before Allah (jj) and teach them a method and wisdom for their people to follow. They do not, in any way, sully the innocence of prophets. Scholars of the Qur’an hold that these tests are in the category of ‘a pious man’s virtue is a saint’s sin.’¹⁰³ In other words, incidents where prophets appear to err, have taken place only to teach us how to act when we ourselves make an error of judgment.

The Qur’an recounts the incident in the following:

وَهَلْ أَاتَيْكَ نَبُؤُا الْخَضْمِ إِذْ تَسَوَّرُوا الْمِحْرَابَ إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَى
دَاوُدَ فَفَزِعَ مِنْهُمْ قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ خَصْمَانِ بَغِي بَعْضُنَا عَلَى بَعْضٍ
فَاحْكُم بَيْنَنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا تُشْطِطْ وَاهْدِنَا إِلَى سَوَاءِ الصِّرَاطِ

“Have you not received the news of the contenders, when they scaled the wall into the sanctuary? When they entered into the presence of David, he was alarmed by them. They said, ‘Do not be afraid. We are only two contenders. One of us has bullied the other. So judge justly between us, and do not violate. Show us the right path!’” (Sad, 38: 21-22)

إِنَّ هَذَا أَخِي لَهُ تِسْعٌ وَتِسْعُونَ نَعْجَةً وَلِي نَعْجَةٌ
وَاحِدَةٌ فَقَالَ أَكْفُلْنِيهَا وَعَزَّنِي فِي الْخِطَابِ

“Indeed this brother of mine has ninety-nine ewes, while I have only a single ewe. Still, he says, ‘Leave it to my care,’ and he browbeats me in speech!” (Sad, 38: 23)

103. The original saying is, ‘hasanatu’l-abrar, sayyiatu’l-muqarrabin.’ It means that some deeds considered good for the righteous may in fact be errors for those closer to the Almighty.

قَالَ لَقَدْ ظَلَمَكَ بِسُؤَالِ نَعَجْتِكَ إِلَىٰ نِعَاجِهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْخُلَطَاءِ لِيَبْغِيَ
بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَقَلِيلٌ مَّا
هُم وَظَنَّ دَاوُدُ أَنَّمَا فَتَنَّاهُ فَاسْتَغْفَرَ رَبَّهُ وَخَرَّ رَاكِعًا وَأَنَابَ

“He said, ‘He has certainly wronged you by asking your ewe in addition to his. Many partners indeed bully one another, except those who have faith and do righteous deeds. And few are they.’ Then David knew that We had indeed tested him, and pleaded with his Lord for forgiveness, and fell down prostrate and repented.” (Sad, 38: 24)

فَعَفَوْنَا لَهُ ذَٰلِكَ وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَّآبٍ

“So We forgave him. And he certainly is near to Us and has a good destination.” (Sad, 38: 25)

On the Day of Judgment, David (as) will be close to the Almighty. The Prophet (saw) has in fact said:

“On the Day of Judgment, those who rule with justice will be seated on pulpits of light to the right of the Merciful (Allah). For they have acted with justice towards their families and others under their responsibilities.” (Ibn Hanbal, II, 160)

He has also said:

“People closest and dearest to Allah on the Day of Judgment will be just administrators. And people most distant to and disliked by Allah will be unjust administrators.” (Tirmidhi, Ahkam, 4; Nasai, Zakat, 77).

Both the current Torah and Gospel include false statements and vile slanders against David (as), which are completely at odds with what the Qur’an has mentioned in the verses above.

On this subject, Ali (kw) has said:

“Whoever talks about the incident of David (as) as relayed by storytellers, I will cane him with 160 lashes!”

There is no doubt that David (as) has a place close to Allah (jj), a good destination and a beautiful rank in paradise.

The Saturday People

The Saturday People or *Ashab’ul-Sabt* as the Qur’an refers to them, lived in the city of Madyan between Medina and the Red Sea. They numbered around 70,000. All they did on Saturdays was to offer deeds of worship, as they were forbidden from

doing anything else. They had also promised David (as) they would not go hunting for fish on Saturdays.

Later, however, the devil whispered to them, saying, “You are banned from eating on Saturday, not hunting!”

It just so happened that as part of divine wisdom, the fish would increase on Saturdays, while being sparse for the rest of the week. As a result, many people fell for the devil’s whisper. The people of Madyan found themselves divided into three camps:

1. One group violated the command. They went fishing, both eating and selling the catch. They would cast their nets on the Saturday, and drag it out on the Sunday.
2. Another group did not engage in the sin; but neither did they speak up against it. They kept silent and did not advise others against the violation.
3. A third group not only kept observing the divine ban, they also spoke out against those who violated it. They also told those who were silent that they needed to speak up. They fulfilled their duty of encouraging the good and advising against evil.

Yet, the silent ones told them, “Why do you keep on advising a group of people who are bound to be destroyed anyway? You are wasting your breath!”

They said, “We only do it, so that we are not held responsible before the Almighty!”

Soon, they built a wall between themselves and the transgressors, to avoid the wrath they sensed would fall. It was not long after that they stopped hearing voices from the other side of the wall. They discovered that overnight, every one of them had mutated into apes. For a short while, the ones punished for not obeying Allah’s (jj) command, roamed among their relatives, miserable and dejected. Three days later, they were all dead.

In his *Ma’alimu’t Tanzil*, Imam Baydawi notes:

“Those who did not go fishing but did not discourage others against it, also turned into apes!”

The Qur’an relays the incident as follows:

وَسَأَلَهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةً الْبَحْرِ إِذْ يَعْدُونَ
فِي السَّبْتِ إِذْ تَأْتِيهِمْ حِيَتَانُهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شُرْعًا وَيَوْمَ لَا يَسْبِتُونَ
لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ كَذَلِكَ نَبَلُوهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ

“Ask them about the town on the seaside, when they violated the Sabbath. Their fish would come to them on the Sabbath, visibly on the shore, but not on the days they did not observe Sabbath. So, We tested them because of the transgressions they used to commit.” (Al-Araf, 7: 163)

وَإِذْ قَالَتْ أُمَّةٌ مِنْهُمْ لِمَ تَعِظُونَ قَوْمًا اللَّهُ مُهْلِكُهُمْ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ
عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا قَالُوا مَعذِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

“When a group of them said, ‘Why do you advise a people who Allah will destroy or punish severely?’

They said, ‘So we have an excuse before your Lord, and with the hope they may refrain.’ (Al-Araf, 7: 164)

فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ أَنْجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ السُّوءِ
وَإِخْرَجْنَا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا بَعْدَاجٍ بَيْسٍ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ فَلَمَّا عَتَوْا
عَنْ مَا نُهُوا عَنْهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ

“So when they forgot what they had been reminded, We saved those who forbade evil and seized the wrongdoers with a terrible punishment for their transgressions. When they defied the ban they were forbidden from, We said to them, ‘Turn into spurned apes.’ (Al-Araf, 7: 165-166)

The Almighty reminds later generations to take a lesson from the incident:

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ

“And you certainly know those of you who violated the Sabbath, upon which We said to them, ‘Turn into spurned apes.’ (Al-Baqarah, 2: 65)

فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

“So We made it an exemplary punishment for those present and the generations to come, and an advice for pious.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 66)

Once the people of shore wronged themselves by violating the Almighty’s ban, David (as) cursed them, after which they turned into apes. (Elmahlı H. Yazır, *Hak Dini Kur’ân Dili*, III, 1786)

The verse below indicates that the incident took place during the time of David (as):

لُعِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَى لِسَانِ دَاوُدَ
وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ

“The faithless among the Children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus son of Mary. That, because they would disobey and transgress.”

(Al-Maidah, 5: 78)



As the companions of the Prophet (saw) believed in all messengers including Jesus (as) without discriminating between any one of them, the Jews retorted:

“We do not know a religion worse than yours!”

It was then that the below verse was revealed:

قُلْ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِنْ ذَلِكَ مَثُوبَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ
وَعَظِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمْ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوتَ
أُولَئِكَ شَرٌّ مَكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ عَنْ سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ

“Say, ‘Shall I inform you of something worse than that as retaliation from Allah? Those who Allah has cursed and with whom He is wrathful, some of whom He has turned into apes and swine; and worshippers of the rebel! Such are in a worse situation, and further astray from the right way.” (Al-Maida, 5: 60) (Wahidi, Asbabu'n-Nuzul, p. 203)

As the Qur'an makes it clear, the Almighty first turned the miserable Israelites who persisted in wrongdoing, into apes and subsequently made them perish. This, however, has nothing to do with the claim that humans come from apes.

A Legacy of David (as): David's Fast

Fasting on alternate days is known as *sawm-i Dawud*; and is a bequest by David (as) to all believers. The Prophet (saw) has said that of all forms of fasting, this is the most virtuous.

Amr ibn Al-As' (ra) son, Abu Muhammed Abdullah (ra) narrates:

“I had once remarked, ‘I promise that for the rest of my life, I will fast during the day and worship during the night.’ Someone informed the Prophet (saw) about it, who asked me if I had said such a thing.

‘Yes, Messenger of Allah,’ I replied.

He said, *'You do not have the strength to do that. Instead, fast on certain days, and eat on others. Sleep at times, and wake up for prayer at others. Fast for three days a month. The reward is ten times the deed. It will be as if you have spent the entire year fasting.'*

'But I can do more than that', I said.

'In that case, fast every three days', he said.

'I can do even more than that', I said.

'Then, fast every two days', he said. *'This is the fast of David; and it is the best and most moderate of all fasts.'*

Again, I told him that I could do more. But this time, the Prophet (saw) stated:

'There cannot be any more than that!'" (Bukhari, Sawm, 55-57; Tahajjud, 7; Muslim, Siyam, 181-193)

David's (as) Virtues

- David (as) would turn to Allah (jj) in all his affairs.
- The Almighty has praised him as 'My servant'.
- He was given one of the four holy books, the Psalms.
- Mountains and birds would join him in *dhikr*.
- He spoke the language of birds.
- He had a beautiful voice. Mountains and birds would listen to him, when he recited the Psalms.
- He could mold iron like wax. He made a living through his own manual labor. The Prophet (saw) has also praised him in that regard.¹⁰⁴
- David (as) was given *faslu'l-khitab*, the ability to separate right from wrong, as well as wisdom.
- His state was the most glorious and powerful of the time.
- David (as) frequently thanked his Lord. He once prayed:
"My Lord! How am I supposed to fully thank You, when I can only thank You through what You have given Me?"

Through revelation, he was asked:

"Do you know that all your blessings are from Me?"

104. See, Bukhari, Buyu', 15; Anbiya, 37.

“Yes”, he said.

The Almighty then told him:

“Thinking like that is enough for Me to be pleased with you”. (Ibn Kathir, Qisasu'l-Anbiya, p. 524)

- In all, David (as) was a superior prophet. The Qur'an states:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ مِنَّا فَضْلًا يَا جِبَالُ أَوِْبِي مَعَهُ وَالطَّيْرَ وَالنَّا لَهُ الْحَدِيدَ

“Certainly We gave David a grace from Us: ‘O mountains and birds, chime in with him!’ And We made iron soft for him.” (Saba, 34: 10)

The Passing Away of David (as)

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“David (as) showed enormous zeal in matters of religion and was a man of great honor. When leaving home, he would lock the door tight and no one would be able to enter until he returned.

One day, he again left his house, locked the door. Yet, when he came back, he saw a man standing in the middle of the lounge.

‘Who are you?’ he asked.

‘I am a person who does not fear kings and who locks cannot keep out!’ he said.

‘Then you must be the angel of death,’ David (as) remarked. ‘Welcome!’

Moments later, his soul was taken.” (Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Musnad, II, 419)

David’s (as) forty-year reign marks the most splendid period in Israelite history. He conquered Jerusalem and made the city his capital. He was both a king and a prophet. Both these qualities were given to him by the Almighty. He was succeeded by his son Solomon (as), also a prophet.

The Psalms and Its Content

The Qur’an mentions both the word *Zabur*, in reference to the Psalms, as well as its plural, *zabur*. *Zabur* means book, while *zabur* refers to books.

The word *Zabur* is mentioned three times in the Qur’an; and they all relate to David (as).

It is stated:

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
 وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ
 وَعِيسَى وَإِيُوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا

“We have indeed revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him, and as We revealed to Abraham and Ismael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus and Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon. And We gave David the Psalms.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 163)

On the other hand, the word *zukur* is cited in reference to the books given to other prophets, not just David (as).

The Qur’an, in fact, says:

وَأَنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ

“This is certainly foretold in the scriptures of the ancients.” (Al-Shuara, 26: 196)

The above verse also implies that all divine books prior to the Qur’an gave the news of the coming of the Prophet (saw).

As for the *Zabur*, or the Psalms, given to David (as), the Qur’an declares:

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ

“Certainly We wrote in the Psalms, after the Torah: ‘Indeed My righteous servants shall inherit the earth.’” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 105)

The Qur’an provides no other information about the Psalms. Islamic sources cite the Psalms as one of the superior qualities given to David (as).

Muslim scholars say the Psalms did not contain rulings on legal matters; and that it was rather a book of prayers and invocations of the Lord.

David (as) came after Moses (as) and adhered to the law of the Torah. The Psalms was a collection of hymns that enabled believers to perfect their prayers and love for the Lord.

The Psalms was revealed entirely in poetic verse form. In fact, the Old Testament contains a book of the same name comprised of hymns sung in the company of music. There are 150 verses in total. It is said that around 70 of them date back to David (as), while the rest was compiled by others.

Thus, the Psalms we have today is not the Psalms revealed to David (as). The Old Testament has not been preserved in its original form. Over the years, it has

been subject to human intervention. This historical fact overrules any possibility that the book in circulation today, is the original Psalms.

The fact is that the current Psalms began to be written around 500 years after the death of David (as). On top of the references to the life and times of David (as), the Psalms also contains lines from what is believed to be around 100 poets, whose names are unknown.

Until today, researchers have been unable to verify exactly who wrote the Psalms and whether it is the work of revelation or inspiration. Orientalist Horn has remarked, “Those who claim the Psalms was authored by David have no basis. It is, in fact, easy to see that the claim is false.”

Like the Torah, the conception of God in the Psalms is anthropomorphic. It depicts God in physical form. And similar to other passages in the Old Testament, it ascribes God a son; and in doing so, falls at odds with monotheism. There is one passage, where David (as) supposedly says:

“I will proclaim the Lord’s decree: He said to me, ‘You are my son; today, I have become your father.” (Psalms, 2/7)

Consequently, today’s Psalms is only a book of poetry. It contains nothing more than prayers attributed to David (as) and others. It is unknown how many of it, if any, are actually from the original Psalms.



RECITING THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WORD IN A BEAUTIFUL WAY

To fully bring out the indelible effect Allah's (jj) word has on both man and jinn, the beauty of the reciter's voice is as important as the correctness and accuracy of the recitation itself. Even in everyday words, a difference in pronunciation may change the meaning, and at times, strengthen or weaken the effect of what is being said. The manner in which a beggar begs is evident not only in his choice of words but also in the way he pronounces them. A commander has an enormous effect in the way he articulates his words to fire up his soldiers for a battle of life and death; and the rhythm or music of his words gives them an added measure of force. It is in fact here that we find the basis of Ottoman military music, which has a very important place in Turkish culture and history.

Clearly, what is valid for everyday human speech is all the more relevant to the divine word that is the Holy Qur'an. It is perhaps because of this aspect that reciting the Qur'an is recommended (*sunnah*), while listening to it is compulsory (*fard*). This has also allowed the recitation of the Qur'an to branch off as a separate science of Islamic knowledge. This science we call *qiraah* even has its own imams or masters, just like Islamic legal schools.

Among all his other attributes, David (as) is in fact remembered in history for his distinctive voice.

The Qur'an testifies to how birds and mountains would succumb to David's (as) mesmerizing voice, when it echoed the sounds of the divine book.¹⁰⁵

Wild animals, and even plants, would join in his chorus.¹⁰⁶



Sound is one of the greatest gifts God has given to humankind.

Without sound, there would have been a gaping void in the universe. Sound is a vital force that can wield both a positive and negative effect.

Like most other blessings, sound could be used as a tool for either good or bad. Just as the universe is bipolar, in that it revolves around opposites such as good and evil, there is sound that is beautiful, as well as ugly. The chirp of a nightingale

105. See, Al-Anbiya, 79.

106. See, Saba, 10.

soothes a sensitive soul and fills hearts with joy, while the sound of a croaking crow may not be as pleasant.

Just as it does on human beings, sound also exercises positive or negative effects on animals. A roaring lion sends fear into the weaker beasts of the jungle, while a cold snake can come dancing out a basket to the tune of a song played by an Indian fakir. People have also sung to speed up camels strolling through the desert, which in traditional Arabic music is known as *hida*.

It is said that hunters would lure gazelles by enchanting them with the sound of a reed flute. On hearing the sweet melody, the gazelle would come out of the woods and crouch by a spring, where it would listen motionlessly to the music, even shedding warm drops of tears. Hunters would then move out of their hiding spots and easily shoot an animal normally too agile to catch.

If sound has this kind of effect on animals, it would be staggering to think what it can do to the emotions of the undoubtedly more developed human beings. Materialists are moved by the sound of money. A gushing water or a singing nightingale appeals to romantic and poetic souls, while the sound of the Qur'an or the *adhan* are sources of comfort for the wayfarers of truth with refined spirits.

At times, to rid his soul of the weight of worldly matters and give it some peace and comfort, the Prophet (saw) would tell Bilal (ra) to:

"Call the adhan, Bilal, and give us a bit of relief?" (Abu Dawud, Adab, 78)

When the nightingale sings, the mountains echo no other sound; and when the *adhan* weaves through the vacuum of the skies, no other voice is reflected back. The greater our sensitivity, the greater the impact these sounds have.

In similar fashion, Rumi (qs) makes the reed flute talk. The reed flute bares its soul. To those who fail to understand, it wails:

"The sound of the reed flute has become fire. Do not think of it as void melody! Shame on those who lack the fire!"

A reed flute player has pointed out to a finer detail in its sound, saying, *"My reed flute sounds and wails a lot differently at the break of dawn!"*

Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi (qs) has said:

"Every being does *dhikr* in its own way. The intensity in which they do so differs from one another.

First, you have inanimate beings, such as stones, soil and minerals. These remember Allah (jj) the most. As they are free from the restraints of the ego and the needs to eat, drink and breathe, they are also further remote from being neglectful."

In the verse below, the Almighty tell us just how alert inanimate beings are:

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِنْ
خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“Had We sent down this Qur’an upon a mountain, you would have surely seen it humbled and splintered to pieces with the fear of Allah. We draw such comparisons for mankind, so that they may reflect.” (Al-Hashr, 59: 21)

And elsewhere:

وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ

“And We disposed the mountains and the birds to glorify Us with David, and We have been the doer of such things.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 79)

Muhyiddin ibn Arabi (qs) says after inanimate beings, it is plants that remember Allah (jj) the most. Plants have certain needs like air, water and the sun. Comparably, they are more developed. They absorb certain minerals from the soil and compose them through the power given by the Almighty to produce colorful flowers, leaves and fruits. Because of these functions, plants remember Allah (jj) a little less than inanimate beings.

Then come animals. In terms of their life functions, they are more developed than plants. By the same token, they have greater needs and an increased presence of the ego.

Humans come last. For better or for worse, their potentials are far greater. This is a natural consequence of the fact that they are subject to divine trial. Yet, the ego, dreams and ambitions relentlessly push humans toward neglect.

The Qur’an, in fact, declares:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ
وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالْدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقَّ
عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ وَمَنْ يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ مُكْرِمٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ

“Have you not considered that whoever is in the heavens and on the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, mountains, trees, animals and many of mankind, prostrate to Allah? And for many the punishment has become due.” (Al-Hajj, 22: 18)

How splendidly does this verse illustrate the conditions of the four classes of beings mentioned above! It also shows that there is no being in the universe that

does not remember the Lord.¹⁰⁷ Among all beings, it is a portion of humans who are the most neglectful and distant from the Lord, and who remember Him the least.

Another verse states how beings are constantly engaged in *dhikr*:

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا
يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا

“The seven heavens glorify Him; the earth too, and whoever is in them. There is not a thing but celebrates His praise, but you do not understand their glorification. Indeed He is all-forbearing, all-forgiving.” (Al-Isra, 17: 44)

Only those who have nurtured a sensitive heart can hear a hum of *dhikr* in every sound. Like Rumi, who began whirling in rapture after hearing the sounds of *dhikr* coming from the thuds of a hammer banging inside a jewelry store, these people live every moment enwrapped in the sound of *dhikr* that reverberates across the universe.

Poet Necip Fazil elegantly depicts the conditions of those, who live within the mysterious world of *dhikr*.

*Those men soar the skies of the heart
While in the pain of crawling in dirt
Each star is a bead on their rosary
But they are last in line during prayer
For the deeds where the ego has crept in
They're busy atoning, one after another
They're forever signing that eternal contract
That expires each night and resumes at day*

This general *dhikr* that occurs throughout the universe is beyond letters and sound, and cannot be heard by all ears. Only the competent can hear it. An example is how, in a poem, Yunus Emre enters into an ecstatic conversation with a yellow flower.

These kinds of people, whose hearts are constantly engaged in divine remembrance and for whom *dhikr* has become part of their nature, reach a point where they detect the Lord's name in every sound they hear.

107. Dhikr, or remembrance of Allah (jj), comes in two forms:

Involuntary dhikr: This is the dhikr that beings do automatically. The lifespans of plants and animals depend on this dhikr; it is virtually like their breath of life. The moment they run out of dhikr, is the moment their lives come to an end.

Voluntary dhikr: This is the dhikr human beings do willingly.

The best sound in the sight of Allah (jj), whether with letters or without, is *dhikr*. Beyond its literal meaning, the term *dhikr* also has a broader one and has given its name to divine books. The Holy Qur'an refers to both itself and the Torah as *dhikr* or remembrance.

In line with the divine command '**Read...in the name of your Lord, who created you!**' all other breaths and sounds gain a special honour through the sound of the Qur'an.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

"Decorate the Qur'an with your voices!" (Ibn Majah, Iqamah, 176)

"Beautify the Qur'an with your voices. For a beautiful voice adds to the beauty of the Qur'an!" (Darimi, Fadailu'l-Qur'an, 34)

"He who does not recite the Qur'an with a nice voice (taghanni) is not one of us." (Bukhari, Tawhid, 44; Abu Dawud, With, 20). Scholars say the word *taghanni* refers to a beautiful voice; and have urged those who lack the skill to read the Qur'an as beautifully as they possibly can.

As the Qur'an is the most beautiful of all speech, it is through the Qur'an's sound that the splendour of the human voice best comes to the fore.

One can get enough of all voices no matter how beautiful they are. Yet, that is never the case with the Qur'an. For hearts that have their share, its sublime melodies offer a breeze from the fragrances of heaven.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

"Allah the Almighty is never more pleased than with a prophet, with a beautiful voice, who recites the Qur'an gracefully, at the top of his voice!" (Bukhari, Fadailu'l-Qur'an, 19; Tawhid, 32; Muslim, Musafirin, 232-234)

The Prophet (saw) also underlines the need to recite the Qur'an in a rhythmic and measured tone (*tartil*), as well as with a clear elocution and pronunciation (*tajwid*).

Repentant and dejected souls can find their peace of heart in the cure concealed in the soothing sound of the Qur'an. Those looking for the path of eternal salvation need the guidance of its heavenly language that breathes life into souls.

The ignorant who do not lose their hearts in the Qur'an's sound, may only know life to the extent of appearance but can never delve into the inner realm of its truths and wisdoms. They spend their entire lives chasing the lusts and pleasures of the world but remain blind to the reason why it exists.

They greedily eat from the feast of the world but do not recognise the real Provider (*Al-Razzaq*) of that feast.

They bury their loved ones in the grave but live without being aware of the tribulations beneath. They are not versed in the language of the graveyard trees that speak without letters or words.

Even when they get slapped by earthquakes, hurricanes and other catastrophes, they falsely console themselves by calling these 'natural disasters', and look for any hole they can seek refuge in.

How bizarre is it that they live on God's dominion but act like enemies towards Him.

Yet, believers whose hearts are enlightened by the Qur'an, are deep in a constant state of contemplation. The divine words they recite inspire them, in their own unique language, to:

“Remember that you are the servant of Allah and live on His dominion! You are fed by Him! Delve into the wisdom and mysteries of the Qur'an so that you can travel to your Lord with a sound heart!”

Those who lend their hearts to the advices of the Qur'an are always conscious of the fact that above all, they are Allah's (jj) servants. They are always thankful for what they have and make an effort to turn their fleeting stay on earth into a means of eternal joy.

In that regard, for those able to obtain a share of the Prophet's (saw) spirituality, the Qur'an speaks the language of both the heavens and the earth, and is a treasure of abundance and inspiration.

The Prophet (saw) and the Holy Qur'an are two sources of light the Almighty has presented to mankind.

Allah's (jj) attributes fully appear in three beings: the cosmos, the Qur'an and the human being.

The cosmos is the attributes of God in action, while the Qur'an is their appearance in speech. As for the human being, he is the kernel of all divine attributes. Just as it would be dim to imagine a world without human beings, the same goes for human beings without the Qur'an.

The Prophet (saw) has in fact said:

“A person without a bit of Qur'an in his heart is like a derelict home.” (Tirmizi, *Fadailu'l-Qur'an*, 18; Darimi, *Fadailu'l-Qur'an*, 1)

The cosmos is a silent Qur'an, while the Qur'an is a vocal cosmos. And as a manifestation of divine mysteries, man is like their essence and kernel. The Qur'an is a miracle of expression, a speech from *Al-Haqq*, the Real. A heart remote from the truths of the Qur'an is dark, as if it has been soaked in tar. It is without light and thus miserable in both worlds.



Let us mention just a few of the Qur'an's countless wisdoms:

By presenting the constant flow of divine power and elegance on display in the world outside, the Qur'an awakens man to his inner world. It makes him shiver with a fragile heart before a truly beautiful universe and takes him on a journey towards the love of Allah (jj) and His Messenger (saw).

The Qur'an is the guide for salvation in this world and the next. Therefore, all it takes to adjust our lives in line with divine standards and be taken on a stroll in the gardens of a balanced life of bliss, is to seek shelter in its wisdom.

A magnificent law of balance governs the universe and every particle within. Unless a person seizes the Qur'an, he will lose his own balance, downgrade his inner value and ultimately tumble down into the valley of demise. That is because what gives measure and balance to man's body and soul is nothing but the Qur'an itself.

For a man of heart, the Qur'an is a profound ocean of contemplation. Every man of thought must reflect on the divine art on display in space and time, and perfect his soul by reflecting on the Qur'an's wisdom-filled parables. It is through this that the Qur'an shines forth its own mercy.

Again, it is a mystery exclusive to the Qur'an that it lays bare the maps of thousands and thousands of realms, and offers the eye glimpses from the horizons of the unseen (*ghayb*).

The Holy Qur'an is a collection of advices that invite to the right and the good. It instructs man to commit to a life of worship and knowledge, and through these, reach the eternal joy of the hereafter. Yet, this is of such a nature that truly understanding what this means can only be through a foresight given by Allah (jj).

The Qur'an invites all humankind to the true path; and as a living Qur'an through his conduct, the Prophet (saw) is the guide who takes human beings there. The Prophet (saw) is like a pharmacy that offers the only cure for mankind's ignorance and denial. Thus, until the final hour, every single person all the way up to the last is obliged to become part of the Mohammedan nation. Some of them have accepted his call, and are referred to as the nation of acceptance (*ummah ijabah*); and these are his true followers. Others are known as the nation of denial (*ummah ghayr ijabah*).

The peace and happiness of entire humankind hinge on personalizing the emotions of the Qur'an, entering its climate of inspiration, putting its teachings into practice and embodying its morals. A life distant from the Qur'an is an eternity forced into suicide.

Only the Qur'an effectively and convincingly resolves the most intricate enigmas such as the spirit, life, death, resurrection, the afterlife and eternity that baffle the human mind.

As a manifestation of the Almighty's eternal knowledge and speech, the Qur'an has an impeccable harmony, and exerts an unequalled strength in assuring the heart and putting the mind at peace. History is also witness to the fact that each prophet, who is like a candle on the lit path of divine call, has confirmed the message of all prophets to come before him. Philosophers, on the other hand, have always been quick to disclaim their predecessors, as they are lost in the dead ends of reasons and the whirls of their deviant theories. Natural sciences, which throughout history have tried to grasp the eternal meaning of life and the universe through the limited scope of human reason, have also swum in a pile of contradictions.

Thus, the hearts of believers molded by the Qur'an become treasures of divine truths. Yet, those who subscribe to the ideas philosophers have offered through their inept understandings, are poor souls who, while looking for the path to eternity, only end up fumbling in the dark.



To live, therefore, is to live in the gardens of the Qur'an's truth.

The Prophet (saw) once said:

"Hearts become rusty just like steel."

"Then, what is its varnish?" asked the companions. The Prophet (saw) replied:

"Frequently reciting the book of Allah and constantly remembering Him." (Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanzu'l-Ummal, II, 214)

He has also said:

"Give your eyes their share of worship!"

"What is their share of worship, Messenger of Allah?" the companions inquired.

"To look at the Scripture, reflect on its content and take lessons from its fine wisdoms." (Suyuti, Al-Jamiu's-Saghir, I, 39)

The Almighty says frequent reciters of the Qur'an will head the list of His fortunate servants, who will make eternal gains. The Qur'an declares:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَنْ تَبُورَ لِيُؤْفِقَهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَيَزِيدَهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ

“Indeed those who recite the Book of Allah, maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided them, secretly and openly, can expect a profit that will never go bankrupt. So that He may pay them their reward in full and enhance them out of His grace. Indeed He is all-forgiving, all-appreciative.”

(Al-Fatir, 35: 29-30)

لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ أَنْاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ

“Not all are alike. Among the People of the Book is an upright nation. They recite Allah’s signs in the times of night and prostrate.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 113)

That is because reciting the Qur’an regularly increases faith. In fact, another verse states:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

“The faithful are only those whose hearts tremble with awe when Allah is mentioned, and when His verse are recited to them, they increase their faith, and who put their trust in their Lord.” (Al-Anfal, 8: 2)



Of all deeds of worship, reciting the Qur’an is undoubtedly one of the most rewarding. It is, therefore, our duty to recite it as beautifully as we can. The Almighty states:

أَوْ زِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا

“...and recite the Qur’an in a measured tone.” (Al-Muzzammil, 73: 4)

Just as important is to listen to the Qur’an in silence when recited. Such that while reading the Qur’an is advisory (*sunnah*), listening to it is compulsory (*fard*). The Qur’an says:

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ الْقُرْآنُ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ وَأَنْصِتُوا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

“When the Qur’an is recited, listen to it and be silent, so that perhaps you will receive mercy.” (Al-Araf, 7: 204)

While reciting the Qur'an both during ritual prayer and outside of it, one must block out all other sounds and focus, so that he may thoroughly understand its meanings, benefit from its advices and regulate his behavior accordingly.

Silence is a sign of being attentive, while being attentive is a sign of prudence. In turn, prudence is a sign of proper faith and conduct, while proper faith and conduct are means to draw divine blessings and mercy.

The Prophet (saw) enjoyed listening to someone else recite the Qur'an. At times, he would ask Ibn Masud (ra) to read, and he would take much spiritual delight from it. Once, while listening to Ibn Masud (ra) recite, his eyes teared up.

Ibn Masud (ra) recounts the time:

"The Messenger of Allah (saw) once commanded me to recite a bit of Qur'an. I said:

'How can I recite the Qur'an to you, Messenger of Allah, when the Qur'an has been revealed to you?'

'Still, he said, 'I like hearing it from others.'

So, I began reciting, until I reached the verse:

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَىٰ هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا

"So how will it be when We bring from every nation a witness and call you, (Muhammed) as witness against these people?" (Al-Nisa, 4: 41)

"That will do for now!", the Prophet (saw) said. And when I looked up, I saw tears rolling down his eyes. (Bukhari, Fadailu'l-Qur'an, 32; Muslim, Musafirin, 247)

One night, Usayd ibn Hudayr (ra) was reciting chapter Al-Baqarah or Al-Kahf in a sweet and measured tone.

His horse was tied-up, standing next to him. Then suddenly, the horse reared up. He paused reading and it calmed down. Usayd then resumed reading only for the horse to rear up once again. Usayd stopped once more, and the horse settled down. Moments later, he resumed but the horse, yet again, became fidgety. So, Usayd stopped reading altogether. His son Yahya was sleeping nearby, and he pulled him closer towards himself, fearing the horse may trample the child. Usayd then looked up and noticed what looked like lanterns in the sky inside a fog that resembled a white cloud. The next morning, he explained what had happened to the Prophet (saw), who said:

"Keep on reading, son of Hudayr...keep on reading!"

“I was afraid, Messenger of Allah, that the horse would trample my son, as he was sleeping very close to it. So, I stopped reciting; and then those bright lights rose up and up, and eventually disappeared”, he said.

The Prophet (saw) asked:

“Do you know what those things were that you saw?”

“No, I do not”, he replied.

“They were angels who had come near to hear you recite the Qur’an. If you had continued reading, they would have stayed until dawn...and would have been visible to people leaving their homes for prayer.” (Bukhari, Fadailu’l-Qur’an, 15)

This event indicates that the sound of the Qur’an moves not only angels but also animals. With this being the case, one can only wonder how many of its secrets the Qur’an would reveal to a fine and purified heart.

The words of Umar (ra) offer something else to reflect on:

“I completed reciting chapter Al-Baqarah in twelve years and sacrificed a camel to thank for it!” (Qurtubi, Tafsir, I, 40). The point is here is that this was not just quick recital of the words. It was recital that sought to grasp the wisdoms, unlock the secrets of the divine words and bring the words alive in action. This is the only proper way to recite and benefit from the Qur’an in the truest sense.

One example of this higher mode of reciting the Qur’an is provided below:

Saint Abu Bakr Warraq had a small son, who was learning the Qur’an from a teacher nearby. One day, he returned from school early; pale and trembling. A surprised Abu Bakr asked:

“What happened? Why did you come home early?”

The little boy, whose heart quivered with the fear of Allah (jj), answered with an expression that resembled an autumn leaf:

“Today, my teacher taught me a verse from the Qur’an; and when I realized what it meant, I became petrified!”

“Which verse?” his father asked.

The little boy then began to recite:

فَكَيْفَ تَتَّقُونَ إِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ يَوْمًا يَجْعَلُ الْوِلْدَانَ شِيبًا

“So, if you disbelieve, how will you endure the day which will turn children gray?” (Al-Muzzammil, 73: 17)

Soon, the boy became ill from fear. Not long after, he was on his deathbed and, eventually, he passed away.

Abu Bakr Warraq was deeply moved by the whole incident. In the days and years that followed, he would frequently visit his son's grave, and tell himself while weeping:

“Abu Bakr! Just one verse of the Qur'an was enough to cast God's fear into your son's heart and take away his spirit! And you have been reading the Qur'an for all these years but you still cannot fear God as much as this child!”

The Qur'an is such a vast ocean of wisdom and mystery that it makes receptive hearts shiver! The below verse beautifully tells us how spiritually infinite the Qur'an is, and how it therefore reflects the infinitude of the Almighty's knowledge, glory and splendor:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ مَا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

“If all the trees on the earth were pens, and the sea replenished with seven more seas as ink, the words of Allah would not be spent. Indeed, Allah is all-mighty, all-wise.” (Luqman, 31: 27)

Man can take from that sea only what his heart can hold; and this can be no more than what an ant can carry from the sea. In the words of a poet:

*I dived into an sea of gems
And took only what I could stock
But what I took was just a drop
While the sea remains chockablock*

In short, all that awaits man in this valley is sheer helplessness. The only way to pass through it, is to seek refuge in the grace of Allah (jj).

Its secret is provided by the Prophet (saw):

“He who knows himself, knows his Lord.” (AjJuni, Kashfu'l-Khafa, II, 361)

Rumi (qs) says:

“It is possible to write out the Qur'an with a few pots of ink. But boundless oceans and shoreless seas would not suffice to spell out its secrets!”

Therefore, the true specialists of the Qur'an are those who satisfy their spirits through its recital, put its laws into practice, embody its morals and mature through its wisdoms. As these people are truly alive, once they are dead and buried, the earth will be commanded to keep their corpses intact.

In fact, Mahmud Sami Ramazanoğlu (qs) testifies to how, in Adana, he once saw the grave of a hafiz reopened thirty years after his death to be relocated to make way for a new road. Yet, despite the decades that had passed, not only had his corpse remained intact, even his shroud was crystal clean.



Like all those before him, the Prophet (saw) was tasked with the duty of reciting the book of Allah (jj) and conveying it to the people. In one hadith, he says:

“The best of you is he who learns the Qur’an and teaches it.” (Bukhari, Fadailu’l-Qur’an, 21)

The Qur’an is a divine word that is the Almighty’s greatest gift to humankind. In that regard, the Prophet (saw) has said:

“The supremacy of Allah’s word over the words of his creation is like the supremacy Allah over His servants.” (Darimi, Fadailu’l-Qur’an, 6)

In other words, compared to the words of humans, the Holy Qur’an is incomparably boundless and infinite. Yet, it is necessary to recite it with an alert heart. The Qur’an opens itself up only on account of the heart’s spiritual condition.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“A believer who recites the Qur’an is like an orange. It smells and tastes good. A believer who does not recite the Qur’an is like a date; it has no smell but it tastes good. A hypocrite who recites the Qur’an is like a basil; it smells good but tastes bitter. A hypocrite who does not recite the Qur’an is like the vine of Sodom; it has no smell and tastes bitter.” (Bukhari, At’imah, 30; Fadailu’l-Qur’an, 17, 36; Muslim, Musafirin, 243).

Another hadith cautions those who recite the Qur’an negligently:

“They read the Qur’an but what they read does not pass beyond their throat!” (Bukhari, Fadailu’l-Qur’an, 21). This means that reading the Qur’an without giving the words due thought, has no spiritual benefit.

Reciting the Qur’an this way can, in fact, drag one into hellfire. The Almighty warns reciters of this type:

أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

“Do they not contemplate the Qur’an, or are there locks on their hearts?”
(Muhammed, 47: 24)

Servants with a deep heart and sensitive thought cannot avoid but take heed of this warning. To think that when the below verse was revealed:

مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; You are exalted from such a thing...protect us from the punishment of the fire!” (Al-i Imran, 3: 191), the Prophet (saw) shed so many pearls of tears that they would have made the stars in the skies envious.

Ata ibn Abi Rabah (ra) who saw many of the Prophet’s (saw) companions, recounts:

“I once asked Aisha (ra) about an action of the Prophet’s (saw) she admired most.

‘Did he ever do anything that was not admirable?’ she said. ‘But there was one night, when he came to my bed, laid down a bit and said, ‘Allow me to get up and worship my Lord for a while.’

I said, ‘Honestly, I would love to spend time with you but I would love it more for you to do what you wished.’

He then got up to take *wudu*. And as he stood to pray, he began to weep. He wept so much that his chest quickly became bathed in tears. He kept on weeping as he bowed, and again as he prostrated. And he wept some more as he raised his forehead from the ground. This continued all the way until Bilal (ra) called out the *adhan* for the dawn prayer. Bilal also noticed that the Prophet (saw) had cried and he could not help but ask:

‘Why do you cry this much, Messenger of Allah, when all your past and future sins have already been forgiven?’

‘Should I not be servant who properly thanks his Lord?’ he replied. ‘By the name of Allah, I received such a revelation tonight, that shame on those who read it without thinking it over.’ He then went on to recite:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ
الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding...who remember Allah while standing, sitting or lying on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying, ‘Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly;

You are exalted from such a thing...protect us from the punishment of the fire!”

(Al-i Imran, 3: 190-191) (Ibn Hibban, II, 386)

The tears believers shed from the fear of Allah (jj) are the gems of fleeting nights, stars of the dark grave and dewes of the gardens of paradise. May the Almighty protect us all from hearts insensitive and eyes tearless to the wisdoms and mysteries of the Qur'an.



Thus, we must not make do with simply reading the Qur'an. We should rather look to embody its morals and put its teachings into practice. This is where the true benefit of the Qur'an lies. This was the approach Prophet (saw) taught his companions and, by the same token, us.

Abu Abdurrahman Al-Sulami explains:

“There was a companion of the Prophet (saw) who used to teach us the Qur'an. He once told us:

‘We used to learn ten verses from our Messenger (saw); and we would not move on to the next ten until we thoroughly ingested the information and deeds they conveyed. The Messenger of Allah (saw) would teach us knowledge and practice together.’” (Ibn Hanbal, V, 410; Haythami, I, 165)

Rumi (qs) says:

The Holy Qur'an is the mindsets and conduct of prophets come to life. If you recite and practice it with focus, count yourself among those who have met prophets! The more you read the parables of the prophets, the tighter the cage of your skin will become for the bird that is your spirit.”

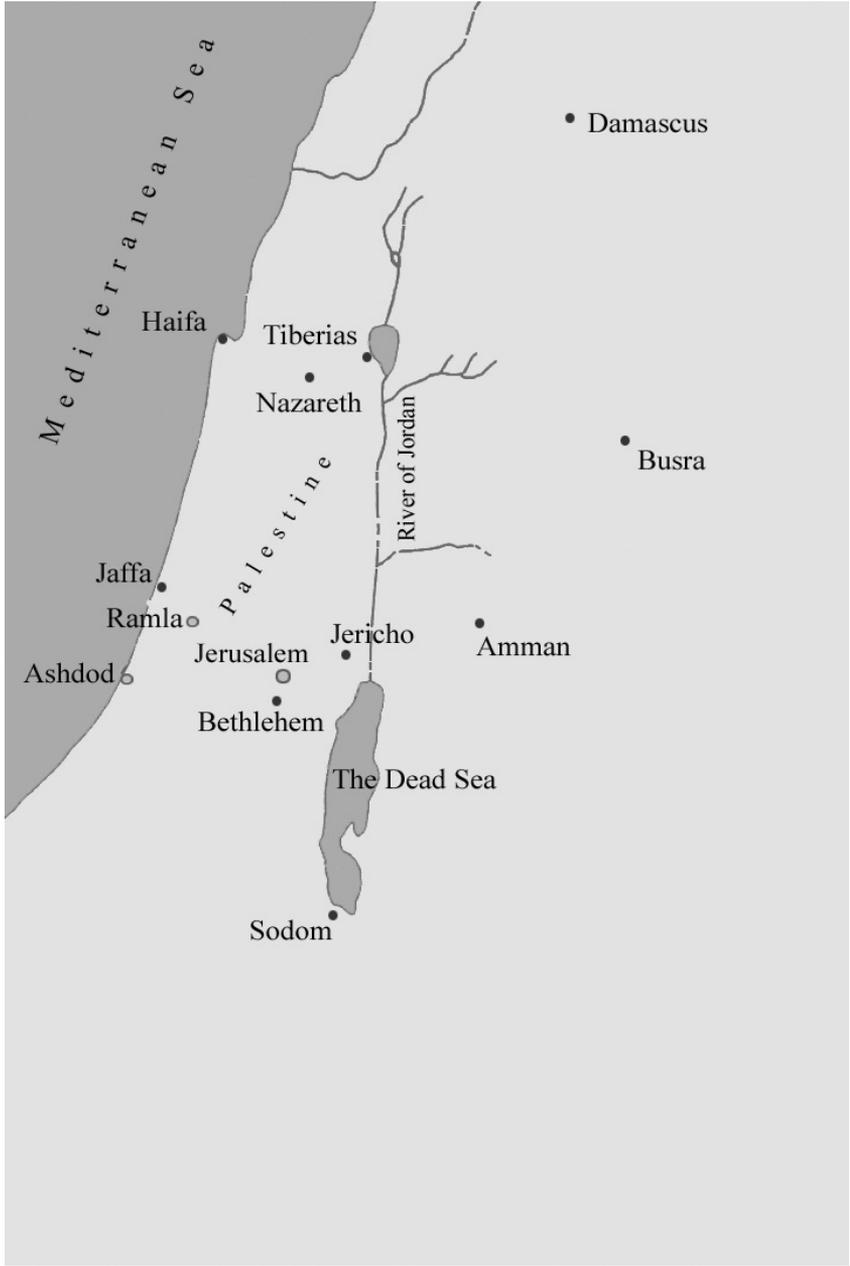
It was only thanks to this that we were able to break free. And if you want to fly out of your cage, there is no other way than through God's oneness!”

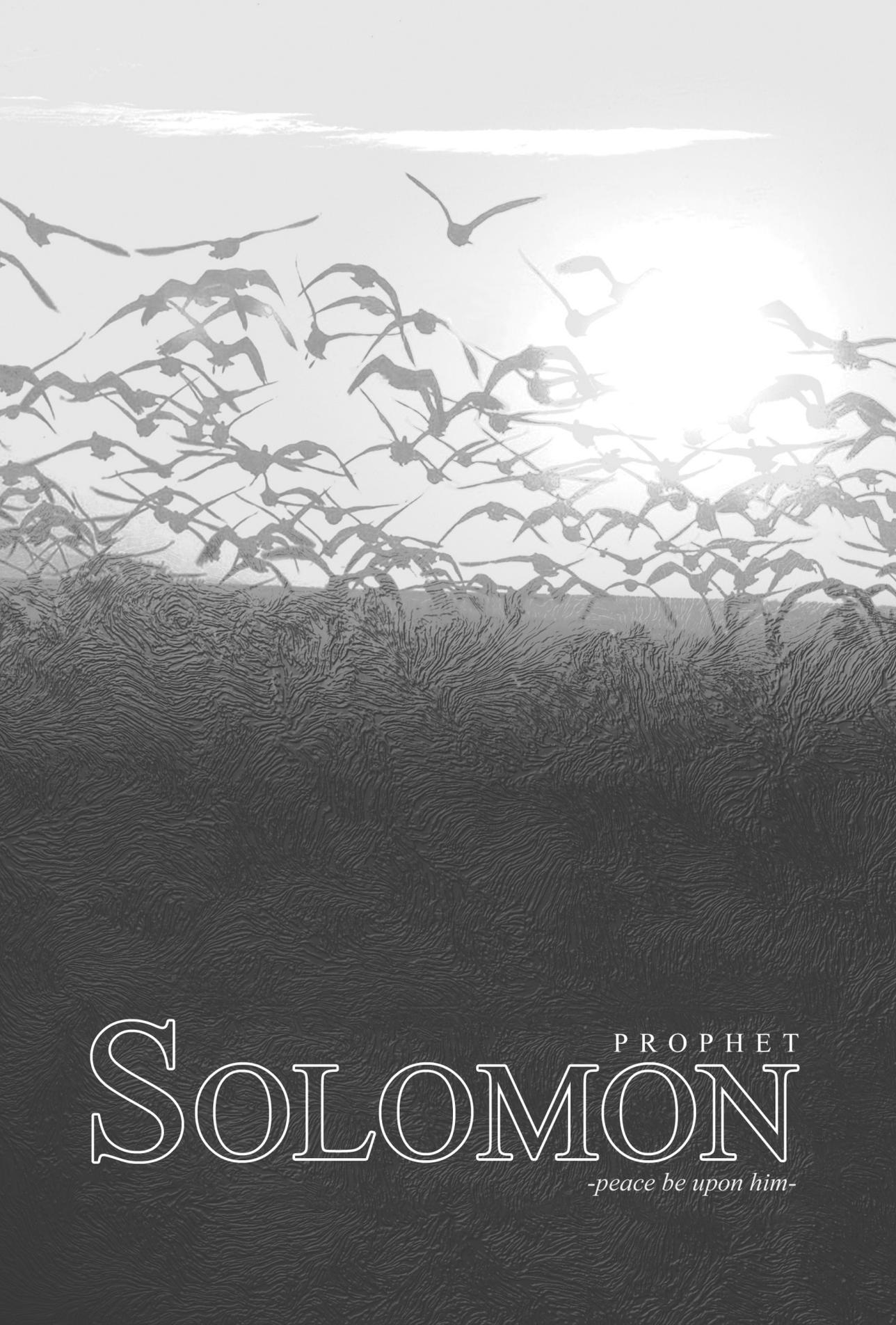
Our Lord! Do not separate our hearts from the light of the Qur'an and the love of Your Beloved (saw)!

Amin...



Prophet David





PROPHET
SOLOMON

-peace be upon him-

*The Prophet who Kept a World of
Wealth and Power out of His Heart*

SOLOMON

-peace be upon him-

Solomon (as) was born in Gaza. He was around 12 or 13 years of age, when his father David (as) passed away. Like his father, he first became a prophet and later a king. He built the Holy Temple, or Bayt Al-Maqdis, in seven years. He married Bilqis, the queen of Sheba, and later passed away in Jerusalem.



From his early childhood, Solomon (as) showed signs of great prudence and intellect, about which the Prophet (saw) relays the following incident:

“Once, two women were travelling together with their two sons. On the way, a wolf came and snatched one of the kids. The women then began quarrelling with each other over the other kid, both claiming him as their own.

‘That child is mine’, said one.

‘No, he is my son’, said the other.

They eventually went to David (as) and asked him to settle their dispute. David (as) ruled that the child belonged to the elder woman. But the women then took the matter to Solomon (as). They told him about his father’s judgment. Solomon (as) then said:

‘Bring me a knife so I can divide the kid between these two women.’

This time the younger of the two women pleaded, ‘Please don’t! God have mercy on you! I am not the mother, she is!’

It was then that Solomon (as) knew that the younger woman was, in fact, the child’s real mother.” (Bukhari, Anbiya, 40)

That is because a mother cannot endure seeing her child being killed.



Below is another incident highlighting Solomon’s (as) foresight:

A flock of sheep had once entered a field one night and destroyed all the crops. The owners of the field lodged a complaint with David (as), asking for compensa-

tion. The damage to the field was just about the same as the value of the sheep. So, David (as) ruled that the sheep be given to the farmers. Solomon (as) was also there; and despite being a child, he suggested:

“There is another way, father! Let the farmers have the flock only temporarily. In that time, they can cover their loss by making use of the sheep’s milk and fur. At the same, they can cultivate their farm and turn it to the way it was. Once they get things back on track, they can then return the sheep to their owner!”

David (as) was delighted with the offer and decided accordingly. The Qur’an says:

وَدَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ إِذْ يَحْكُمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ إِذْ نَفِثَتْ فِيهِ
غَنَمُ الْقَوْمِ وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شَاهِدِينَ

“And recall David and Solomon when they gave judgement concerning the tillage when the sheep of some people strayed into it by night. We were witness to their judgement.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 78)

فَفَهَّمْنَاهَا سُلَيْمَانَ وَكُلًّا آتَيْنَا حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَسَخَّرْنَا مَعَ
دَاوُدَ الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ

“We gave understanding to Solomon, and to each We gave judgement and knowledge. And We disposed the mountains and the birds to glorify Us with David. We have been the doer of such things.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 79)

Solomon’s (as) exceptional foresight and devotion to the Lord convinced David (as) to pick him from among his 19 sons, as his heir. However, the Israelites protested:

“Solomon is still a kid! There are others who are older and wiser!” they said.

Thus, in line with a divine command, David (as) held a test in the presence of scholars. He asked Solomon (as):

“What is that whose goodness makes all other parts good and whose badness corrupts all other parts?”

Solomon (as) replied:

“It is the heart!”

They all liked he answer.

David (as) wrote the names of all candidates on sticks, which he then locked up inside a room. After a while, it was found that only Solomon’s (as) staff had

branched out leaves. David (as) thanked the Lord, and the Israelites accepted Solomon (as) as caliph.

With the help of Allah (jj), this dispute was now settled; so David (as) now turned to his son to give him some advice:

“Son! Avoid making jokes for they have little benefit and cause regret. Avoid getting angry, for it makes a person a simple. Embrace piety, for it wins in all circumstances.

Do not expect favors from people! This is true wealth, right there!

It is poverty for you to covet things the Almighty has given others but not you!

Avoid words and behavior that will require you to apologize!

Get your soul and tongue accustomed to the truth!

Work to make today better than yesterday!

Pray like a person offering his final prayer!

Do not mingle with base and vulgar people!

If you do get angry, just walk away!

Always retain hope in the mercy of Allah (jj)! For His mercy encompasses everything!” (Salabi, Arais, p. 323)



After David (as) passed away, Solomon (as) became king.

وَوَهَبْنَا لِدَاوُدَ سُلَيْمَانَ نِعَمَ الْعَبْدِ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ

“And to David We gave Solomon. What an excellent servant! He was indeed penitent.” (Sad, 38: 30)

Solomon (as) was given many blessings and powers:

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

“Certainly We gave David and Solomon knowledge, and they said, ‘All praise belongs to Allah, who granted us an advantage over many of His faithful servants.’” (Al-Naml, 27: 15)

Solomon (as) could understand the language and prayers of birds:

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمُنُ دَاوُدَ وَقَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلَّمْنَا مَنطِقَ الطَّيْرِ
وَأَوْتَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِينُ

“Solomon inherited from David, and he said, ‘O people! We have been taught the speech of the birds, and we have been given out of everything. This, indeed, is a clear advantage.’ (Al-Naml, 27: 16)

Humans, jinn, animals and the wind were all under his command:

وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي
بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَالِمِينَ

“And for Solomon We disposed the turbulent wind which blew by his command toward the land We have blessed. We have knowledge of all things.”

(Al-Anbiya, 21: 81)

وَلِسُلَيْمَانَ الرِّيحَ عُذُومًا شَهْرًا وَرَوَاحَهَا شَهْرًا وَأَسَلْنَا لَهُ عَيْنَ الْقِطْرِ وَمِنَ الْجِنِّ
مَنْ يَعْمَلُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَمَنْ يَزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ أَمْرِنَا نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ

“And to Solomon, We gave the wind. Its morning course was a month’s journey and its evening course was a month’s journey. We made a fount of copper flow for him, and We placed at his service some of the jinn who would work for him by the permission of his Lord. And if any of them swerved from Our command, We would make him taste the punishment of the blaze.” (Saba, 34: 12)

يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَحَارِبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ وَجِفَانٍ كَالْجَوَابِ وَقُدُورٍ
رَاسِيَاتٍ اعْمَلُوا آلَ دَاوُدَ شُكْرًا وَقَلِيلٌ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ

“They built for him as many temples as he wished, and figures, basins like cisterns, and caldrons fixed in the ground. O House of David, give thanks; for few of My servants are grateful.” (Saba, 34: 13)

The word the Qur’an uses for ‘figures’ is *tamasil*, which scholars have interpreted as portraits and paintings of living and non-living things alike, as well as their statues made of mud, copper or glass. The word itself indicates that the term includes paintings of both living and non-living entities.

The word *tamasil*, as used in the above verse, carries a broad meaning. It may, therefore, indicate that in the law of Solomon (as), it was permissible to depict all

beings, living and non-living, in paintings and statues. Yet, not all interpreters of the Qur'an agree this may have been the case:

1. Some scholars say that Solomon's (as) law did not allow paintings and statues of living things, based on the fact he followed the law of Moses (as), where depicting living beings is explicitly banned. According to this view, the word *tamasil* refers only to images of non-living things; and at the same time, complies with the similar ban in Islam. It may also be the case that Solomon's (as) law allowed paintings and statues, only because there was no fear they would lead people of that particular time to paganism.

2. Other scholars have said that Solomon's (as) law did in fact allow painting and sculpting images of living beings. Yet, this leads to the question whether the same is the case in Islam, seeing as it is the Qur'an telling us this. Muslim jurists and scholars have ruled that painting only non-living things, like a scenery, forests and mountains is permissible, as on many occasions, the Prophet (saw) has prohibited the depiction of living things. This is explained by the many hadith about drawing pictures.

"Whoever makes a drawing of a living being on earth, will be forced on judgment day to bring it to life...but he will never be able to." (Bukhari, Libas, 97; Ta'bir, 45; Muslim, Libas, 100)

Ibn Abbas (ra) narrates that on the day the Prophet (saw) took Mecca from the pagans, he saw many images on the inner walls of the Kaaba. He did not step inside, until he had all of them removed. One painting depicted Abraham (as) and Ismail (as) holding gambling arrows.

"May Allah take the souls of those who painted these!" he said. *"Never did they seek their fortune in arrows!"* (Bukhari, Anbiya, 8; Hajj, 54, Maghazi, 48)

Consequently, even if it Solomon's (as) law permitted paintings and statues, Islam clearly does not.

Ibn Masud (ra) narrates the Prophet (saw) once told them that the fiercest punishment in the hereafter will be for those who drew images of living beings. (Bukhari, Libas, 89; Muslim, Libas, 96) That is mainly because the exaggerated respect people have shown for paintings and statues have, in history, led them to paganism.

Aisha (ra) relays another incident:

Jibril (as) had once promised the Prophet (as) he would come to see him at a specific time. Yet, the time had come but he had not arrived. The Prophet (saw) threw the stick he was holding to the ground, and said:

'Neither Allah nor His messengers turn back on their word!'

He then started to look around, only to find a puppy under the sofa! He called to me, saying:

‘When did this puppy enter the room, Aisha?’

‘I assure you, I have no idea!’ I said.

So, he had the puppy taken out of the room; and Jibril (as) arrived immediately.

‘You promised me you would come. So, I waited but you did not turn up!’ the Prophet (saw) said.

‘What kept me out was the dog inside your home’, Jibril (as) explained. ‘We angels do not enter home that has a dog or an image inside.’” (Muslim, Libas, 81, 82. Also see, Bukhari, Badu’l-Khalq, 7; Libas, 94; Ibn Majah, Libas, 44)

The images mentioned alongside dogs in the above hadith, should not be understood simply as paintings. They also include embossed or engraved depictions of living beings, as well as their statues. A painting is like a shadow; it has no mass. With that said, if the word ‘images’ is construed as encompassing all forms of depictions of a living thing, it could also mean that the ban was in place, only because this was a time when the danger of paganism was still very real.

It goes without saying that today, paintings and photography have a broader presence in everyday life and are, at times, a necessity. As Islam has a dynamic nature, it has determined a legitimate scope for their use, allowing people to make use of photography, which has now become unavoidable.



While on the subject, another point worth emphasizing is how the hadith stresses that angels do not enter places that contain not only images but also dogs. This points to a fine truth. Islam has banned having dogs as pets inside homes. According to Islamic law, both the breath and saliva of a dog is dirty. Medical science has today proven how a dog’s saliva, fur and even breath can lead to many contagious diseases. Yet, these findings are merely what science has been able to reach as of today. Who knows how many finer points Islam’s regulations on the matter have.

As indicated above, Jibril (as) did not enter the home of the Prophet (saw) because of a dog that had only accidentally made its way inside. One must spare a thought for the situation of those who willingly keep dogs in their homes as pets! The fact that the Prophet (saw) asks Aisha (ra):

“How did this puppy get here?” and the manner in which she responds, assuring him she had no idea about it, suggests that it is unacceptable for a Muslim to have a

dog as a pet. This incident did not occur for no reason. It allowed the ruling on the matter to come to light.

A cat is a domestic animal. There is no harm in having a cat inside the home. The same, however, does not hold for a dog. A person can keep a dog only for hunting, shepherding and guarding a farm or field; as these all serve a purpose.

The Almighty has indeed put dogs under the command of man; and, different to most other animals, He has given them a sense of loyalty to their owners. He has also endowed them with exceptional qualities beyond even the power of technological devices. Today, dogs are in fact used in searching for narcotics or detecting the locations of people trapped under rubble. Along with protecting properties and farms, dogs are also employed in search and rescue operations, as well as by medical response teams.

With the splintering of families and the rise of individualism especially in the Western world, people who live alone tend to keep dogs as household pets for protection from burglars and other dangers. In some Western countries, people are even legally obliged to insure their dogs. Yet, the same people who are utmost generous in providing for their dogs, whether it be their insurance or feeding costs, are not often as generous towards the poor and underprivileged of their own society. In time, going through all the trouble and costs to keep a dog inside a home transforms not only the dog's nature but also that of its owner. The excessive devotion towards the dog has now gotten to the point where it is seen as a member of the family. At times, even a person's own children are seen as second class. The most alarming consequence is that it even makes the ego channel its natural love for children towards the dog and prevent a person from having children of his own. In fact, the populations of many Western countries are on the wane, when they really should be increasing.

From another standpoint, one really does not protect a dog by detaining it inside his home. Much rather, he forces the animal to live under conditions that contradict its nature.

As the pacesetter of all ages, Islam allows dogs to be kept only outside of homes and under special circumstances. The contrary of approach in Western societies really does nothing but corrupt human nature and undermine the family. It is unfortunate that, of late, dogs have also made their way into many Muslim households, which is only one detrimental example of blindly imitating the West.

However, Islam's ban on keeping dogs inside homes does not entail a negative attitude towards them. It does not imply that dogs should not be fed; and it certainly does not mean they should be mistreated. Islam teaches mercy for all creation. It

also commands us to protect the lives of dogs, and like all other being, treat them with mercy and compassion.

A hadith in fact speaks of a sinful woman who will enter paradise solely on account of giving water to a dog that was about to die of thirst.

Our own history is famous for institutionalizing feelings compassion in a variety of *waqfs*, or charity foundations, whose hands of mercy have reached out even to animals in need.

The important thing is to observe the boundaries Islam has set on the matter.

Solomon's (as) Love of Horses

إِذْ عُرِضَ عَلَيْهِ بِالْعَشِيِّ الصَّافِنَاتُ الْجِيَادُ فَقَالَ إِنِّي أَحْبَبْتُ حُبَّ الْخَيْرِ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّي حَتَّى تَوَارَتْ بِالْحِجَابِ رُدُّوهَا عَلَيَّ فَطَفِقَ مَسْحًا بِالسُّوقِ وَالْأَعْنَاقِ

“When one evening, prancing steeds were displayed before him, he said, ‘I have preferred the love of these niceties due to the remembrance of my Lord. The horses then disappeared behind the veil. ‘Bring them back to me!’ he said. He then began to wipe legs and necks.” (Sad, 38: 31-33)

Some interpreters of the Qur’an suggest that what Solomon (as) meant was:

“I love horses only because they help me remember my Lord!”

In other words, it did not make him delay his prayer and worship. The horses eventually disappeared behind a ‘veil’. They were now either back in their stables or had galloped so far that they were no longer in sight. That was when Solomon (as) completed his ritual prayer (*salat*).

He told his men to, “Bring them back to me!”

He began massaging their legs, necks; and groomed them with great care.

Fakhruddin Razi writes that just like in Islam, Solomon's (as) law also advised breeding and training horses for war. It is said that one day, Solomon (as) had inspected the horses; and upon seeing the steeds standing with one foot up and the rest on the ground, he remarked:

“I only love the wealth of the world to remember my Lord's name, to gain His pleasure and spread His word. I never want anything for myself!”

Afterwards, he commanded the stablemen to take out the horses for a run, and watched them until they galloped out of sight. He then ordered the horses back, and caressed them affectionately, all the while gazing at a beautiful manifestation of the Lord's power and art.

From the verse, it is understood that in the beauty of both their posture and pace, horses are an expression of divine power.

Horses have turned men into heroes, and, throughout history, have been symbols victory and nobility.

Horses are among those unique beings, in whose name Allah (jj) swears by in the Qur'an:

وَالْعَادِيَاتِ ضَبْحًا فَالْمُورِيَاتِ قَدْحًا فَالْمُغِيرَاتِ صُبْحًا
فَأَثَرُنَّ بِهِ نَقْعًا فَوْسَطُنَّ بِهِ جَمْعًا

“By the snorting chargers, by the strikers of sparks, by the raiders at dawn, raising therein a trail of dust, and cleaving therein a host!” (Al-Adiyat, 100: 1-5)

The Prophet (saw) has said the following about horses:

“Until the Day of Judgment, the good –that is rewards and spoils- have been knotted into the foreheads of horses.” (Bukhari, Jihad, 43; Muslim, Ijarah, 96-99)

“Whoever keeps a horse with genuine belief in Allah and His promise and with the intention of fighting on His path, what the horse eats, drinks and discharges, will be listed among his rewards in the hereafter.” (Bukhari, Jihad, 45; Nasai, Khayl, 11).

Among all animals, horses are spiritually the closest to human beings. Before going into battle, a cavalryman chooses a horse he feels is most akin to his temperament. That is because during battle, a horse feels the same excitement as its rider. A horse is also a manifestation of power. Its body possesses another kind of symmetry and beauty.

Solomon's (as) Trial

One day, the Almighty tested Solomon (as) by taking away all his power at once. The Qur'an says:

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا سُلَيْمَانَ وَأَلْقَيْنَا عَلَى كُرْسِيِّهِ جَسَدًا ثُمَّ أَنَابَ

“Certainly, We tried Solomon, and cast a lifeless body on his throne. Thereupon, he was penitent.” (Sad, 38: 34)

In an instant, Solomon (as) was dispossessed of everything he had, and was left with nothing.

There are a few reports regarding the nature of this trial:

1. Among the artisans employed to work in the construction of the Temple (*Baytu'l-Maqdis*) were a number of devils. They well versed in the craft of deception and staged a coup. As a result, Solomon (as) was briefly separated from his throne, or remained on it without any authority, no different than a corpse. It could also mean he was removed from his throne and replaced with a puppet ruler.

2. Another report suggest that Solomon (as) wished for all his wives to bear sons, so that they could go to battle in the way of Allah (jj). Yet, he neglected saying *insha'Allah*, if Allah wishes. Consequently, only one of his wives gave birth to a son; and he was born disabled. (Bukhari, Anbiya, 40; Ayman, 3; Muslim, Ayman, 23/1654)

Similarly, when the Prophet (saw) was asked for information about the Spirit, the Sleepers of the Cave and Dhul-Qarnayn (as), he said:

“I will tell you about them tomorrow”, without saying *insha'Allah*. Consequently, he did not receive revelation for some time. The Almighty declares:

وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَلِكَ غَدًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ وَادْكُرْ رَبَّكَ
إِذَا نَسِيتَ وَقُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِّي رَبِّي لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَذَا رَشَدًا

“Do not say about anything, ‘I will indeed do it tomorrow’ without adding, ‘if Allah wishes.’ And when you forget, remember your Lord, and say, ‘Maybe my Lord will guide me to something more right.’” (Al-Kahf, 18: 23-24)

3. According to another report, Solomon (as) was tested with a severe illness, which reduced him to a ‘corpse on a throne.’

4. Another report says the Almighty sent fear into Solomon (as); and the anxiety that something bad might happen, turned him figuratively into a corpse.

With the grace of Allah (jj), Solomon (as) returned to his former state. He then repented:

قَالَ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَهَبْ لِي مُلْكًا لَا يَنْبَغِي لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ بَعْدِي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

“He said, ‘My Lord! Forgive me, and grant me a kingdom no one will attain to after me. Indeed, You are the All-munificent.’” (Sad, 38: 35)

It was not for the purpose of bragging that Solomon (as) prayed to be given powers no one else had. He wanted power to subdue the tyrant kings of his time, who were swimming in pride and conceit.

Fakhruddin Razi has also interpreted Solomon’s (as) prayer as:

“My Lord! Give me so glorious a kingdom that after I die, people will say, ‘If the wealth of the world was to benefit anyone, it would have benefited Solomon’; and through this, curb their love and ambition for the world!”

Judging by that, Solomon (as) was not after the riches of the world but the riches of the hereafter.

The Qur’an states:

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

“Whoever desires the tillage of the hereafter, We will enhance for him his tillage, and whoever desires the tillage of the world, We will give it to him, but he will have no share in the hereafter.” (Al-Shura, 42: 20)

The Qur’an indicates that Allah (jj) accepted Solomon’s (as) prayer:

فَسَخَّرْنَا لَهُ الرِّيحَ تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ رُخَاءً حَيْثُ أَصَابَ وَالشَّيَاطِينَ
كُلَّ بَنَاءٍ وَعَوَاصٍ وَأَخْرَيْنَ مُفْرَّينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ

“So We disposed the wind for him, blowing softly by his command wherever he intended. And the devils, every builder and diver, and others bound together in chains.” (Sad, 38: 36-38)

As understood from the verses, the Almighty had placed devils (jinn) under Solomon’s (as) command, as builders and divers. With Solomon’s (as) order, some of these devils constructed grand buildings, mosques, palaces; and made paintings, dug out pools and crafted immovable cauldrons beyond human capacity. Others dived into the seas to bring out many things including precious gems and objects hidden deep beneath.

As for the expression ‘bound together in chains’, scholars have offered two interpretations:

1. Some scholars have said these were the slaves and captives of Solomon (as). It is narrated that Solomon (as) would tie them together when they worked, so that they would not escape.

2. According to other scholars, Solomon (as) had punished some demons for rebelling against his order, by binding them together in chains and consigning them to heavy labor. This is the more preferred interpretation.

Ibn Kathir has holds that view, saying that the devils bound in chains were the stubborn, rebellious ones that either refused to work or did so halfheartedly.

On top of such power and splendor, the Almighty had also given Solomon (as) a great authority. The Qur'an states:

ذَا عَطَاؤُنَا فَامْنُنْ أَوْ أَمْسِكْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ وَإِنَّ لَهُ عِنْدَنَا لَزُلْفَىٰ وَحُسْنَ مَآبٍ

“This is Our bounty. Give away or withhold, without any reckoning! Indeed Solomon has nearness with Us and a good destination.” (Sad, 38: 39-40)

Abu Hurayrah (ra) narrates that the Prophet (saw) once explained:

“Last night, a demon (ifrit) from among the jinn lunged at me to disrupt my prayer. Allah (jj) gave me the opportunity and I grabbed and stopped him in his tracks. I even wanted to tie him to one of the poles inside the mosque, so you could all see him in the morning. But then I remembered the prayer of my brother Solomon (as): ‘My Lord! Forgive me, and grant me a kingdom no one will attain to after me.’ (Sad, 38: 35). Allah (jj) then banished him, vile and despicable.” (Bukhari, Salat, 75; Anbiya, 40; Muslim, Masajid, 39/541)

Despite receiving a glorious wealth and kingdom, Solomon (as) knew how to lead a life of servanthood with humility, focus and passion; and he kept his heart removed from the world. It has been said:

“In spite of the kingdom and power he was granted, Solomon (as) never for one looked up into the sky until the day he died, out of reverence for Allah (jj).” (Ibn Abi Shaybah, Musannaf, v. VIII, p. 118)

The Construction of the Holy Temple

On the order of the Almighty, David (as) had begun constructing the Temple but he passed away before it was completed. Thereupon, Solomon (as) gathered all the jinn, and had them build the rest. He also established a city around it, consisting of twelve neighborhoods. (967 or 953 BCE)

The Temple, first called *Bayt Al-Maqdis*, or the Sacred House, later became known as *Masjid Al-Aqsa*. After the Kaaba and the Prophet's Mosque, it is the third holiest site of worship.

Also inside the Temple was the Ark of the Covenant, containing holy relics and the tablets of the Torah.

After the death of Solomon (as), the Temple was destroyed a number of times. In around 586 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar entered Jerusalem with his army and torched the city. He also pillaged the gems of the Temple and took them back with him to

Babylon. For long years, the Temple remained in rubble. After the Persians defeated the Babylonians and allowed Jews to return to Jerusalem, the Temple was built for a second time, around the year 515 BCE. In the year 70 CE, however, the Temple was razed once again; this time by the Romans. For a long time, its spot remained vacant, though people still acknowledged the area as a place of worship and protected its remains. It is narrated that in 637, Umar (ra) had a mosque built on that spot. In 691, the Umayyad caliph Abd Al-Malik had the Dome of the Rock built over the rock the Prophet (saw) used as a stepping stone during the *Miraj*. Right beside it, he began the construction of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, which was completed during the reign of his son Walid I. The Al-Aqsa Mosque has since undergone a number of repairs and renovations.



The Al-Aqsa Mosque has a special place in Islam. It is the first *qibla*. Until the 16th month into the Hegira, it was the direction Muslims faced during ritual prayer. At the same time, it was the point where the Prophet's (saw) Night Journey (*Isra*) ended, and his ascension to the heavens (*Miraj*) began.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“One may travel to visit only three mosques: the Kaaba, my mosque here (Medina) and Al-Aqsa.” (Bukhari, Fadailu's-Salat, 6; Muslim, Hajj, 288/827)

In another hadith, he explains:

“Once Solomon built the Sacred Mosque, he asked Allah (jj) for three privileges:

The ability to judge in line with divine command, which he was given,

A kingdom no-one else could attain to after him, which he was also given,

And for people who came just to pray at the mosque to be forgiven of their sins the moment they stepped out, just like the day they were born...and that wish, was also accepted.” (Nasai, Masajid, 6; Ibn Majah, Iqamatu's-Salat, 196/1408)

Solomon (as) and the Ants

The Almighty states:

وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودُهُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ
 حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَوْا عَلَىٰ وَادِ النَّمْلِ قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا مَسَاكِنَكُمْ لَا
 يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

“And gathered for Solomon were his soldiers of jinn, men and birds, and they were marching in rows. When they came to the Valley of Ants, an ant said, ‘O ants! Enter your dwellings, lest Solomon and his army should trample on you while they are unaware.” (Al-Naml, 27: 17-18)

The ant warned, “Solomon’s (as) kingdom is tremendous. You will be crushed! Get back inside your nests!”

Solomon (as) heard these words and said:

“No, my kingdom is fleeting, and my life on earth is bound to end! But the joy the word of God brings, is eternal!”

The Qur’an says:

فَتَبَسَّمْ ضَاحِكًا مِنْ قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ
نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَى وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ
وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“He thereupon smiled, amused at its words, and said, ‘My Lord! Inspire me to give thanks for the blessing with which You have blessed me and my parents, and that I may do righteous deeds which may please You. And admit me, by Your mercy, among Your righteous servants.” (Al-Naml, 27: 19)

The verse makes it clear that the splendor of his kingdom did not drag Solomon (as) away from being aware of his servanthood, as he humbly asks for both himself and his parents to be forgiven.



The Prophet (saw) relays an advice Solomon (as) received from his mother:

“Son, do not sleep too much at night, for too much sleep is poverty in the afterlife!”
(Ibn Majah, Iqamatu’s-Salat, 174/1332)

Hence, to avoid the poverty of the hereafter, one must not be fooled by the comfort of the world, and keep striving on the path of serving the Lord.

Solomon (as), the Hoopoe¹⁰⁸ and Bilqis

With the Holy Temple now complete, Solomon (as) led his army of winds, jinn, humans, birds and other wild animals on an expedition towards Mecca. He informed them that Mecca will be the town from which the Final Prophet (saw) will hail. Solomon (as) then lead the army south to Sanaa. There, he saw a nice valley

108. The Hoopoe is a bird the Qur’an refers to as al-Hudhud.

and wanted to pray. At that point, the Hoopoe took flight, wishing to inspect the region and come back by the time they finished their prayers. It flew with the other birds of the area and was amazed by the things it saw. The other birds took it on a trip through the gardens of the palace of Bilqis.

Right then, Solomon (as) needed to perform *wudu* and looked around for the Hoopoe, so it could find some water. That was the Hoopoe's main duty: to detect places with water for ablution.¹⁰⁹ Yet, the bird was nowhere to be seen. The Qur'an recounts:

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِيَ لَا أَرَى الْهُدْهَدَ أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ

“He then inspected the birds, and said, ‘Why do I not see the Hoopoe? Or is he absent?’” (Al-Naml, 27: 20)

At first, Solomon (as) looked around for the Hoopoe with sympathy; but when he realized it had left without permission, he spoke more firmly, in line with the discipline he demanded from his soldiers:

لَأُعَذِّبَنَّهُ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَأَذْبَحَنَّهُ أَوْ لِيَأْتِيَنِّي بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ

“I will surely punish him with a severe punishment, or I will surely behead him, unless he brings a clear-cut excuse!” (Al-Naml, 27: 21)

فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطُ بِهِ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَأٍ بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ

“It turned up before long and said, ‘I have found out about something about which you have no information. I have brought you, from Sheba, certain news!’”

(Al-Naml, 27: 22)

Sheba was a tribe in Yemen named after their forefathers. It was also the name of the capital of the kingdom ruled by Queen Bilqis. The Qur'an says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لِسَبَإٍ فِي مَسْكَنِهِمْ آيَةٌ جَنَّتَانِ عَنْ يَمِينٍ وَشِمَالٍ كُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ بَلْدَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ وَرَبٌّ غَفُورٌ

109. Ibn Abbas (ra) reports that the Hoopoe knew and informed Solomon (as) where to find water. It also knew how near or far the water was. It would peck at the spot and the jinn would come and dig the water out. Ibn Abbas (ra) was told:

“Despite having this ability, if a child was to lay a trap and cover it with dust, the Hoopoe would step on it unaware and become ensnared. This is strange, considering it could spot water, way deeper, beneath the earth!”

He replied, “Once destiny arrives, the eyes are blinded and the mind flies away.”

“There was certainly a sign for Sheba in their land: two gardens, to the right and to the left. ‘Eat of the provision of your Lord and give Him thanks!’ What a good land and what an all-forgiving Lord!” (Saba, 34: 15)

The Hoopoe continued explaining to Solomon (as) the things it saw:

إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ

“I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given everything, and she has a great throne!” (Al-Naml, 27: 23)

وَجَدْتُهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ

“I found her and her people prostrating to the sun instead of Allah, and Satan has made their deeds seem dazzling to them. He has barred them from the way, so they are not guided!” (Al-Naml, 27: 24)

أَلَّا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبَاءَ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

“They do not prostrate to Allah, who brings out the hidden in the heavens and the earth, and knows whatever you hide and whatever you disclose. Allah... there is no god except Him! He is the Lord of the Great Throne!” (Al-Naml, 27: 25-26)

قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ

“Solomon said, ‘We shall see whether you are truthful, or if you are lying.’” (Al-Naml, 27: 27)

Solomon (as) had a seal in the shape of a ring. When he put that ring on his finger, all beings would submit to him. It is narrated that the seal read, “There is no god but Allah and Muhammed is His messenger.”

Solomon (as) wrote a letter that began with the words ‘In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful and Compassionate.’ He then stamped the letter with his famous seal and gave it to the Hoopoe. He added:

أَذْهَبْ بِكِتَابِي هَذَا فَالِقَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ

“Take this letter of mine and deliver it to them. Then draw away from them and observe their response.” (Al-Naml, 27: 28)

The Hoopoe flew out with the letter in the dark of night and left it on Bilqis' throne. It then moved aside and waited to see what would unfold.

Bilqis woke up in the morning to find a letter on her throne. She wondered who may have left it, as all the doors had been tightly shut.

"Who brought this letter?" she asked the guards.

"We stood by this door all night", they said. "No one could have entered!"

A stunned Bilqis proceeded to open the letter. She was left astounded by what she read. She immediately summoned her council and said:

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُؤِ إِنِّي الْفَيْي إِلَي كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ إِنَّهُ مِنْ
سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

"She said, 'Members of the elite! A noble letter has been delivered to me. It is from Solomon, and it begins in the name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.'¹¹⁰" (Al-Naml, 27: 29-30)

Some scholars suggest that Bilqis ended up being guided onto the right path for no other reason than her respect for the letter and its contents.

In fact, the Pharaoh's magicians had also shown Moses (as) respect, when they offered him to go first in their showdown. At the end, they were also guided.

In contrast, the Persian ruler, Khosrow II tore up and the threw away the Prophet's (saw) letter of guidance, and hurled insults. As a result, his kingdom was shattered and he met a miserable end in the throes of disbelief.

Saint Bishr Al-Hafi (the Barefoot) once saw a piece of paper with the word 'Allah' on it, lying in the street. He picked the paper up from the ground, cleaned it, put fragrances on it and hung it on a nice corner of his house. Due to his reverence, the Almighty graced him with great rewards and placed him alongside the righteous.

Bilqis continued reading the letter out loud:

أَلَّا تَعْلَمُوا عَلَيَّ وَأَتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ

"It states, 'Do not defy me, and come to me in submission!'" (Al-Naml, 27: 31)

110. According to imams Abu Hanifah, Malik and Ibn Hanbal, the basmalas at start of each surah or chapter of the Qur'an, serve to separate the chapters. Imam Shafii, however, regards them as separate verses.

Through the ‘*basmala*’ in the letter, Solomon (as) had implied to Bilqis that Allah (jj) alone deserved to be worshipped. After expressing the true faith, he called on her and her people to take a good spiritual look at themselves, by saying ‘do not react with arrogance; instead come to me as Muslims.’ With those words, he suggested that all happiness was in Islam.

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُونِ قَالُوا
نَحْنُ أَوْلُوا قُوَّةً وَأَوْلُوا بِأَسْ شَدِيدٍ وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكَ فَانظُرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِينَ

“She said, ‘Members of the elite! Give me your opinion concerning my issue. I do not decide on any matter until you are present.’

They said, ‘We are powerful and possess great might. But the decision is yours. So, see what you decide.’” (Al-Naml, 27: 32-33)

قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعْرََّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذَلَّةً وَكَذَلِكَ
يَفْعَلُونَ وَإِنِّي مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنَظِرَةٌ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ

“She said, ‘When kings enter a town, they devastate it, and reduce the mightiest of its people to the most abased. That is how they act. I will send them a gift, and see what the envoys bring back.’” (Al-Naml, 27: 34-35)

After receiving Solomon’s (as) letter advising her not to defy him and to come to him along with her people, Bilqis consulted the matter with her statesmen. In the end, she decided to send envoy to Solomon (as) with lavish gifts, to ensure they would be safe from harm.

Once the envoy arrived, Solomon (as) noticed that these were people who relied on their wealth. He construed the gifts as a sort of bribe, and sent them back:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَ بِمَالٍ فَمَا آتَيْنِيَ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ
مِمَّا آتَيْكُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ

“So when he arrived, Solomon said, ‘Are you trying to help me with wealth? What Allah has given me is better than what He has given you. But you seem to exult over the gift you have brought!’” (Al-Naml, 27: 36)

ارْجِعِ إِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُودٍ لَا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا
وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِنْهَا أَذَلَّةً وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ

“Go back to them, for we will come at them with armies which they cannot face, and we will expel them from the land, abased and degraded.” (Al-Naml, 27: 37)

The envoys returned and informed Bilqis what Solomon (as) told them.

“He must have read our intentions”, she exclaimed. “I am starting to believe that this man is not an ordinary king...and we do not stand a chance against him!” She then sent another envoy to Solomon (as), this time with just one message:

“My dignitaries and I will come to your presence to see your power and the religion to which you invite us!”

Bilqis stored her illustrious throne away in the safest chamber of the palace and had its doors locked tight. Then, accompanied by a grand entourage, she set out.

In the meantime, Solomon (as) asked for Bilqis’ throne in Sanaa to be brought. Scholars have suggested a few reasons:

1. To show Bilqis a miracle and yet another proof to demonstrate the might of Allah (jj) and confirm his prophethood
2. To test Bilqis’ intelligence by transforming the throne and seeing if she could recognize it.
3. Since a throne is a symbol of kingship, Solomon (as) wished to see the state of Bilqis’ kingdom before she arrived. (Fakhruddin Razi, Tafsir, v. XXIV, p. 169)

قَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِي بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ قَالَ عَفْرَيْتُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَقَامِكَ وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٍّ أَمِينٌ

“He said, ‘Members of the elite! Which of you will bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?’

An Ifrit¹¹¹ from among the jinn said, ‘I will bring it to you before you rise from your place. I indeed have the power to do it and I am to be trusted.’ (Al-Naml, 27: 38-39)

Solomon (as) would sit on his throne in the morning and deal with state affairs until the afternoon. Accordingly, Ifrit pledged that he could bring the throne within that period of time.

111. Ifrit refers to an immensely strong, capable type; a go-getter and livewire. It also implies mastery in evil and devilry. As this expression is also used for humans, the verse makes it clear the person mentioned was an ‘ifrit from among the jinn.’

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ
 فَلَمَّا رَأَهُ مُسْتَقَرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ
 وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ

“The one who had knowledge of the Book said, ‘I will bring it to you in the blink of an eye.’

So, when Solomon saw the throne next to him, he said, ‘This is by the grace of my Lord, to test me if I will give thanks or be ungrateful. And whoever gives thanks, gives thanks only for his own sake. And whoever is ungrateful should know that my Lord is indeed all-sufficient, all-generous.’ (Al-Naml, 27: 40)

The strong view is that the wise man who brought the throne in the blink of an eye was Solomon’s (as) vizier, Asaf ibn Barhiya.

Karamah

These are supernatural feats that take place through saints. They are of two types:

1. Knowledge about Allah’s (jj) essence, attributes and action. This is also called spiritual insight or *kashf*. These are impossible to grasp through reason and reflection. Only Allah (jj) grants this knowledge to whom He wills.

2. Supernatural events that occur in the physical world. Again, to perform these, Allah (jj) chooses whom He wills.

People generally esteem the second kind of *karamah*. Yet, the first kind is superior.

Imam Shafii says:

“Having my prayers accepted by the grave of Imam Musa Kadhim has become something like an obsession. I have experienced it so many times.”

Imam Ghazzali says:

“A person who inspires in life also inspires after death, as a means for wishes to be accepted (*tawassul*).”

Ma’ruf Karhi and Abdulqadir Jilani are among saints, famous for being given spiritual disposal by the Almighty even after their death.

Time and again, *karamah* also occurred among the companions of the Prophet (saw).

During a battle between Muslims and Persians on the 23rd year of Hegira, Umar (ra) was on the pulpit inside the Medina Mosque, when he suddenly exclaimed:

“To the mountains, Sariyah, to the mountains!” The commander Sariyah, as well as the Muslim army heard the warning all the way in the battlefield. (Ibn Hajar, al-Isabah, II, 3)

Anas (ra) narrates:

“Two companions (Usayd ibn Hudary and Abbad ibn Bashir) left the Prophet’s (saw) presence in a dark night. Two flame-like lights appeared in front of them and lit up their way until they both reached home.” (Bukhari, Salat, 79; Manaqibu'l-Ansar, 13)

Imam Ali Ridha was once sitting beneath a wall, when a bird appeared and started chirping. He said to those around him:

“The bird is telling us that a snake is approaching its nest and its crying for help to save its hatchlings!”

They then went to the nest and indeed saw a snake slithering its way up. They immediately killed the snake and saved the hatchlings.

The fact that Bilqis’s throne was brought not through Solomon’s (as) miracle but through the *karamah* of Asaf ibn Barhiya points to the spiritual greatness of Solomon (as), as Asaf was his vizier.

قَالَ نَكِّرُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا نَنْظُرُ أَتَهْتَدِي أَمْ تَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ

“Solomon said, ‘Disguise her throne for her, so that we may see whether she is perceptive or not.’ (Al-Naml, 27: 41)

The throne had arrived in an instant, in the time it takes to blink an eye. Yet, it was brought from a distance of three days (from Sheba to Sanaa) according to one view, while two months according to another (from Sheba to Damascus or Jerusalem). This was an extraordinary feat that could have taken place only through *karamah*.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ قِيلَ أَهَكَذَا عَرْشُكَ قَالَتْ كَأَنَّهُ هُوَ وَأُوتِينَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِينَ وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَعْبُدُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ

“So when she came, she was asked, ‘Is your throne like this one?’

She said, ‘It seems to be the same, and we were informed before it, and we became Muslim.’

She had previously been barred from the way by what she used to worship besides Allah, for she belonged to a faithless people.” (Al-Naml, 27: 42-43)

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

“It was said to her, ‘Enter the palace.’

So when she saw it, she thought it to be a pool of water, and she bared her shanks.

Solomon said, ‘It is a palace paved with crystal.’

She said, ‘My Lord! Indeed I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.’ (Al-Naml, 27: 44)

It is narrated that ahead of Bilqis’s arrival, Solomon (as) had a palace built. Its courtyard, including the surface, was made of crystal. There was water flowing underneath with fish swimming inside. Bilqis did not realize that the surface was of a transparent substance and slightly lifted her dress, as she thought she would be walking through water. All the things she saw shook her trust in her own judgment and prepared her heart to accept the divine call. She knew that these were no human feats. She saw divine glory with her own eyes and became Muslim.

The Passing Away of Solomon (as)

At the time of his death, Solomon (as) was leaning on his staff. As he was left standing, those around him did not realize he had passed away, until a worm ate away at his staff and Solomon (as) collapsed to the ground. The Qur’an says:

فَلَمَّا قَضَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَوْتَ مَا دَلَّهُمْ عَلَى مَوْتِهِ إِلَّا دَابَّةٌ الْأَرْضِ تَأْكُلُ مِنْسَأَتَهُ فَلَمَّا
خَرَّ تَبَيَّنَتِ الْجِنُّ أَنْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ الْغَيْبَ مَا لَبِثُوا فِي الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ

“And when We decreed death for him, nothing informed them of his death except a worm which gnawed away at his staff. And when he fell down, the jinn realized that had they known the unseen, they would not have remained in such humiliating torment.” (Saba, 34: 14)

It is understood that after Solomon (as) died, his corpse stood upright against his staff for a long time. The term ‘humiliating torment’ refers to the hard labor the jinn were forced to do. As they did not become aware that Solomon (as) had passed

away, they continued working. This shows that jinn have no insight into the unseen (*ghayb*).

Just like his life, Solomon's (as) death also symbolized a struggle in the way of *tawhid*. The way he died conveyed the fact that only Allah (jj) knows the unseen and no other being can have insight into it unless informed by Allah (jj) himself. As if to mock the jinn who claimed they knew the unseen, the Almighty brought Solomon's (as) death to light by the weakest of all creatures and reminded them they could know nothing without His permission.

On the other hand, there is also plenty of wisdom in how a prophet of great power and kingdom died standing. The words, lives and experiences of all prophets offer subtle lessons.

The end of Solomon's (as) glorious kingship is also an example of how fleeting the world is and how all things inescapably meet an end. In his *Terkib-i Bend*, Ziya Pasha says:

*On the wind, it's said, sailed Solomon's throne
And with the wind that throne is now gone*

Another famous poem by Yunus Emre reads:

*Owner of riches, owner of wealth
Where has the first owner gone to?
Riches are a lie, so is wealth
Mess around a bit until you're through*

Kingship and Modesty

Solomon (as) was a very humble man. In the mornings, he would go and sit with the poor and weak, and say:

"A poor man must hang out with his kind."

It is reported that Solomon (as) had the following exchange with a sparrow:

Solomon (as) had once reprimanded a sparrow (or the Hoopoe). The sparrow then threatened Solomon (as).

"I will destroy your palace and kingdom", it warned.

"How can you possibly destroy my palace with such a small frame?" he asked.

"I will wet my wings and dip into the soil of a donated land (*waqf*)", it replied. "Then I will carry the soil stuck on my wings to the roof of your palace...and that soil will be enough to make the roof collapse!"

This is a lesson that underlines the importance of religious endowments or *waqfs*, and the need to be sensitive towards them. Elders have said, “Beware of things that begin with the letter *waw*”, referring to swearing in God’s name in vain (*wallahi*), becoming a governor (*wali*) lacking sensitivity and awareness, a custodian (*wasi*) incompetent in fulfilling his duty and betraying the property of a *waqf*.

What is meant by ‘being wary’ in relation to *waqfs* is that those who work for these charity institutions need to be utmost careful in observing justice. It is forbidden to make personal use of anything that belongs to a *waqf*. A *waqf* is a moveable or immovable asset whose owner is Allah (jj) and which has been donated for the benefit of all Muslims.

Some reports say Solomon (as) will enter paradise 500 years after all other prophets. The reason is that it will take that long for Solomon (as) to give account for the kingdom and wealth he was given.¹¹² The Qur’an does indeed reveal that prophets will also be called into account:

فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“We will surely question those to whom the prophets were sent, and We will surely question the prophets.” (Al-Araf, 7: 6)

After Solomon (as)

Following Solomon (as), the Israelites split into two. Of its twelve tribes, ten formed the Kingdom of Israel, while the remaining two founded the Kingdom of Judah.

The Assyrians put an end to the Kingdom of Israel in 721 BCE, while the Kingdom of Judah was destroyed in 586 BCE by Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian army. Nebuchadnezzar also set fire to Jerusalem and killed most of its inhabitants. He was a tyrant king, who became the second nonbeliever to rule the world after Nimrod. He rebuilt Babylon and made the city the capital of his empire. He defeated all rivals, east and west. He therefore yielded to pride and ended up declaring himself god. Eventually, Nebuchadnezzar became insane, where he began to believe he was an ox. He roamed the forests for seven years, during which his wife ruled in his place. It is said that he regained his sanity but died only a year later.

Nebuchadnezzar plundered Jerusalem several times. He burnt all copies of both the Torah and the Psalms. Naturally, most of the Torah’s content was soon forgotten. By the time people began rewriting the parts they remembered, the Torah had lost its original form, replaced with many conflicting tracts. Ezra (*Uzayr*), who lived around 500 BCE, compiled all these tracts of the Torah. He was also present

112. See, Qurtubi, Tafsir, XV, 20.

during the second construction of the Temple. According to Judaism, the Torah was entirely lost; and God inspired Ezra to rewrite it.

When the Persian king Cyrus defeated the Babylonians, he allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem. In 515 BCE, they repaired and rebuilt the Temple. They lived under the rule of Persians, and after them, Macedonians. At 63 CE, Romans seized full control of Jerusalem, sending Jews into exile for the second time. The Temple of Solomon was once again, demolished.

The Israelites underwent these tribulations because of their own mischief. They had transgressed so much that they changed the Torah and the Psalms to serve their personal interests, and by doing so, corrupted the true religion. They even killed prophets like Zechariah and John (as) for simply trying to prevent them.

The Story of Harut and Marut

Magic was widespread among Jews. Hence, they believed that Solomon (as) was a great magician, who had achieved his kingdom and command over jinn and animals through sorcery. When the Qur'an presented Solomon (as) as a prophet, they remarked:

“Muhammed thinks Solomon is a prophet even though he was nothing but a magician!”

It was then that the below verse was revealed:

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ
كَفَرُوا يَعْلَمُونَ النَّاسَ السَّحَرَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ
وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا
مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ
وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ
مِنْ خَلَاقٍ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

“And they followed what the devils pursued during Solomon’s reign. Solomon did not turn faithless, but faithless were the devils who taught the people magic, and what was sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut. Yet, they would not teach anyone without telling them, ‘We are only a test, so do not become faithless.’ But they still learned from the two the craft to split man from his wife. But they could not harm anyone with it except with Allah’s permission. And they learned that which would only bring them harm and no benefit, know-

ing that anyone who buys it has no share in the Hereafter. They only sold their souls to evil, if only they knew!” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 102)

Scholar Fakhruddin Razi explains the reasons as to why angels Harut and Marut were sent to earth:

a. At the time, magicians had flourished. Some of them had exposed aspects of the craft previously unknown and staked claim to being prophets. They therefore posed a challenge to humans. For that reason, the Almighty sent these two angels to teach people magic, so they would be able to recognize these imposters.

b. Knowing the difference between miracle and magic depends on knowing what they are. Back then, people did not know what magic was. It was therefore impossible for them to recognize a miracle. The Almighty thus sent the two angels to explain to the people the reality behind magic so they could discern the truth behind a miracle.

c. According to another view, magic, which sowed division among the enemies of Allah (jj) and love among His friends was permissible at the time. The Almighty therefore sent the two angels to teach people magic strictly in line with these aims. Yet, the people later began utilizing magic to its opposite end: to sow enmity among God's beloved servants and love among His foes.

d. Since magic is forbidden, it has to be of a nature that human beings can know and grasp. Otherwise, what cannot be grasped cannot be banned.

e. It is also possible that the jinn knew kinds of magic that humans could not perform; and that the Almighty sent these two angels to teach humans things to protect themselves against the jinn.

f. This could also be conceived as a trial that adds to the burden of servanthood. Once man learns a way to obtain worldly pleasures, it becomes harder for him to keep away from it. And the harder the trial is, the greater are the rewards. By keeping away from something he knows how to get, man can therefore reap far greater rewards.

This is similar to how, on a hot summer day, the Almighty tested Saul's army with a river; and Saul declared:

فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ
فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنْ اغْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ

“Allah is about to test you with a river. Whoever drinks from it is not of me. Whoever does not, is indeed of me, excepting those who drink a bit of it from their hands.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 249)

All these explanations suggest numerous wisdoms behind the Almighty sending two angels down on earth to teach magic. Allah (jj) is undoubtedly wise in all His affairs and knows all things the best.

The Prophet's (saw) Superiority to Solomon (as)

1. The winds were placed under Solomon's (as) command. All angels, great and small, were in the service of the Prophet (saw).

2. Solomon (as) could travel a distance of two months in a single day. On the Night of Miraj, the Prophet (saw) rose to the Throne in an instant.

3. Birds used to shade Solomon (as), whereas a cloud would shade the Prophet (saw).

4. All creatures had gathered under Solomon's (as) seal to serve him. On the Day of Judgment, all prophets, saints, martyrs and the righteous will gather under the Prophet's (saw) flag, *Liwau'l-Hamd*.

5. Solomon (as) was given a throne. The Prophet (saw), on the other hand, was given *Ayat al-Kursi*, the Verse of the Throne. It is from among the treasures of paradise, which sends fear into all devils.



SOVEREIGNTY IS ALLAH'S (jj) ALONE

The Almighty gives Solomon (as) as an example as a prophet of means, who kept all the riches of the world he was given, out of his heart. If entire mankind was to come together with the aim of making just a single person as rich as Solomon (as), they could still never succeed. That is because Solomon (as) had command over winds, wild animals, unruly devils and demons. Yet, despite all this wealth, Solomon (as) kept company with the poor and forlorn, saying:

“I am a poor man! And it is best I keep company with my like!”

Rumi (qs) beautifully explains the spiritual gains to be had from being in the company of the poor:

“Hearts drowned by poverty and need are like a house filled with smoke. Listen to their problems and lend a helping hand, so that you open up a window inside that house for the smoke to leave and for your heart to become refined!”

This state of mind has no better expression than charity. Giving charity is also to thank the Lord for one's means and wealth. The Lord pledges that wealth is, in fact, increased by charity:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ

“If you are grateful, I will surely increase you in blessing.” (Ibrahim, 14: 7)

The Prophet (saw) loved donating. He has said:

“Son of Adam! Give so that you will be given!” (Bukhari, Tafsir, 11/2)

The Prophet (saw) wished for generosity to become the nature of all Muslims. He has stated:

“Only two people merit envy. A person who Allah has given has given wealth and the ability to spend it in His way; and a person who Allah has given knowledge and the ability to practice and teach others (i.e. a person who donates his knowledge).” (Bukhari, Ilm, 15; Muslim, Musafirin, 266-268)

The Qur'an declares:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَمِيدُ

“O mankind! You are the ones who stand in need of Allah. And Allah, He is the Sufficient, the Praiseworthy.” (Fatir, 35: 15)

As understood by the verse, sovereignty –including power and wealth- belongs neither to individuals nor society. Sovereignty is Allah’s (jj) alone. All beings live on the Almighty’s property and survive through the things He gives. All individuals have is a limited use of wealth for a set period of time.

Wealth, property and rank are the greatest means of a trial. A time came when Solomon (as) had his entire kingdom taken away; and he could only regain it through repentance. In light of this, the below advice from a saint has great meaning and wisdom:

“Do not chase after provisions, but chase after the Provider!”



It is narrated that upon seeing the splendour of Solomon’s (as) kingdom, the ant leader told his fellow ants:

“How magnificent is Solomon’s kingdom!”

Solomon (as) heard that and remarked:

“My kingdom is fleeting; but the kingdom brought by the word of God’s oneness is eternal!” He well knew that true sovereignty and kingdom belonged only to Allah (jj).

The Qur’an declares:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعِزَّةَ فَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ جَمِيعًا

“Whoever seeks honor, know that honor entirely belongs to Allah.” (Fatir, 35: 10)

إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا

“There is none in the heavens and the earth that is not a servant to the Merciful.” (Maryam, 19: 93)

وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and Allah has power over all things.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 189)

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعْزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذَلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِإِذْنِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“Say, ‘O Allah, Master of all sovereignty! You give sovereignty to whomever You wish, and strip sovereignty of whomever You wish. You make mighty whomever You wish, and You abase whomever You wish. All good is in Your hand. You certainly have power over all things.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 26)

تُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتُؤَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ
وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ تَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

“You make the night pass into day and the day pass into night. You bring forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. And You provide for whomever You wish without any reckoning.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 27)

These verses show that the real kingdom on earth lies in remembering Allah (jj), serving His creatures and donating in His cause.

Charity, which the Qur’an mentions on more than 200 occasions, is to devote both the wealth and the self to Allah (jj). In other words, it is to spend the blessings Allah (jj) has given, in His way. In this sense, a Muslim is a person who has devoted all his existence to Allah (jj).



The first fruit of faith is mercy. A heart distant from mercy cannot be considered alive. Both the *basmala* and *Al-Fatihah*, which are the keys to all things good, begin with the divine names *Rahman* and *Rahim*, signifying Allah’s (jj) mercy and compassion. Consummate examples of mercy and compassion are also embodied in the lives of prophets and saints.

The Prophet (saw) invites believers to develop a mercy that envelops all creatures:

“Allah (jj) shows mercy to those who show mercy. Have mercy on those on earth, so those in the sky have mercy on you!” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 16; Abu Dawud, Adab, 58)

Mercy best shows itself in giving charity, which, as servants, is also our duty.

A serious campaign of charity is needed in our society, where feelings of brotherhood have faded, and peace and serenity have made way for hate and hostility. We should bear in mind that those suffering and in need, could well have been us. What we donate to them, is therefore a thanks we owe to the Lord.

When listing the traits of righteous people, the Almighty adds:

وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

“...and they spend out of what We have provided for them.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 3)

Sadaqah and *infaq*, which are Arabic terms for charity in general, come in many types.

Charity begins with donating what is unneeded. For those without means, even half a date is wonderful charity. It is the genuine intent behind it that will protect the provider from hellfire.

The Prophet (saw) wants mercy, compassion and their natural outcome, charity, to become part of every Muslim's nature. From that perspective, he considers all believers rich. In fact, in many hadith, he tells us that all good deeds like encouraging the good, forbidding evil, helping the oppressed, consoling the dejected, comforting the needy, removing harmful obstacles off streets, visiting the ill and even putting on a smile, are types of charity.

True wealth, therefore, lies in a contented heart. People are rich only to the extent they are content. A smile from a person with a rich heart, counts as charity. That is because his smile reflects a ray of the peace, love and tranquillity within his heart, to those around; and what a splendid donation this is. In contrast, nothing could enrich a person who is poor at heart.

This means that true wealth lies not in money or property but rather a content heart. True believers are those whose richness of heart shows in what they donate. Charity is a perfect manifestation of a sensitivity and selflessness that all believers are obliged to have.

An evocative case in point is provided by Haris ibn Hisham (ra), Iqrimah ibn Abi Jahl (ra) and Iyash ibn Abi Rabia (ra), who were all martyred during the Battle of Yarmouk. These heroes of Islam lay side by side on scorching sand and were parched with thirst, when in their dying moments they were offered a glass of water. But each of them passed it on, thinking the other needed the water more. In the end, they all ended up drinking from the cup of martyrdom, before they could ever have a sip of water. The glass of water was left untouched. (Hakim, Mustadrak, III, 270)

The above represent the pinnacle of charity referred to as *isar* or altruism, which is to prefer the needs of a brother over one's own.

The Almighty declares:

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ فِي السَّرَّاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَالْكَاطِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ وَالْعَافِينَ
عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“Those who spend in ease and adversity, suppress their anger, and excuse the faults of the people. And Allah loves the virtuous.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 134)

It is narrated that Jafar Al-Sadiq had a slave, who did his household chores. One day, the slave brought a bowl of soup and accidentally spilled it all over Jafar Al-Sadiq. He ended up with soup all over him; and for a moment, looked at the slave with anger. The slave then said:

“Sir, the Qur’an praises those who suppress their anger!” and recited the relevant verse.

“Then, I have suppressed my anger”, assured Jafar.

“Sir, the same verse also praises those who excuse the faults of people” the slave said before reciting the relevant part.

“Sure thing”, said Jafar. “I have forgiven you!”

The slave added, “The rest of that verse says ‘Allah loves the virtuous’”, and recited the remainder of the verse.

Jafar Al-Sadiq then declared:

“In that case, go! From now on, you are free! I have set you free for the sake of Allah!”

These are wonderful cases of charity for believers to follow.

The Prophet (saw) tells us that a sinful woman will be admitted to paradise only for giving water to a dog panting heavily from thirst. In contrast, another woman will end up in hell only for mistreating her cat and ignoring its hunger. (Bukhari, Anbiya, 54; Muslim, Salam, 151-152)

All these are examples laden with lessons capable of setting our hearts straight.

Like the moon lighting up a dark night, a believer must be selfless, sensitive, kind, merciful, compassionate and generous.

Allah (jj) informs us that to get closer to Him, we must donate out of the things we love:

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

“You will never attain *birr* until you spend out of what you hold dear, and whatever you may spend of anything, Allah indeed knows it.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 92)

Scholars interpret the term *birr* as the pinnacle of goodness, the mercy of Allah (jj) and His paradise. In another verse, the Almighty defines it as:

لَيْسَ الْبِرُّ أَنْ تُولُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ
آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ

ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَإِذْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ
وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ
وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

“*Birr* is not to turn your faces to the east or the west. Rather, it is personified by those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and who give their wealth, for the love of Him, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, the beggar and the slave; and maintain the prayer and give alms; and those who true to their promise, patient in stress, distress, and in the heat of battle. They are the ones who are true. And it is they who are the pious.”

(Al-Baqarah, 2: 177)

As is defined in the verse, the term *birr* includes all the superior traits a believer must embody. The Prophet (saw) points to this when he says:

“Whoever puts this verse into action will have perfected his faith.” (Nasafi, Madariqu’l-Tanzil, I, 249)



A *waqf* is charity, both spiritual and material, that has come into life in an institution. A *waqf* is an endowment, where altruism towards all beings -which every Muslim must have- becomes manifest. It is an establishment in which love, mercy, compassion towards the created for the sake of the Creator, are put on display. The Almighty says all things are a trust. Everything in the universe has been entrusted in man’s care; and they include children, wealth, possession and health. Man must be rigorously sensitive in protecting them. Returning a trust intact is also means to receive mercy and blessings.

The previously mentioned dialogue between Solomon (as) and a sparrow contains an important lesson in highlighting the sensitivity that must be shown to *waqfs*. It is especially vital for those who serve in endowments to take heed.

The secret to acquiring wealth lies in the hadith, “*The best of men are those with most benefit to others*” (Suyuti, al-Jamiu’s-Saghir, II, 8). It must be remembered that money belongs in the wallet, not the heart! A wise poet vividly illustrates how negligent man is in relation to the world:

*The vile earth is but a hostel
Whether you live in a mansion or rubble
But I’m lovesick without cure for my trouble
For I have built a home inside a hostel*

It must be known that for people of wealth and power, the prayers of the poor and weak are means of mercy. It must also be known there is no shame in being needy. It could perhaps be part of a deeper wisdom and grace that could shine an eternal light on the person in the hereafter.

Umayyah ibn Khalid (ra) narrates that the Prophet (saw) used to pray Allah (jj) to help and give Muslims victory for the sake of the poor immigrants from Mecca. (Tabarani, Mujamu'l-Kabir, I, 292)

Abu'd-Darda (ra) also remembers the Prophet (saw) saying:

"Call the poor to me...for you are only helped and fed through their prayers!" (Abu Dawud, Jihad, 70; Ibn Hanbal, V, 198)



Human beings are the most honourable of all creation. Differences that exist between individuals like being strong or weak, healthy or ill, knowledgeable or ignorant, rich or poor are only there to ensure social order and harmony.

Wealth and poverty, which occupy an important place among these divisions, refer to opposite economic conditions. Being rich or poor contains a deep and delicate divine wisdom that serves the whole purpose of man's trial. Thus, being rich is not an honour, just as being poor is not a shame. Both are divine allotments, and reflections of a wise divine decree. The Almighty declares:

أَهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّكَ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَعِيشَتَهُمْ
فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ
بَعْضًا سُخْرِيًّا وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

"Is it they who dispense the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have dispensed them their livelihood in this life, and raised some of them above others in rank, so that some may take others into service. Your Lord's mercy is better than what they amass." (Al-Zukhruf, 43: 32)

Alms, or *zakat*, has many wisdoms. It serves to curb possible transgressions by the rich who have a soft spot for wealth, remove feelings of resentment and hate from the poor before these ever take hold of their hearts, protect social life and connect individuals to one another through love. Thus, Islam has made alms compulsory for all Muslims with means. Alms and charity are key in striking a balance between the rich and the poor, and allowing love to flourish between them.

The rich will answer to Allah (jj) on how they earned and spent their money, as well as whether they observed their duty of giving alms, donations and putting their

wealth to good use. The rich are subjected to a great test, as they are obliged to spare a portion of their wealth for the poor. Yet, if they pass this test along with the others, they will attain the Lord's pleasure and a place in paradise.

The poor will also answer to Allah (jj) on whether they were able to avoid impatience, complaining, voicing unnecessary requests, being a burden on people, being spiteful, jealous or rebellious and if they kept away from selling their morals and honor for material gains. If they pass these questions, then their troubles on earth will transform to eternal bliss.



Both the generous rich and the patient poor are honored and shareholders of divine pleasure. With that said, Islam also berates the rich, who are conceited and miserly, and the poor, who are impatient and rebellious against divine will. Thus, both wealth and poverty are great tests. It is for that reason the Prophet (saw) would pray:

“My Lord...I seek your protection from the disaster of poverty and wealth!”
(Bukhari, Daawat, 45)

The truly rich are, therefore, those who are more content, and have amassed greater reliance and submission.

By nature, human beings incline to the world. The soul takes a liking to the world's pleasures. Yet, those who fall for these pleasures can never find satisfaction. The more the wealth, the greater is the ambition. Greed for wealth eradicates mercy and compassion, to the point that giving charity becomes the most difficult chore. Such a person is spiritually ill and physically ailing. His ego tells him to 'get richer' so he could 'help the poor more in the future'. Yet, it has also been said that “Perished are those who say I will do it tomorrow.” All tomorrows are really an unknown.

The Almighty tells us how in the moment of death, man will come to his senses as if he is waking up from a dream, and with an unrelenting remorse, plead:

رَبِّ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ فَأَصَّدَّقَ وَأَكُنُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“My Lord, why did You not spare me for a short time so that I might have given charity and become one of the righteous!” (Al-Munafiqun, 63: 10)

By then, however, it will be too late. In the same verse, the Almighty therefore commands His servants to donate from what they are given, before that time comes. Otherwise, they will be struck by an insufferable remorse, which the verses below evocatively illustrate:

كَانَهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبُثُوا إِلَّا عَشِيَّةً أَوْ ضُحِيهَا

“The day they see it, it will be as if they had not stayed on earth except for an evening or forenoon.” (Al-Naziat, 79: 46)

يَوْمَ هُمْ بَارِزُونَ لَا يَخْفَى عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ
لِمَنِ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

“The day when they will rise from their graves, nothing about them will be hidden from Allah. To whom does the sovereignty belong today? To Allah, the One, the Supreme.” (Al-Mumin, 40: 16)

وَلَوْ تَرَى إِذِ الْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُوا رُؤُسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ رَبَّنَا أَبْصَرْنَا
وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ

“If you would only see when the guilty hang their heads before their Lord, and confess, ‘Our Lord! We have seen and heard. Send us back so that we may act righteously. We are now truly convinced.’” (Al-Sajdah, 32: 12)

Propriety in Charity

It is extremely important to be polite when donating. The giver must especially feel appreciation towards the recipient, for giving him the opportunity to carry out a financial duty and pay off his debt of gratitude to the Almighty. Donations also serve as a shield against troubles and illness. The Qur’an expresses the importance of this deed, by saying, “It is Allah who accepts donations.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 104).

The Qur’an also lays down the proper manners to observe when giving charity:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَبْطُلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَى كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ
مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ
عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَاَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَى شَيْءٍ مِمَّا
كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

“O you who have faith! Do not render your charities void with scolding and insults, like those who spend their wealth only to show off to people and have no faith in Allah and the Last Day.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 264)

While these verses encourage being charitable, they at the same time lay out the proper manners one must have during the act of giving. A donation that comes with

patronizing, taunting and looking down on the poor, and breaking their hearts, has no value in the sight of Allah (jj). This is in fact a major sin that brings punishment. The heart is precious: it is the very spot that Allah (jj) gazes at. Rumi (qs) says:

“Kindly donate from the wealth that you have and win over a heart...so that the prayers voiced from that heart enlightens your grave and serves as a light in that darkest of all nights!”

In his words of wisdom, Rumi also explains how the poor are a blessing for the rich, as it is through them that the rich pay off their debt of gratitude to the Lord; and how proper care is needed not to break the hearts of the poor, as if it was not for them, generosity would not have an outlet:

“The poor are mirrors for the generous. Do not fog the mirror up by saying hurtful things to it!

The poor are the appearance of Allah’s (jj) generosity. These poor only seek help from the benevolent. They open up only to them. By doing so, they open up the paths of bliss for the charitable rich. And by finding a way into the hearts of the poor through kindness and charity, the rich let the flowers of love and mercy bud in their hearts.

The poor are therefore also the mirrors of the Lord’s generosity. The rich see their generosity in these mirrors. The righteous rich, who have lost themselves in the Truth, have gained knowledge of themselves before the Lord by realizing that their wealth is only a trust. And for that, they have become reflections of divine generosity. They have a share of the Almighty’s benevolence and are lost in it.

Apart from those who carry their wealth outside of their hearts and keep guard against becoming enchained by their riches, all others are miserable and destitute in the hereafter. These people are not really waiting by the gates of the Lord. Their existence is relative. They are simply the decorations and images outside the gate.

These are the truly miserable and poor, whose hearts have fallen distant from the Lord. Their visible existence are lifeless shades and faded images of their miserable state. They are people devoid of spirit and heedless of the truth, and from whom you should keep away! Do not throw a bone at a picture of a dog!

They are slaves to their personal interests, unaware of their thirst for the Truth.

Beware of putting a plate of food in front of these dead people! Do not show them any affection or pay them any compliment! They are destined to become sordid beggars on the Day of Judgment!

These are dervishes, not of spirit, but of bread! They are like mudfish. They look like fish but are scared to death of the sea.

They take their misery as happiness, and enjoy what they think is good food and a sweet drink. Yet, they have no share of the divine platter.

And you, who does not want to fall in this misery! Encompass creatures with generosity so that you become one of the wise!”



Charity is the mirror of generosity; and the most proper manner of donating is indicated in the adage, “not to let the left hand become aware of what the right hand gives.” The Prophet (saw) in fact tells us that those who donate this way will be among the blissful who will be shaded on Judgment Day under the Throne.¹¹³ To this aim, our ancestors have founded numerous endowments. These endowments operate in such a way that the donations come from undisclosed donors. This protects the donor from showing off. At the same time, the recipient prays for the donor, without ever finding out who he or she is. A wonderful example is the following charter issued by Ottoman Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror:

“I, the Conqueror of Istanbul and Allah’s helpless servant, Mehmed, declare that:

...I have endowed the 146 shops which I earned with the grease of my elbow, to public use under the below conditions:

Meals are to be prepared in the dining hall of the complex and served to the wives and children of martyrs, and Istanbul’s poor! And to those who cannot come to eat due to certain drawbacks, their meals are to be taken to them in sealed containers, secretly, in the dark of night.”

As is clear in the charter, while laying down guidelines to protect the society’s weak, Sultan Mehmed also sticks to the rules of etiquette.

With a ruler with such impeccable sensitivity, the society of the time also had an etiquette to match. They used to leave their alms discretely inside ‘alms stones’ set up across the city’s mosques, for the needy to collect it without having to see the donor.

On the other hand, it is also important to find and donate to those who are too shy to voice their needs. The Almighty declares:

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَحْصَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ضَرْبًا فِي الْأَرْضِ
يَحْسَبُهُمُ الْجَاهِلُ أَعْيَاءَ مِنَ التَّعَفُّفِ تَعْرِفُهُمْ بِسِيمَاهُمْ لَا يَسْأَلُونَ النَّاسَ
الْحَافًا وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

113. See, Bukhari, Adhan, 36.

“Charities are for the poor who are reduced in the way of Allah, incapable of moving about in the land for trade. The unaware suppose them to be well-off because of their reserve. You recognize them by their mark; they do not ask the people demandingly. And whatever wealth you may spend, Allah indeed knows it.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 273)

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

“Those who give their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 274)

The true purpose of religion is to affirm Allah’s (jj) oneness, and to then achieve a peaceful society by raising individuals of great elegance, sensitivity and depth. This level of maturity is possible only by cultivating hearts with mercy and compassion, and allowing these feelings to show in the best manner they can, through alms and charity. The heart of a believer must envelop all of God’s creatures with mercy and compassion.

We live on Allah’s (jj) land. We are fed by what He gives. Those who neglect their financial duties should ask themselves: whose wealth am I really withholding?

The natural outcome of love is sacrifice. One sees it as a duty and derives enormous pleasure from making sacrifices for the person he loves. This follows all the way until the lover, if need be, gives his life for the beloved. Donating to the Lord’s creatures is one of the best ways for the lover to show his feelings for the One he loves. Alms and charity are essentially given for Allah (jj); and it is solely for that reason that the Qur’an says ‘it is Allah (jj) who takes them’:

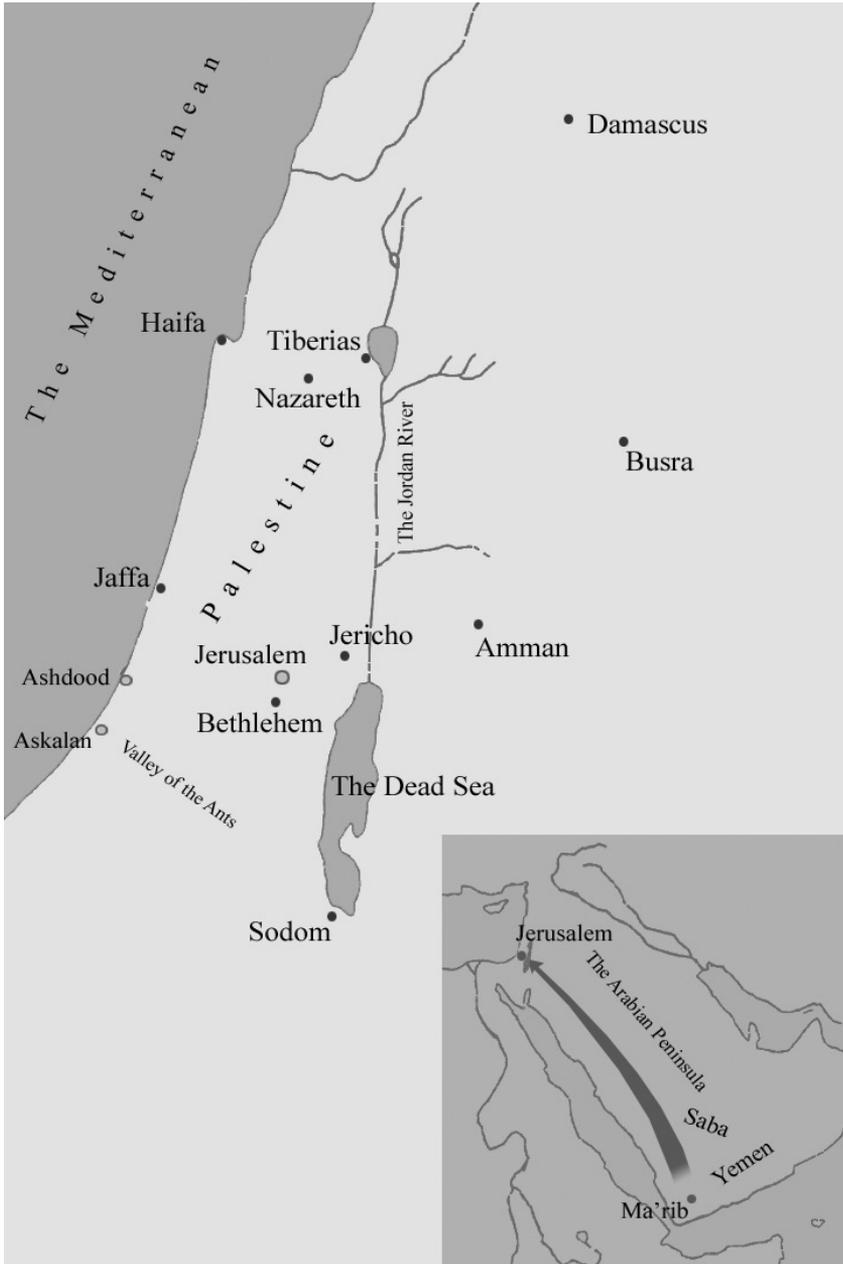
أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ
وَيَأْخُذُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ

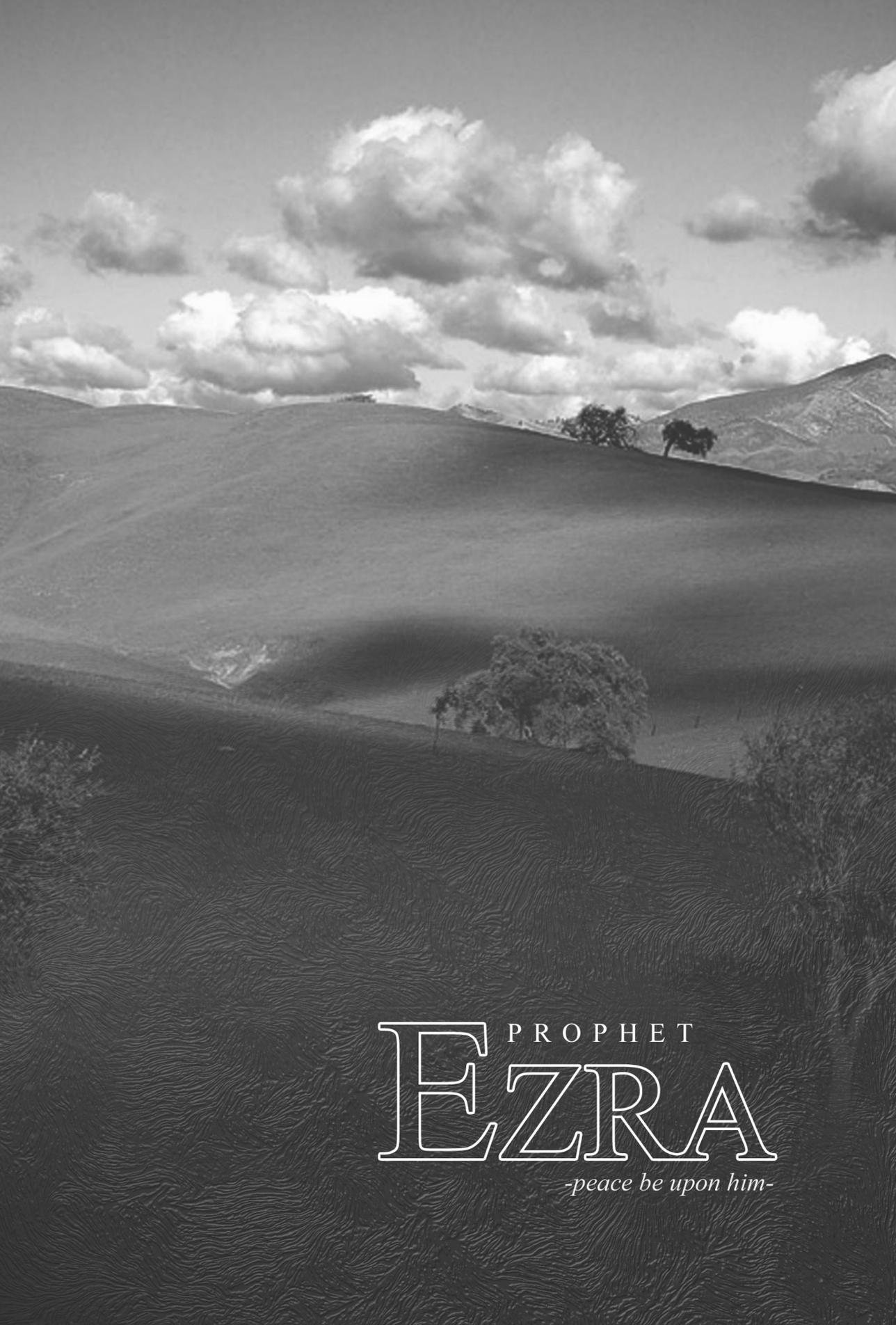
“Do they not know that it is Allah who accepts the repentance of His servants and receives the charities, and that it is Allah who is the Clement, the Merciful?” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 104)

My Allah, the True Owner of wealth and sovereignty! Let mercy, compassion and all forms of spending on Your path become boundless treasures in our hearts!

Amin..

Prophet Solomon





PROPHET
EZRA

-peace be upon him-

***The Man Resurrected After a Hundred-Year Death
To Serve as an Example of the Greater Resurrection to Come***

EZRA

-peace be upon him-

Ezra (as) is known, in Islam, as *Uzayr*. He was a descendent of Aaron (as) and was among a few people, who had memorized the Torah.

The Qur'an does not make it clear whether Ezra (as) was a prophet. The Prophet (saw) has also said:

"I do not know if Ezra was a prophet." (Ali al-Muttaqi, XII, 81/34087)

The Qur'an only mentions how Allah (jj) took his soul and returned it to him after a hundred years.

In Ezra's (as) time, the Israelites had become rampant in their violations, for which the Almighty had sent Nebuchadnezzar as punishment. The Babylonian king invaded the regions of Damascus and Jordan, destroyed the Temple, laid waste to towns and farmlands, killed defenseless civilians and took young men and women with him back to Babylon as prisoners. Among them was Ezra (as).

It is narrated that at around the age of fifty, Ezra (as) fled from captivity. He rode a donkey towards Jerusalem. Once the city became visible, he felt saddened upon seeing its buildings and gardens in ruin. He was also hungry; so he tied his donkey to a tree and helped himself to some figs and juice he squeezed from some grapes on the vine. He then sat beneath a tree and gazed, once more, at the devastated land and the remains of human and animal bones scattered around. As he reflected on Allah's (jj) power and how everything would be raised from the dead, he fell asleep.

The Almighty says:

أَوْ كَالَّذِي مَرَّ عَلَى قَرْيَةٍ وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا قَالَ أَنَّى يُحْيِي هَذِهِ اللَّهُ
بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا فَأَمَاتَهُ اللَّهُ مِائَةَ عَامٍ ثُمَّ بَعَثَهُ قَالَ كَمْ لَبِثْتَ قَالَ لَبِثْتُ يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ
يَوْمٍ قَالَ بَلْ لَبِثْتَ مِائَةَ عَامٍ فَانظُرْ إِلَى طَعَامِكَ وَشَرَابِكَ لَمْ يَتَسَنَّهْ وَانظُرْ إِلَى

حِمَارِكَ وَلِنَجْعَلَكَ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَانظُرْ إِلَى الْعِظَامِ كَيْفَ نُنشِزُهَا ثُمَّ نَكْسُوهَا لَحْمًا
فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ قَالَ أَعْلَمُ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“Or him who came upon a township as it lay fallen on its roof.

He said, ‘How will Allah revive this after its death?!’

So, Allah made him die for a hundred years. He then resurrected him, and said, ‘How long have you remained?’

He said, ‘I have remained a day or part of a day.’

Allah said, ‘Rather you have remained a hundred years. Look at your food and drink which have not rotted! Then, look at your donkey! We did this to make you a sign for mankind. And look at the bones, how We arrange them and then clothe them with flesh!’

When it all became clear to him, he said, ‘I know that Allah has power over all things.’ (Al-Baqarah, 2: 259)



It was the early hours of daybreak, when Ezra (as) had fallen asleep. When he woke back up, the sun had not yet set. But a hundred years had elapsed in between. Nebuchadnezzar was long dead. The captives had returned to Jerusalem, rebuilt the city, as well as the Temple.

Ezra (as) rode into the city on his donkey and saw that everything had changed beyond recognition. The people were not the people he knew, neither were the buildings. He tried searching for his neighborhood. So, he stood by a house to ask an old and crippled woman outside:

“Where is Ezra’s house?”

“This is it!” the old woman said in a sad voice. “But he went missing around a hundred years ago. I used to be his maid.”

“I am Ezra!” he said and went on to explain what happened.

The maid was elated and asked him to pray for her to return to her previous health and condition. Ezra (as) thanked the Lord for the blessings and prayed for the lady. Soon, she regained her former state.

Ezra (as) had an 18-year-old son at the time of his ‘death’. He was now a 118-year-old grey and frail man. He could not recognize his father.

“My dad had a mole on his back shaped like a crescent,” he said.

They lifted Ezra's (as) shirt and saw that very mole. Nobody had any doubts that the man was indeed Ezra (as).

When Nebuchadnezzar invaded and pillaged Jerusalem, he also had all the copies of the Torah burnt. It was Ezra (as) who revived the religion from its ashes.

According to a report from Ibn Abbas (ra), when the Almighty saw the Israelites turn their backs on the Torah and follow their desire, He took the Ark containing the Torah away from them and made them forget the entire revelation. The Israelites soon felt remorse. Thereupon, Ezra (as) worshipped and prayed to the Lord in lots. Eventually, the Almighty sent down a light that entered Ezra's (as) heart and allowed him to recollect the Torah. He then retaught it to the Israelites. Later, the Ark was also found; and when the Israelites saw that the Torah they had been taught matched the original copy word for word, their love for Ezra (as) grew.

Yet, despite all this, the Israelites slipped into a deviant path, and went so far as to declare Ezra (as) the son of God.

The Qur'an declares:

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ عُزَيْرٌ ابْنُ اللَّهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ
بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهِئُونَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ قَاتَلَهُمُ اللَّهُ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ

“The Jews say, ‘Ezra is the son of Allah,’ and the Christians say, ‘Christ is the son of Allah.’ That is an opinion they mouth, imitating the opinions of the faithless of former times. May Allah assail them, where do they stray?” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 30)

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا
أُمْرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

“They have taken their scribes and their monks as lords besides Allah, and also Christ, Mary's son; though they were commanded to worship only the One God, there is no god except Him. He is far too immaculate to have any partners they ascribe.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 31)

Even though today's Jews do not see Ezra (as) as 'the son of God', there was a certain Jewish faction at the time that went overboard in their love for Ezra (as) and called him that.



RESURRECTION

Resurrection (*bathu bada'l mawt*) is to wake up to an eternal life after death. It is the spirit's journey to eternity. Physically, man first lives among soil, then in the father's loins, the mother's womb, the parents' arms and inside their heart. From the cradle of earth, he is then delivered to the cradle of the grave, to set out on a journey towards the Day of Judgment and from there, to either heaven or hell.

To awaken humans from the slumber of neglect and give them a share of the truth to help them fulfil their duties of servanthood, the Almighty has given miraculous examples to hearts that can hear and see. While these are too many to count, the Almighty has especially dotted both the Qur'an and the cosmos with many striking allusions to our inescapable destiny, resurrection after death.

In the Qur'an, Allah (jj) presents human understanding with the stories of Ezra (as) and the Sleepers of the Cave as cases in point for resurrection.¹¹⁴ These divine examples contain truths that help hearts mature and take them closer to the Lord.

The Sleepers of the Cave

The Sleepers of the Cave lived in Tarsus, present day Turkey, at the time of the pagan Roman Emperor Decius. They were a group of pious youths, who strived in the way of faith and *tawhid*.

The Qur'an does not specify their exact number. It simply refers to them as 'a group of youth'. What the Qur'an lays emphasis on is not their number, names or places of origin but rather the sincerity and quality of their hearts, which has earned them a special mention from the Lord. This is an event laden with lessons and wisdom. It serves as an example of resurrection and aims to give man an insight into many divine truths.

The Sleepers of the Cave were a group of youth from the circle of Emperor Decius. As they were believers in *tawhid*, they constantly prayed to Allah (jj) in tears to end the pagan emperor's tyranny. Yet, as the days wore on, the emperor's pride and conceit heightened his denial and tyranny, to the point he declared himself god. Decius did not stop there, either. He began arresting every person who believed God was one; and after putting them through gruesome torture, had each of them hanged at the gates of the city.

114. The Qur'an gives another example for life after death in the 260th verse of Al-Baqarah through the incident of the 'resurrection of the birds'. For more information, see *The History of Prophets*, V. I.

It was around this time that he found out that there were a group of believers from his own circle. He summoned the young men and threatened them. Yet, because the youth had long tasted the eternal zest of faith, they were undaunted. They defended their position before the emperor and told the truth to his face. The Almighty recounts their states of mind in the following:

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَأَهُم بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاهُمْ هُدًى

“We relate to you their account in truth. They were indeed youths who had faith in their Lord, and We had enhanced them in guidance.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 13)

وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِهَا لَقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذَا شَطَطًا

“And We fortified their hearts, when they stood up and said, ‘Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth! We will never call on any god besides Him, for we will have then have said an atrocious lie!’” (Al-Kahf, 18: 14)

هُؤُلَاءِ قَوْمُنَا اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ الْهَيَّةِ لَوْلَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِمُ
بِسُلْطَانٍ بَيِّنٍ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا

“These, our people, have taken gods besides Him. Why do they not at least bring any clear evidence? Who is a greater wrongdoer than he who fabricates a lie against Allah?” (Al-Kahf, 18: 15)

With Decius insisting they return to worshipping idols, the youths said:

“We have one God and recognize no other. We cannot leave the Lord of the heavens and earth for lifeless lumps of stone made by men! There is not even a slight chance we can accept your offer! This is how things will stand until eternity. You are free to do what you can!”

In doing so, they responded to the tyrant Decius with a resoluteness and nobility similar to the Pharaoh’s magicians, who had set out to compete with Moses (as) only to come round to believing in Allah (jj).

Once they were privileged to enter the fold of faith, the magicians responded to the threats of the Pharaoh with the words:

“Your action cannot harm us! One way or another, we will return to our Lord! So, do what you can!”

Decius was furious with the determination he saw in the youths. He stripped off all their official ranks.

“You are still young; do not be foolish!” he then told them. “You have three days to change your mind! Think carefully. Would you rather live or perish?” Following this warning, Decius left them on their own and set out for Nineveh.

This period of grace proved to be a blessing in disguise. The youths had gained valuable time to escape the evils of the emperor. Relying only on the Almighty’s mercy and help and with their dog by their side, the youths left the city and hid inside a cave. Inside, they ate the food they had brought with them and spent day and night worshipping and praying to the Lord with the words:

“Our Lord! Give us a mercy from You and a path of escape out of our situation!”

It is narrated that the Prophet (saw) made the same prayer while inside the Cave of Sawr during the Hegira.

Soon, for the sake of their good deeds, sincerity and genuine prayers, divine mercy came to their aid. Decius had returned from Nineveh and found out about their escape. Immediately, he went out to search and before long, found the cave they were hiding in. For a moment, he thought about a suitable punishment when, through divine providence, the idea of blocking the cave’s entry, crossed his mind. He wasted no time and commanded his soldiers to:

“Block the entrance of the cave! Let them die from hunger and thirst; and let this cave be their grave!”

This way, Decius thought he could bury the youth alive. Yet, little did he know that Allah (jj), who had raised Moses (as) in the Pharaoh’s palace and protected him from the Pharaoh’s evils, was also protecting these youth from his own.

The Almighty, who is the Best of all protectors, encompassed the youth with His eternal mercy and made them sleep inside the cave for 309 years.

Rumi says:

“It is better to sleep than to be with the ignorant and receive their reflection. By separating the Sleepers from the deviant, the Lord preserved their hearts from neglect.”

The Qur’an states:

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَزَاوَرُ عَنْ كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَإِذَا غَرَبَتْ
تَقْرُبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِي فَجْوَةٍ مِنْهُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مَنْ
يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُرْشِدًا

“You would see the sun, as it rose, slanting toward the right of their cave, and cut across them towards the left when it set, while they remained in a cavern within it. That is one of Allah’s signs. Whomever Allah guides is rightly guided, and whomever He leads astray, you will never find for him any guardian or guide.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 17)

وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ آئِقَاطًا وَهُمْ رُقُودٌ وَنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ الشَّمَالِ وَكَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ
ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَلَمُلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعبًا

“You would have assumed they were awake, even though they were asleep. We turned them to the right and to the left, and their dog lied stretching its fore-legs at the threshold. If you had come upon them, you would have surely turned to flee, and you would have surely been filled with terror!” (Al-Kahf, 18: 18)

When the Sleepers eventually woke up, they supposed they had been inside for a very short time:

وَكَذَلِكَ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا بَيْنَهُمْ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ
بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ فَابْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ
فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا

“So, We then awoke them and they questioned one another.

One of them said, ‘How long have you stayed here?’

Some of them said, ‘We have stayed a day or part of it.’

Others said, ‘Your Lord knows best how long you have stayed. Send one of you to the city with this money. Let him observe who has the purest food, and bring you back some provisions. Let him be attentive, and not make anyone aware.’ (Al-Kahf, 18: 19)

إِنَّهُمْ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوا إِذَا أَبَدًا

“For if they find out about you, they will either stone you to death, or force you back into their creed. Then you will never be saved.” (Al-Kahf, 18: 20)

One of them went into town to buy food with coins dating back centuries. So, when the shopkeepers noticed this, they informed the emperor, thinking the man had found a treasure.

The new emperor was a pious man. He always gave good advices to those around him and invited them to *tawhid*, reminding them they will be resurrected

after death. Yet, the ignorant among his people were doubtful or in denial of life after death. This would sadden the emperor; and he would pray:

“My Lord! Give me a sign to show these people the reality which they deny!”

At last, when the emperor saw the young man appear, he elatedly announced it to everyone and thanked the Lord for the realization of what he had been waiting for. He then visited the cave and saw the rest of the Sleepers. Divine wisdoms and lessons had thus appeared. Shortly after, the Almighty took the souls of the Sleepers for good.

The Qur’an has praised the Sleepers of the Cave for persevering with their faith, enduring tyranny, remaining steadfast on the path of Allah (jj) and migrating for His cause. Such that they have given their names to the chapter which recounts their experiences (Al-Kahf, means the Cave). Even though the chapter contains other important parables, the fact that it is named after them, indicates the importance of their experience.

Our Prophet (saw) has said that reciting Chapter al-Kahf on a Friday will compensate for all sins until the next Friday. (Suyuti, al-Jamiu’s-Saghir, I, 98) As the chapter sheds light on things we should never fail to remember, such as the struggle of faith, resurrection, the story of Moses and Khidr and how divine power becomes manifest, the Prophet (saw) has advised us to read it at least once a week.



It is also remarkable that the dog that accompanied the Sleepers to the cave, also received a share of their blessing. Interpreters of the Qur’an say that despite being a dog, Qitmir, as it was so called, will also enter paradise for having kept company with the righteous and loyally guarding the cave’s entrance.¹¹⁵

Rumi (qs) says:

“For choosing to loyally keep watch over the Sleepers at the gate of the cave, that dog drank from the water of divine mercy, despite having no bowl in front of it. And it earned the right to join them in paradise.”

And Sheikh Sadi (qs) says:

“For hanging around the deviant, Lot’s (as) wife lost her way and became deviant herself. As for the Sleepers’ Qitmir, it acquired the quality of a human for keeping watch over the righteous.”



115. See, I. Hakki Bursevi, Ruhu’l-Beyan, V, 226.

While revealing the wisdom behind how the Sleepers were put to a 309-year slumber, yet still remained alive despite not eating or drinking, the Almighty also states that this, for Him, is an easy feat:

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا

“Do you suppose that the Companions of the Cave and the inscription are among Our wonderful signs?” (Al-Kahf, 18: 9)

That is because Allah (jj) is the Creator and Executor of far greater affairs. He creates from nothing, takes and gives life.

Through many everyday events, man is given opportunity to grasp the secret of his life and death. On top of that, the Qur’an presents parables, filled with wisdoms that appeal both to the mind and the heart, for humans to also come to terms with their impending resurrection, with reminders of the Almighty’s invincible power:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ
وَضَرَبَ لَنَا مَثَلًا وَنَسِيَ خَلْقَهُ قَالَ مَنْ يُحْيِي الْعِظَامَ وَهِيَ رَمِيمٌ قُلْ
يُحْيِيهَا الَّذِي أَنشَأَهَا أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ خَلْقٍ عَلِيمٌ

“Does not man see that We created him from a drop of fluid? And then he becomes an open contender! He draws comparisons for Us, and forgets his own creation. He says, ‘Who shall revive the bones when they have decayed?’ Say, ‘He who produced them the first time, will revive them and He has knowledge of all creation.” (Ya-Sin, 36: 77-79)

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّنَا نَجْمَعُ عِظَامَهُ بَلَىٰ قَادِرِينَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ نَسُوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ

“Does man suppose that We will not put together his bones? Yes, indeed, We are able to reassemble even his fingertips!” (Al-Qiyamah, 75: 3-4)

أَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ بِقَادِرٍ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَىٰ

“Is not such a One able to revive the dead?” (Al-Qiyamah, 75: 40)

The Almighty also gives examples from the order of nature to show easy it is for Him to resurrect the dead:

رَعِمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ لَنْ يُبْعَثُوا قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتُبْعَثُنَّ
ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلْتُمْ وَذَلِكَ عَلَىٰ اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ

“The faithless claim they will not be resurrected. Say, ‘Yes, by my Lord, you will surely be resurrected, and then you will surely be informed of what you did. That, for Allah, is easy.’ (Al-Taghabun, 64: 7)

وَاللّٰهُ اَنْبَتَكُمْ مِنَ الْاَرْضِ نَبَاتًا ثُمَّ يُعِيدُكُمْ فِيْهَا وَيُخْرِجُكُمْ اَخْرَاجًا

“Allah made you grow from the earth like grass. He then makes you return to it. And He will bring you forth!” (Nuh, 71: 17-18)

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَّاحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقَلَّتْ
سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنَاهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَاَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ
كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ كَذٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰى لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ

“It is He who sends forth the winds as harbingers of His mercy. When they bear clouds laden with rain, We drive them toward a dead land and send down water. And with it, We bring forth all kinds of crops. Thus will We raise the dead; perhaps you will think.” (Al-Araf, 7: 57)

فَاَنْظُرْ اِلَىٰ اٰثَارِ رَحْمَتِ اللّٰهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا
اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ لَمُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ

“So, observe the effects of Allah’s mercy, how He revives the earth after its death! He is surely the reviver of the dead, and has power over all things.” (Al-Rum, 30: 50)

اَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَلَمْ يَعْْي بِخَلْقِهِنَّ
بِقَادِرٍ عَلٰى اَنْ يُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتٰى بَلٰى اِنَّهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ

“Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and the earth without exhaustion, is able to revive the dead? Yes, indeed He has power over all things.” (Al-Ahqaf, 46: 33)

قُلْ كُوْنُوْا حِجَارَةً اَوْ حَدِيْدًا اَوْ خَلْقًا مِّمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِيْ صُدُوْرِكُمْ
فَسَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَنْ يُعِيْدُنَا قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَسَيُنْغِضُوْنَ اِلَيْكَ
رُؤْسَهُمْ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هُوَ قُلْ عَسٰى اَنْ يَكُوْنَ قَرِيْبًا

“Say, ‘Even if you were stones, iron or a creature more fantastic to your minds!’ They will say, ‘Who will bring us back?’ Say, ‘He who brought you forth

the first time.’ They will nod their heads at you, and say, ‘When will that be?’ Say, ‘Maybe it is near!’” (Al-Isra, 17: 50-51)

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ
مِثْلَهُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَهُمْ أَجَلًا لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ فَبِأَيِّ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا كُفُورًا

“Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and the earth, is able to create the like of them? He has appointed for them a term, in which there is no doubt. Yet, the wrongdoers are only intent on ingratitude.” (Al-Isra, 17: 99)

إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَنْ نَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

“All that We say to a thing, when We will it, is to say, ‘Be!’ and it is!” (Al-Nahl, 16: 40)

Also splendidly explained is how we go to sleep each night and wake up the next morning, is really a rehearsal for resurrection:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّاكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُم بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيهِ
لِيُقَضَىٰ أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

“It is He who takes your souls by night and knows what you do by day. Then, He reanimates you to complete a set term. Then to Him, you will return, when He will inform you of what you used to do.” (Al-An’am, 6: 60)

As the above verses of the Qur’an explain, the fact that night evolves into day and day into night, how the four seasons follow one another and how, in the meantime, crops die and are reborn, are all reminders of rebirth after death, the awakening to the morning of eternity.

In many passages of the Qur’an, the Almighty demonstrates resurrection to the human mind with clear proofs, which leave no room for doubt:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنْ كُنتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبُعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ
ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَنُقِرُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا
نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُتَوَفَّىٰ
وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْدَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا وَتَرَىٰ الْأَرْضَ
هَامِدَةً فإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنْبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ

“O people! If you are in doubt about resurrection, consider that We created you from dust, then from a drop of fluid, then from a clinging mass, then from a fleshy tissue, partly formed and partly unformed, so that We may manifest Our power to you. We establish in the wombs whatever We wish for a specified term. Then, We bring you forth as infants, so that you may come of age. Then, there are some of you who are taken away, and others who are relegated to old age, and knows nothing after having possessed some knowledge. And you see the earth dry and dead, yet when We send down water upon it, it stirs and swells and grows every delightful kind of plant.” (Al-Hajj, 22: 5)

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّهُ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى
وَأَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“That is because Allah is the Real; and it is He who revives the dead, and has power over all things.” (Al-Hajj, 22: 6)

وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ

“And the Hour is bound to come, there is no doubt in it. And Allah will resurrect those who are in the graves.” (Al-Hajj, 22: 7)



The initial stage of resurrection begins with the first blowing of the trumpet (*sur*). As a result, every being dies. The trumpet then sounds for the second time, with which all the dead are reborn.

The Almighty describes this as:

وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَصَعِقَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ
شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ

“Say, ‘O my people! Act according to your ability. I, too, am acting. Soon you will know!’” (Al-Zumar, 39: 68)

Allah (jj) also details how the resurrected will be overcome by a state of shock; and the terrifying scene as people make their way towards the field of gathering (*mahshar*).

يَوْمَ يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ الْأَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا كَانَتْهُمْ إِلَىٰ نُصَبٍ يُوْفَضُونَ خَاشِعَةً
أَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرَاهُمْ ذَلَّةً ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ

“The day when they emerge from the graves, hastening as if racing toward a target, with a humbled look, overcast by abasement. That is the day they had been promised.” (Al-Ma’arij, 70: 43-44)

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يَنْفَعُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَعذِرَتُهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْتَبُونَ

“On that day the excuses of the wrongdoers will not benefit them, nor will they be appeased.” (Al-Rum, 30: 57)

يَوْمَ تَشَقُّقُ الْأَرْضُ عَنْهُمْ سِرَاعًا ذَلِكَ حَشْرٌ عَلَيْنَا يَسِيرٌ

“The day the earth is split open for them, they will come out hastening. Mustering them is easy for Us!” (Qaf, 50: 44)

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَيْنِهِ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُسْفِرَةٌ ضَاحِكَةٌ مُسْتَبْشِرَةٌ وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ تَرْهَقُهَا قَتَرَةٌ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرَةُ الْفَجِرَةُ

“The day when a man will avoid his brother, mother and father; his spouse and sons. That day each of them will have a worry to keep him occupied. That day some faces will be bright. Laughing and joyous. And some faces on that day will be covered with dust. Overcast with gloom. It is they who are the faithless, the vicious.” (Abasa, 80: 34-42)

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ أَكْفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

“On the day, when faces will turn either white or black. To those with faces black, it will be said, ‘Did you disbelieve after your faith? So taste the punishment because of your disbelief!’ But as for those with faces white, they will dwell in Allah’s mercy, where they will remain forever.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 106-107)



How can a sane person not consider how every particle in the cosmos bursts from a kernel into a festive spring, moving from a micro universe to a macro, from an atom to spheres, and marches forth from life to death in a cycle to be repeated until the final hour, in a harmonious order impossible to fully grasp? Within this

impeccable order that leaves the mind in awe, how would Allah (jj) ever create man without a purpose?

The Qur'an declares:

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ

“Did you suppose that We created you aimlessly, and that you will not be brought back to Us?” (Al-Muminun, 23: 115)

أَيَحْسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى

“Does man suppose he would be abandoned to futility?” (Al-Qiyamah, 75: 36)

When every particle in the universe, each letter in the Qur'an and every cell in the human being say, in their own language, that nothing is created in vain, it is truly bizarre for man to sleep in neglect, unresponsive to divine wisdoms and truths!

Alas! What sort of a transaction could possibly occur between sleepers? What else can the lives of the ignorant be, other than a blind man's bluff?

Hearts blinded to the truth have always rejected the lifebuoys held out by prophets and saints, as they clash with their egoistic and animal desires. They instead retreat to the narrow confines of their reason and construct an imaginary world remote from death, and take comfort in empty consolations.

Just as flies enjoy feeding off filth, these people take their misery as bliss; and carry on like the living dead burdened by the weight of their physical existence. That is until they breathe their last and are no more. Many a greedy tyrant, who has never known what it feels like to fall flat on his back, has been knocked out with the mortal blow of death!

For those freed from the amusements of the world and have reached the climes of the heart, death marks birth into the real life. Death is a transition from the world of shadows into the real world.

If fearing and fleeing death was necessary, it would have made sense to shiver with every approaching night! Yet, we never fear. We let ourselves go into the night, knowing that the morning will necessarily dawn as part of the divine order of creation.

Therefore, we must also accept that the morning of truth will dawn from the nightfall of death. The Qur'an eloquently tells us how each passing moment takes us closer to that morning:

وَمَنْ نُعَمِّرْهُ نُنَكِّسْهُ فِي الْخَلْقِ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ

“And whomever We give a long life, We cause him to regress in creation. Will they still not reason?” (Ya-Sin, 36: 68)

In the words of a wise intellectual, “For the prudent, the world is a stage to behold divine beauty; while for the ignorant, it is nothing but a plate from which to fulfil desire.”

Our days on earth race ahead with the speed of a car with brake failure. Every day, we witness the autumns of life take someone closer to the end and the storms of death whisk others away. How could we simply watch all this with the cold expression of a sullen statue, hopelessly try to kick open the iron gates of destiny to satisfy fleeting desires, flee the grave we are inescapably bound for or base our lives on a mundane wish for material gain, when we carry the honor and dignity of being human?

As the summary of the book of universe and the manifestation of all divine names, should not man instead look to become energized through spiritual food and live up to the purpose of his creation as best he can? If life is a market, the noblest clothing sold in it is the burial shroud; the very final item on man’s shopping list.

Life on earth passes like a raincloud in summer. How is a life without concern for the hereafter any different to a day, where no thought is spared for the coming night?

The Almighty declares:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَلَا تَغُرَّنَّكُمُ الْحَيَاةُ
الدُّنْيَا وَلَا يَغُرَّنَّكُم بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ

“O mankind! Allah’s promise is indeed true. So, do not let the life of the world deceive you, nor let the ‘deceiver’ deceive you concerning Allah.” (Fatir, 35: 5)

Once man throws a thoughtful eye at both himself and the universe, he cannot but rethink how he will lead his life. For those devoted to live by their purpose of creation, there is not greater concern or event than death. That final farewell paints a scene sprawling with lessons. Yet, for those who nourish their flesh but starve their spirit for just a short stay on earth, what a pitiful exhaustion death is!

The moment they are resurrected, they will see the true face of the misery they mistook for joy. The Almighty declares:

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انْتَشَرَتْ وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فُجِّرَتْ
وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعْثِرَتْ عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ

“When the sky is rent apart, when the stars are scattered, when the seas are merged, when the graves are overturned, a soul will know what it has sent ahead and left behind.” (Al-Infitar, 82: 1-5)

Once assembled on the field of gathering, people will consider how little time they had spent on earth, compared to the everlasting life that will have just begun:

كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا عَشِيَّةً أَوْ ضُحِيهَا

“The day they see it, it shall be as if they had not stayed in the world except for an evening or forenoon.” (Al-Naziat, 79: 46)

It is for that reason that the Prophet (saw) has these words to illustrate life on earth:

“What business could I have with the world? I am like a wayfarer on horseback who has momentarily taken a break beneath a tree and is about to move on.” (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 3; Ibn Hanbal, I, 391)

And here is how Allah (jj) describes the mindsets of those with true understanding:

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ
وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ
هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, and say, ‘Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Immaculate are You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.’” (Al-i Imran, 3: 191)



The entire world runs on a sensitive order. Everything is governed by a delicate law of balance. In all the wonders they display, both the skies and the earth are examples of exceptional harmony. The sun and the moon rise and set according to a meticulous formula that also makes the day and night flow one after another. Raindrops fall on the soil according to a measure, while autumn and spring, along with the greenery, sprout in line with a sensitive calculus. Food for every single

creature is apportioned with a delicate measure. When the entire cosmos subsists through a divine order and harmony, how is it even thinkable for man, the highest specimen in the universe and the wonder of creation, to lead a reckless life without order, emotion and meaning?

Man has been created to pass the test of life. To do so, he must protect his mental, emotional and physical balance.

Mental balance rests on knowledge of certainty and the light of truth;

Emotional balance, or inner harmony, rests on good morals and a sound heart;

Physical balance relies on valuable deeds that serve the Lord;

...while the inspirational sources of all these are the Qur'an and Sunnah.

In short, as the most honorable of creation, man must uplift himself through faith and good deeds; and live up to the divine order that exists throughout the universe.

In regards to the delicate order within man, the Qur'an and the universe, Allah (jj) tells us:

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ
بِحُسْبَانٍ وَالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدَانِ وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ أَلَّا
تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ

“The Merciful. He has taught the Qur'an. He created man, and taught him articulate speech. The sun and the moon are calculated. And the herb and the tree prostrate. He raised the sky and set up the balance. Do not infringe the balance! Maintain the weights with justice, and do not shorten the balance!” (Al-Rahman, 55: 1-9)

Our Lord! Include us in this world among your pious servants, who are treasures of wisdom and mysteries; and resurrect us with them on the day of rebirth!

Amin...





PROPHET
JOB

-peace be upon him-

*The Prophet whose Profound Contemplation Turned
Him into The Stone of Patience*

JOB

-peace be upon him-

Job (as) was of the lineage of Jacob's (as) brother, Esau. He lived around Damascus, and had very few followers.

Through the prayers of his great uncle Isaac (as), the Almighty blessed Job (as) with a lot of wealth and many children. He owned a vast land with a lot of livestock and had many servants to help him. He always helped the poor, orphans and widows, and would not eat unless there was a poor person on the dinner table. Job (as) took great delight in offering guests things Allah (jj) had given him.

Job (as) began life a wealthy man, fell poor and weak in the middle stages; but later received all that he had lost, thanks to a patience that has become legendary. The Almighty praises him as:

إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ

“We indeed found Job to be patient. What an excellent servant! He was truly penitent.” (Sad, 38: 44)

Job (as) was sent to the people in the region of Damascus. The Qur'an describes him as a prophet who received divine revelation:

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا
إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَىٰ
وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا

“We have indeed revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him, and as We revealed to Abraham and Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus and Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon. And We gave David the Psalms.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 163)

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ
وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ

“And We gave him Isaac and Jacob and guided each of them. And Noah, We had guided before; and from his offspring, David and Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses and Aaron. And so We reward the virtuous.” (Al-An'am, 6: 84)

The Test, Patience and Reward

As part of a test, Allah (jj) took everything Job (as) had, one by one, from his children to his wealth. Afterward, Job (as) also became stricken with a severe illness. Yet, through reliance and submission to Allah (jj), he showed patience in the face of all these tribulations and resigned to divine will.

In the end, his legendary patience and submission became etched in history as an example to humankind.

Job (as) underwent these tests during his years as prophet. The reason for all the things he went through, was Satan. He could not stomach Job's (as) virtue; so disguised as a human, he went around saying to people:

“It is easy to be a good man, when basking in abundance and wealth. You should wait and see how he conducts himself in hard times.”

The devil was relentlessly trying to tarnish Job's (as) reputation.

To disclose Job's (as) level of reliance and submission to the public, the Almighty thereupon made him undergo a number of tribulations.

When the Almighty willed to test Job (as), He first took his wealth. A flood destroyed his sheep, while a wind obliterated his crops. The devil, disguised as a shepherd, quickly ran to Job (as), thinking of capitalizing on the opportunity. In tears, he said:

“Job, you cannot imagine the disaster that has just happened! Allah has destroyed everything you have!”

Job (as) was untroubled. He calmly thanked the Lord and said:

“It was my Lord who had given me everything I owned. And now, He has taken it. He is the True Owner. He gives if He wants and takes if He wants!”

These words and attitude were enough to leave the devil devastated.

Not long after, an earthquake killed Job's (as) children as they were studying. This time, the devil came to Job (as) wailing; and to incite the prophet to rebel, he remarked:

“Look, Job! God has destroyed your home with a quake. He took all your children from you. If only you could have heard their screams. It was unbearable!” The devil recounted the incident in such moving manner that it burst open the mercy in Job’s (as) heart and brought him to tears. Yet, just like before, he showed patience and resigned to divine will.

The devil was left empty-handed and furious. He was just about to say something else, when Job (as) interrupted him, saying:

“You wretch! You are the devil and you are trying to provoke me against my Lord! Know that my children were a trust...and their Owner has now retaken them! It is He who gives and He who takes; so, why should I feel hurt? I am a servant who thanks his Lord under all circumstances!”

Aziz Mahmud Hudayi gives beautiful voice to how the righteous are fully resigned to the Lord:

It is You who gives, You who takes and You who makes,

Only that which You gave, and that is all that we have

Anas ibn Malik (ra) recounts the following:

“My stepfather Abu Talha had lost one of his sons. He was outside at the time. When his wife Umm Sulaym saw that his son had died, she washed and enshrouded him, and lied him down at a corner of the house. Meanwhile, Abu Talha returned.

‘Is the child feeling any better?’ he asked.

‘He is a lot calmer now’, she said. ‘I am hoping he is having a good rest now!’

The next morning, Abu Talha woke up and took a bath. Just as he was about to step outside, his wife stopped him and let him know that his son had passed away. Abu Talha walked out in grief. He went next to the Prophet (saw) and prayed with him. Afterwards, he spoke about what had happened. The Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

‘I am hoping that Allah the Almighty has blessed that night for your family!’”

(Bukhari, Janaiz, 42; Adab, 116)

This incident goes to show Umm Sulaym’s intelligence, piety and submission to Allah (jj). It also wonderfully explains how one’s parents, children, wealth and everything around him are trusts, which their Owner takes back when He wishes. It is as if Umm Sulaym was telling her husband:

“Our child has been recalled by the Power who gave him to us in the first place. In just a short while, we will reunite with him in the Hereafter. Do not be sad or raise your voice! Be pleased with the Lord’s will!”

Not long after, the Almighty in fact gave them another child. The Prophet (saw) personally named him Abdullah.



Finally, the Almighty gave Job (as) an illness, whose name the Qur'an does not reveal.¹¹⁶ His sickness became so severe that people no longer came to see him. Only his compassionate wife Rahimah kept by his side and saw to his needs. She also worked to earned them both a living. She did all this with love.

Never for once did Job (as) complain about his sickness. He sought refuge in his Lord, kept patient and continued thanking Him. With a prophet's elegance, he ascribed his illness and weariness to the devil. The Qur'an recounts:

وَأذْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ

“And remember Our servant Job. When he called out to his Lord, ‘The devil has visited on me hardship and torment.’” (Sad, 38: 41)

That is because, jealous of Job's (as) conduct, Satan wanted to pester him. Yet, Job (as) was immovably conscious and resigned to the fact that everything came from Allah (jj).

Satan had failed to distance Job (as) from the Lord. So, this time, he directed his whispers to the townsfolk.

“Do not help Job (as) through Rahimah, unless you want to contract his disease! In fact, remove him from your town!”

The people were tricked. They threatened Rahimah, telling her to:

“Get out this town, the both of you! We will otherwise stone you both to death!”

Without any other option, Rahimah carried Job (as) on her back out of town. They settled outside of the area. Rahimah laid out a bed for Job (as) out of sand and placed a rock under his head as pillow. She then built a small hut and loyally continued caring for her husband.

Even in this condition, the patient Job (as) still kept on giving advice to those who passed by.

For a living, Rahimah was making strings and selling them to the women of the town. One day she told her husband:

“You are a prophet! Why don't you pray to Allah for health and ask Him to cure your illness?”

116. The Qur'an does not mention the name of the illness, as the moral of the experience is not the illness itself, but Job's (as) patience and resignation to the will of Allah (jj).

“How many years did I spend healthy?” Job (as) asked.

“80 years”, she replied.

“I would be embarrassed, Rahimah, to complain to my Lord before my time of illness equals my time of health. We are happy when Allah gives. Why should we not be patient when He tests?”

Like the Qur’an, the Prophet (saw) also heaps praise on Job’s (as) remarkable patience:

“*Job was the kindest, most patient and restrained among all men.*” (Ibn Abi Shaybah, Musannaf, III, 201)

Job was (as) unshakably content with the Lord. It is as if the below poem was written about him:

*Whatever comes from You is fine
Whether a rose or a spine
A fur coat or a shroud
Your fire is fine so is your light*



After failing to deceive Job (as), the devil this time turned his attention to his wife, Rahimah. He kept confronting her, trying to beguile her with tricks. Each time, Rahimah would inform her husband of what the devil was up to; and he would warn:

“That is Satan trying to deceive you. It is trying to separate you from me, so ignore him!”

Rahimah was from Joseph’s (as) lineage, and carried a glimpse of his beauty. There was no woman in the area more beautiful than her. So, the devil confronted her one day, in the guise of a handsome man.

“I have never seen a woman so beautiful”, he said. “I am from the village over there; and there is no counting my wealth!”

Rahimah took refuge in the Lord and said:

“I am the wife of Prophet Job (as), who is ill. I take care of him. And I cannot look at anyone else other than him!” She then walked off.

On returning home, she told Job (as) what had happened. He became irritated and said:

“Did I not already tell you to ignore him? I will surely strike you with 100 lashes once I regain my health!”

Job's (as) condition was getting worse by the day. It was now keeping him from fulfilling his responsibilities as prophet. So, he raised his hands to the Almighty; and from the bottom of his heart, prayed for his health:

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

“And Job, when he called out to his Lord, ‘I am surely stricken with distress, and You are the most Merciful of the merciful.’” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 83)

Interpretations of the Qur'an have listed a number of reasons as to why Job (as) prayed that way:

Imam Jafar Al-Sadiq says, “When the period of tribulation stretched out, Satan said to Job (as), ‘Prostrate to me if you want to be cured from your illness!’ Job's (as) heart became heavy and remarked, ‘My illness does not bother me; the persistence of my enemy does!’ That is when he told his Lord that he was ‘stricken with distress.’”

One narration suggests that a few people who had believed in Job (as) remarked, “If he really had any goodness in him, he would not have been in this condition!” These words had hurt Job (as).

According to another narration, it got to a point where Rahimah began selling her clothes for food. When Job (as) found out, he became very upset and decided to pray for a cure.

It is also said that Jibril (as) visited Job (as) and advised him, “The Almighty has many tribulations in His treasure. You cannot endure them. Just ask for your wellbeing!”

A man one day entered the Prophet's (saw) mosque and asked a few questions about Job (as). The Prophet (saw) cried and said:

*“I promise by Allah that Job did not complain or moan over the tribulation. But he was stricken for seven years, seven months and seven nights. He wanted to offer prayer standing up but he could not. And when he saw that he could not serve the Lord as well as wanted to, he said, ‘I am surely stricken with distress!’”*¹¹⁷

While Job (as) sounds as though he is complaining, he is, in fact, making a genuine plea. To complain, is to whine to other people. Turning to Allah (jj) is never a complaint. Jacob (as) had also felt an immense agony from being separated from his son Joseph (as); and as the Qur'an recounts, he prayed:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَشْكُوا بَثِّي وَخُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ وَأَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

117. See, Qurtubi, Tafsir, XI, 323, 327.

“He said, ‘I complain of my anguish and grief only to Allah. And I know from Allah what you do not.’ (Yusuf, 12: 86)

Cure from Illness

Rahimah had set out in search for food, when Jibril (as) appeared by Job’s (as) side and delivered the Almighty’s message, which said:

“Job! I heaped trouble on you and you remained patient. And now, I will return your health and wealth!”

This was followed by the command:

أَرْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا مُغْتَسَلٌ بَارِدٌ وَشَرَابٌ

“Stomp your foot on the ground; and there you have a cooling bath and drink.” (Sad, 38: 42)

In line with the divine order, Job (as) stomped his foot on the ground. A spring of water sprouted. With it, he took a bath; and miraculously, he was cured of all inner and outer ailments.

Another narration suggests that when Job (as) stomped on the ground, it burst forth two springs of water, one cold and the other hot. He drank from first and washed himself with the other.

The command ‘...stomp your foot on the ground!’ is also striking in that even in a miracle, a servant is asked to make a personal effort. This means that person must not just make do with a prayer but also show some effort. One must also fulfil the conditions of prayer. This command is similar to how Mary is ordered to “... shake the trunk of the palm tree!” (Maryam, 19: 25). It also evokes the verse:

إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ

“To Him rises the good word, and He elevates righteous conduct.” (Fatir, 35: 10)

As a result of his sincere and mannerly turn to the Lord, Job’s (as) had his prayer accepted and the gates of healing, mercy and grace opened. The Qur’an says:

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ
وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِنَا وَذِكْرَى لِلْعَابِدِينَ

“So We answered his prayer and removed his distress. And We gave him back his family along with others like them, as a mercy from Us, and a memory for the devout.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 84)

Job (as) was once again healthy. And with the order of the Almighty, Jibril (as) placed a crown on his head and dressed him in beautiful clothes. The cloud of grace rolled above and showered on him specks of gold.

Our Prophet (saw) has said:

“As Job bathed in the miraculous water, a horde of golden grasshoppers fell in front of him. Job immediately began collecting them inside his shirt. The Almighty then said:

‘Job! Do you not see that I have already made you rich by returning your wealth?’

Job replied, ‘Yes, my Lord! You have made me rich. Yet, I always stand in need of Your treasures of goodness and grace. So, I accept anything that comes from You. You are the One giving; how can I refuse?’ (Bukhari, Ghusl, 20; Anbiya, 20; Nasai, Ghusl, 7)

Meanwhile, Rahimah had returned from the town and she could not recognize Job (as). Assuming he had gone missing, she ran to the fields, wailing. Job (as) called out to her.

“Who are you looking for?” he asked.

“I had a spouse, he was ill. He was my treasure. And after all that I have gone through, I have now lost him!” she replied.

“Who was he?” he asked.

“He was the patient Job. In his healthy times, he looked like you.” she explained.

“I am Job, Rahima”, he said. “Allah has once again given me health.”

They both cried from joy and thanked the Lord.

Job (as) had now regained his youth and vigor. The Almighty also gave him more children and wealth than before:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ

“And We gave back his family to him along with others like them, as a mercy from Us and a memory for those with intellect.” (Sad, 38: 43)

Ultimately, Job (as) reunited with his family, who had been scattered, and received blessings greater than he ever had.

On the first morning after regaining his health, Job (as) heaved a sigh. He was asked why, to which he responded:

“At every dawn, I used to hear a voice ask, ‘How are you feeling our patient?’ But this morning, I did not hear that voice ask me how I was. That is why I am crying.”

Rahimah's Reward

Job (as) had pledged to cane his wife with 100 lashes over a mistake she had made. Yet, his wife had sacrificed a lot for him. Allah (jj), therefore, showed mercy and informed Job (as) that he could fulfil his vow by instead hitting her once with a bundle of 100 wheat stems:

وَأَخَذَ بِيَدِكَ ضِعْفًا فَأَضْرِبْ بِهَا وَلَا تَخْنَثْ إِنَّا
وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ

“We told him, ‘Take a bundle in your hand and then strike your wife with it, but do not break your oath.’ Indeed, We found him to be patient. What an excellent servant! He was truly penitent.” (Sad, 38: 44)

Islamic law refers to this as ‘Job’s concession (*rukhsah*)’. As the verse does not specify what exactly this bundle was, it has also been given other meanings, such as the need to form a community.



CONTENTMENT

“Indeed We found Job to be patient.

What an excellent servant! He was truly penitent.” (Sad, 38: 44)

Masiwa, in other words, all beings apart from Allah (jj), are created in such a way that they abide by a hierarchy from the simplest to the most perfect. At the top of this hierarchy, is man, as he is a being with a share of all the Lord’s attributes and who, therefore, embodies and unites all opposites in his existence. Simpler put, the human being is endowed with a contrasting tendency towards both good and evil. In the Almighty’s divine essence, these opposites rest calmly, in a way we cannot understand. Yet, in man, they are in eternal conflict.

If man uses his willpower to develop the positive tendencies in his being and cleanses his heart until the good within triumphs over evil, he will get closer to the Lord. Hearts able to do so, experience the excitement and delight of a person who has reached the beloved at the end of a long and arduous journey. This way, the distance between Allah (jj) and the servant shortens, and life on earth no longer constitutes an exile (*ghurbah*). Although the most deep-seated pains caused by being distant from Allah (jj) still persist in the mind, they slowly begin to fade. Even the sorrows of the human condition piled on top of these fundamental pains, are no longer felt, due to the zest and joy of being together with the Lord. All pain and anguish relating to the world, are virtually numbed.

At this stage, these pains begin to be conceived as blessings from the Lord and, therefore, transform to joy. This joy inundates the soul, and, at times, even encompasses the body. A glaring example is when Ali (kw) had an arrow from his leg removed during ritual prayer, a time when one is nearest to the Lord.

By cleansing the heart and refining the soul, the understanding also moves up a level, which allows it to break free from slavery to material and devote itself to the Real. In every event witnessed, man becomes aware of the chain of causes that lead all the way to the first. And once the mind matures enough, it becomes conscious of the Creator of all causes (*musabbibu’l-asbab*). That is when man reaches a sensitivity expressed in the poem:

*Whatever comes from You is fine
Whether a rose or a spine*

At this level, the eyes of the heart open and the person no longer ascribes any importance to means and causes. He strives to become annihilated in the Real and Ultimate cause and Artisan, the Almighty Creator. Those who fall short of this level are stuck dwelling on one of the causes that lie on the way. Like Leyla, these causes are like hooks that that often reel the person away from the Lord.

The great Yunus Emre, who overcame the barriers of the ego and the world, gives wonderful voice to the stages of the heart and how he lost himself in the Lord:

*Sufis need company
Brothers need eternity
Majnun needs Leyla, to be
I need You and only You*

The most inspiring means to reach this level of maturity, are troubles that come with pain. Hence, as indicated by a number of hadith, among all people, it is prophets who suffer the most troubles. The reason for this is that prophets are living examples for believers. Their duty requires them to be close to the Lord; and troubles that test their bond with the Lord provide the basis of this closeness. Prophets display a patience beyond imagination, only because they do not allow their souls to be dragged into the traps of excess joy or sorrow. They instead remain content (*rida*) and, embody its natural outcomes, patience (*sabr*) and reliance (*tawakkul*).

Abu Said al Khudri (ra) had visited the Prophet (saw) when he was ill and personally witnessed the amount of pain he was going through. He recounts:

“I placed my hand on the Prophet (saw) and I could feel his fever through the quilt.

‘You have very high fever, Messenger of Allah’, I said.

‘Prophets are like that’, he said. ‘We are given troubles in spades but also rewards in equal measure.’

‘Messenger of Allah’, I asked. ‘Who among people endure the most trouble?’

‘Prophets’, he said.

‘After them?’ I asked.

‘The righteous’, he replied, before adding:

‘Some among them are tested with such great poverty that they have nothing to cover up with except for a cloak. But they celebrate trouble, just as you celebrate wealth!’” (Ibn Majah, Fitan, 23)

Thus, it is wrong to be pleased with events that bring joy, while being displeased with others that bring sorrow. Yet, it is very difficult get rid of this human short-

coming, unless man climbs the peak of spiritual maturity. If Jacob (as) was able to bury his pain and longing for his son Joseph (as) and say 'I best be patient', it was only thanks to the exceptional maturity he had as prophet. He really did not open up about his situation to anyone except for Allah (jj). In the end, his longing transformed into a reunion.

It is narrated that the Prophet (saw) once asked Jibril (as):

"How great was Jacob's (as) longing for Joseph?"

He replied, "As great as that of seventy mothers who had lost their children."

"Then how much are his rewards?" asked the Prophet (saw).

"As great as the rewards of seventy martyrs", replied Jibril (as), "...for he did not think bad of Allah even for a moment." (Suyuti, Al-Durru'l-Mansur, IV, 570).

Although troubles and grief may appear as obstacles to a happy life, they are not. For those content with everything that comes from Allah (jj) and know how to be patient, they could be gateways to a much greater joy.

Rumi (qs) says it concisely:

"The hand of grief shakes off yellow leaves from the branch of the heart. They are replaced by leaves of joy, greener and more elegant."



Grief, troubles and pain are the most powerful means to enrich the spirit, as they weaken the ego. This is why people of heart, who are tasked with showing people the way, always pass through the mill of a painful experience. Pain's greatest profit is love. Poet Fuzuli has, therefore, said:

*Acquaint me, oh Lord, with the grief of love
Don't spare me from even a drop of it*

For saints, grief and joy are twins. They well know why man is given these; and, therefore, they are always resigned. Poet Dertli, (Turkish for 'distressed') beautifully puts his distress into words:

*We are roasted by a fire love has lit
Two eyes flowing with tears from a split
A rubble of a home razed and now built
Who cares if we are to now stand or tilt*

In fact, after they were defeated by Moses' (as) staff, the magicians had exclaimed:

"We believe in the Lord of Moses and Aaron!"

The Pharaoh threatened them, saying, “I will cut your hands and feet on opposite ends and crucify you on date trunks! I will make you taste the severest of all deaths!”

The magicians responded, “Your action cannot harm us! We will return to our Lord, anyway!” They challenged the threat by reminding the foolish Pharaoh that pains in this life come, go and ultimately end, while the spiritual joy of attaining the great truth minimizes worldly troubles and renders them unimportant.

The magicians had first set out to compete with a prophet of great rank. However, once they grasped the truth, they ecstatically affirmed him; and with an immense excitement of faith, they preferred to drink from the glass of martyrdom. They challenged all troubles related to the world and set out on a journey towards eternity, fully resigned to divine will. Thus, a tyranny that appeared like torture, became the means of an endless gain. They joined the righteous, for whom grief that comes from the Lord, is joy.

Just like Satan, the Pharaoh yielded to his pride and continued denying a truth that was plain to see. Rumi (qs) offers the following to depict the conditions of those stubbornly bogged down in denial:

“If you look closely, no one denies just for the sake of denying. It is perhaps he wants to destroy his rival out of jealousy or make himself look greater.”



For the righteous, a single trouble on the path of the Lord is a thousand times better than the joys and festivities of this world of illusion. They keep their hands off things common people strive for. Rumi (qs) goes on to say:

“What is a blessing for commoners, is grief for saints. The public must go through pain and discomfort to see the difference between both.”

It is impossible to find a word, sound or an expression to explain the ‘rank of contentment’ which saints enjoy. This the stage one becomes annihilated in the Lord. It comes with an entirely different spiritual pleasure, full of mysteries shut off to those who are not in the knowhow.

In fact, during the severest days of Job’s (as) illness, his wife Rahimah had asked:

“You are a prophet! Why don’t you pray to Allah for health and ask Him to cure your illness?”

And Job (as) had inquired, “How many years did I spend healthy?”

And when she said, “80 years”, he replied:

“I would be embarrassed, Rahimah, to complain to my Lord before my time of illness equals my time of health. We are happy when Allah gives. Why should we not be patient when He tests? I am pleased with my Lord.”

Job’s (as) conduct also illustrates the most beautiful example of being content with divine will. Despite all the troubles brought by his illness, to avoid sounding like he was groaning, and instead, show a patience proper to being content, Job (as) was ashamed to even complain to the Almighty and ask for health. Following his wife’s persistent requests, all he said in the way of a plea, was:

“You are the most Merciful of the merciful!”

The Almighty then took away all his troubles and cured him, to leave behind a memory for all those who persevere in servanthood. As a result of his patience, gratitude, submission and divine love, Job (as) regained his health and vigor.

Job’s (as) patience and contentment are perfect examples especially for dervishes who have entered the path of the Lord.

The troubles and pain the Prophet (saw) suffered in Taif served as basis for the journey of *Miraj*, which no other human being will ever experience.

Also, the conduct of Abraham (as), who Allah (jj) declared as His Friend (*Khalilullah*), exemplifies a rather different kind of devotion and submission to the Lord.

Just before he was thrown into the fire, Jibril (as) came to him and asked:

“Do you need anything?”

“I do need something”, Abraham (as) said, “but not from you!”

He then further asked, “Who has given fire the power burn?”

In the end, Abraham’s (as) intense love of Allah (jj) turned the fire into a garden. He was a prophet in whom the mysteries of divine names had become manifest, and who, as a result, had become annihilated in the Truth.



For those lost in the Truth, anything that comes from Allah (jj), whether joy or grief, is means for spiritual promotion. For them, all troubles are blessings. Just like Abraham (as), they desist from even using Jibril (as) as means for relief. They are already honored by Allah (jj). They are no different than butterflies that annihilate themselves while trying to get closer to the light.

Yet, it would be arrogant and immodest for a person to expect the same and assume a fire will not burn just because it did not burn Abraham (as). All that would await the person, is destruction.

Rumi (qs) explains:

“There is such a thing as entering the fire in the path of the Lord. But first look at yourself to see if you carry the attribute of Abraham. For the fire recognizes that, not you!”

Thus, it is dangerous and ignorant to hold oneself in the same light as those who have greater spiritual rank. What we need to do is take our precautions, resort to the available means and depend on the Lord for a result.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“If you want to know your rank in the eyes of Allah, look at the rank Allah has in your eyes. For the Almighty demotes a servant to the rank the servant has demoted Him!” (Hakim, Mustadrak, I, 672/1820)

Below is a wonderful example:

It is narrated that the Prophet (saw) asked Harithah (ra):

“How did you make it to the morning?”

“As a true believer”, he said.

“Every reality has a proof, Harithah”, the Prophet (saw) said. *“What is the proof that your faith is real?”*

“Messenger of Allah...after I started abstaining from the world, my days turned waterless and my nights sleepless. It was like I could vividly see my Lord’s Throne... and it is like I can see the dwellers of paradise visiting each other, and the dwellers of hell cursing at one another!”

The Prophet (saw) then said:

“That should do, Harithah! Protect your condition! You are a man Allah has enlightened!” (Haythami, Majmau’z-Zawaid, I, 57)

Regarding him, the Prophet (saw) has also said:

“Anyone who wishes to see a man whose heart Allah has enlightened should look at Harithah.” (Ibn Hajar, Al-Isabah, I 289)

This is what the Qur’an defines as:

رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ

“Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him.” (Al-Bayyinah, 98: 8)

Just like Solomon (as), these pious servants pray:

رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ
صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“My Lord! Inspire me to give thanks for Your blessing with which You have blessed me and my parents, and that I may do righteous deeds which may please You. And admit me, by Your mercy, among Your righteous servants.”

(Al-Naml, 27: 19)

The Almighty declares:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَشْرِي نَفْسَهُ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ رَؤُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

“And among people is he who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of Allah. And Allah is most Kind to His servants.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 207)

The reason behind the revelation of this verse, is highly significant:

Suhayb Al-Rumi (ra) had set out of Mecca, during the Hegira, to join the Prophet (saw) in Medina. As soon as he left, however, he was pursued by a group of pagans. When Suhayb (as) saw he was being followed, he dismounted his camel, placed an arrow in his bow and took position. When the pagans appeared in the distance, he called out:

“Quraysh! You well know that I am your best archer. By the time you get to me, I will empty all the arrows in my bag, then take out my sword and fight until it breaks in my hand. Only then will you be able to do with me as you wish. But if you want, I can tell you the spot in Mecca where I have left all my money. In return, you will let me go on my way!” The pagans accepted the offer. (Ibn Jawzi, Zadu'l-Masir, I, Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, I, 260-261)

Without wasting time, Suhayb (as) then rode forth. Meanwhile in Medina, the Almighty had revealed the verse to the Prophet (saw). When Suhayb (as) arrived, he said:

“May your trade be profitable, Suhayb!”

Suhayb (ra) replied, “Messenger of Allah! Only Jibril (as) could have told you the news, since no one else could!” (Hakim, Mustadrak, v. III, p. 450-452)



The Qur'an states:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ
وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

“But the faithful men and women are comrades of one another. They bid what is right, forbid what is wrong, maintain the prayer, give the alms, and obey Allah and His Prophet. It is they to whom Allah will soon grant His mercy. Allah is indeed the Mighty, the Wise.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 71)

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
وَمَسَاكِينَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتِ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

“Allah has promised the faithful men and women, gardens with streams running beneath them, for them to remain forever; and good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. Yet, Allah’s pleasure is greater than all these. That is the great success.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 72)

All these rewards are promised to those with faith of the highest kind, and who are devoted to serving both the Creator and creation. But for the Almighty to be pleased with the servant, however little, is unimaginably greater than all the rewards of paradise put together. That is because Allah (jj) is the source of all joy, honour and greatness.

The Almighty praises His devout servants who donate only to seek His pleasure:

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ وَتَثْبِيْتًا مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ
كَمَثَلِ جَنَّةٍ بِرَبْوَةٍ أَصَابَهَا وَابِلٌ فَآتَتْ أُكُلَهَا ضِعْفَيْنِ فَإِنْ لَمْ يُصِبْهَا
وَابِلٌ فَطَلَّ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

“Those who spend their wealth to seek Allah’s pleasure and confirm their faith, are like a garden on a hillside. The downpour strikes it, whereupon it brings forth its fruit twofold. And if it is not a downpour that strikes it, then it is a shower. And Allah sees best what you do.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 265)

وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا
وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَدْرُؤُنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ

“Those who are patient for the sake of their Lord’s pleasure, maintain the prayer, spend out of what We have provided them, secretly and openly, and repel evil with good...for them is the reward of the ultimate abode.” (Al-Ra’d, 13: 22)

The highest rank man can ever reach is to gain Allah’s (jj) pleasure. And this itself is the reward for being pleased with Allah (jj).

Every time Omar ibn Abdulaziz was asked what he liked, he would say:

“My joy lies with my destiny. I love whatever God decides!”

The Qur’an says:

قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمٌ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

“Allah will say, ‘This is the day honesty will benefit the honest. For them there will be gardens with streams running beneath, for them to remain there forever. Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. That is the great success.’ (Al-Maidah, 5: 119)

It is narrated that the Almighty will ask the dwellers of paradise:

“Are you content? Are you happy?”

They will reply, “How can we not be happy, our Lord! You have graced us with a blessing You have graced no other!” The Almighty will then declare:

“I will grant you something even greater!”

“What can be greater, our Lord?” they will inquire.

Allah (jj) will say, “I will be pleased with You and never get angry with you, ever!” (Bukhari, Riqaq, 51; Muslim, Jannah, 9)



Contentment is the final fruit of love. A servant whose heart is filled with love, embraces everything that comes from his Lord. Even if the lover feels the pain, he is so pleased with it that he can even crave for more. This is to accept a passing pain for the endless rewards it will bring. Shaiq Balkhi in fact says:

“A person who knows the reward of distress does not wish to be saved from it!”

It is like how a sick person does not mind the bitter taste of medicine, if it means he will be cured. Some patients even willingly undergo highly risky operations.

As high a level as it is for a servant to be content with the Lord, it is even higher for the Lord to be content with him. Allah’s (jj) pleasure is greater than the rewards

of paradise. At this level, love takes a person inside a realm where he feels no pain. While those unable to love cannot know how even this feels, lovers experience states far more extraordinary than we have just explained.

Despite all this, there is also another aspect:

One should never pray for tribulation just because it comes with great rewards. A person may not be able to judge the amount of burden he can carry and may end up being crushed under the weight. If it comes from the Lord, however, one must rest assured that Allah (jj) never burdens a servant with more weight than he can carry.

A man by the name of Can Baba had become so enamored with divine love that he raised his hands and prayed:

“My Lord! I have no pleasure other than You! Test me however You wish!”

He later underwent a major trouble. It was only when he became old and frail that he felt deep regret. He would go in front of elementary schools and ask every kid he saw:

“Pray to Allah so that He cures this dishonest old man!”

It is also incorrect to understand contentment as accepting sin and corrupting activities. It is the biggest ignorance to be content with rebellion, sinning and denial. The divine warnings against it are too many to count. One of them declares:

لَا لَاتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“**The faithful should not leave the faithful take the faithless as allies.**” (Al-i Imran, 3: 28)

In other words, contentment does not imply silence to evil people or action.

A look at the lives of saints shows that they owe their immense spiritual maturity to a host of troubles, griefs and pain.

Also striking is how the great Bahauddin Naqshiband was tasked by his master Emir Kulal to serve people, treat sick and wounded animals people avoided, and clean the streets for seven years. He fulfilled all these tasks with great devotion. Ultimately, his troubles and ordeals took him to spiritual ranks beyond imagination. The below poem gives an indication of the modesty and self-denial that got him there:

*The world is wheat, I am hay
Everyone is good, it is I who is bad*

In light of this, Rumi (qs) says:

“Ordeal and suffering are the only ways to break free from slavery to sin.”

Yet, if even these are not enough cause an awakening, the claws of their own egos will destroy the lovers of the world who reap joy from following their desires. According to saints, this destruction is the real suffering.

For everlasting joy, one must not be tricked by the world’s passing appeals and deceitful calls. The Prophet’s (saw) wife Hafsa (ra) recounts something that explains his attitude towards the world:

“We used to fold a rug in two and lay it under him as a bed. Once we had folded it in four; and he could not wake up that night to pray. He then inquired what had been laid under him, and asked us to next time fold the rug in two, as usual. He became uncomfortable with us spending time for his comfort.” (Tirmidhi, Shamaail, p. 154)



The path to getting close to the Lord runs through love. Lovers have to take kindly to things that come from the beloved. Lovers always carry the beloved in their hearts and on the tips of their tongues. Likewise, hearts that wish to indulge in the pleasures of faith, sustain the remembrance of the Lord. While standing, sitting or lying down, they reflect on the subtle wisdoms behind the creation of the heavens and earth, and say:

رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ

“Our Lord! You have not created this in vain! Immaculate are You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 191)

In turn, to every servant pleased with Him, Allah (jj) will say:

اِرْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي

“Return to your Lord, pleased, pleasing! Enter among My servants. And enter My paradise!” (Al-Fajr, 89: 28-30)

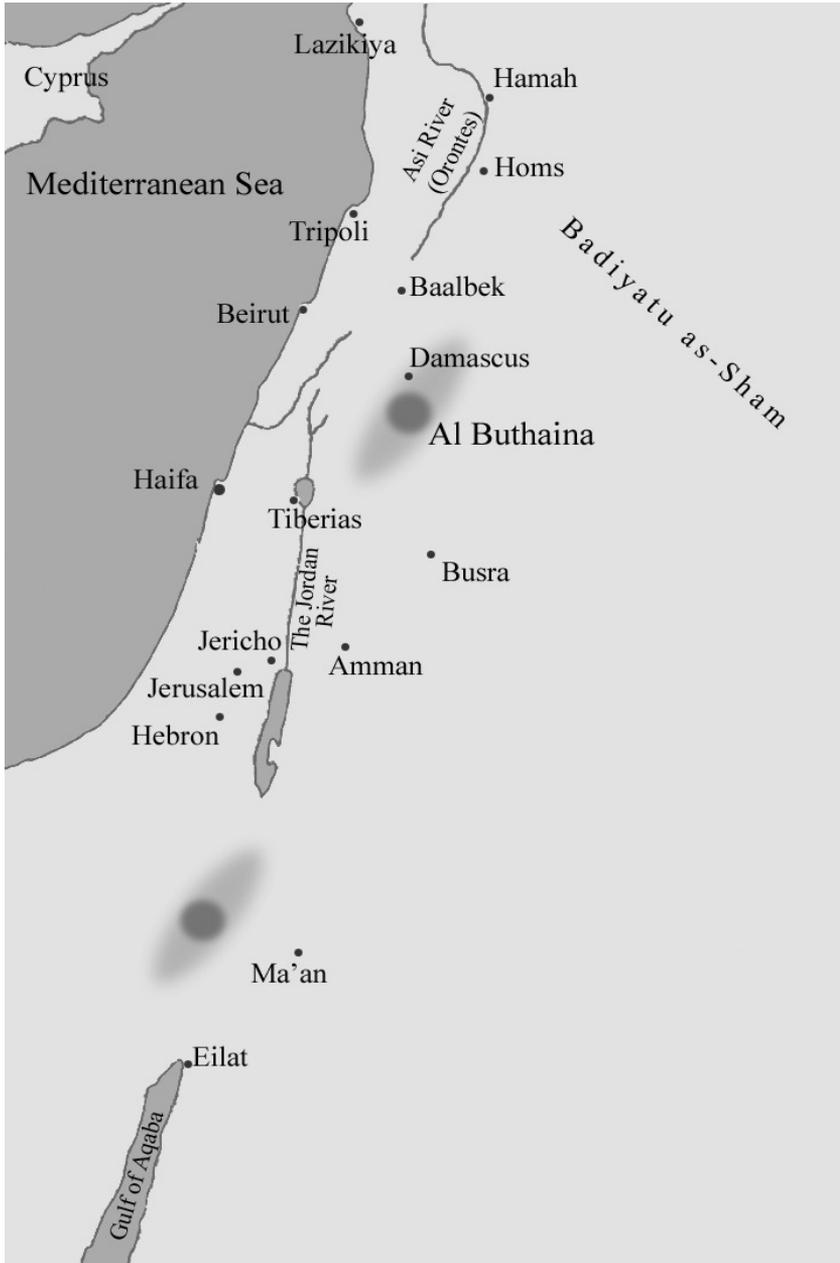
The Lord rewards them with eternal blessings and honors them with His Beauty (*Jamal*).

Lord! Admit us among the servants of Yours, with true reliance and submission, who have obtained Your pleasure!

Amin...



Prophet Job





PROPHET
JONAH

-peace be upon him-

*The Prophet who Overcame Darkness through an
Ecstatic Repentance and Prayer*

JONAH

-peace be upon him-

Jonah (as) has a chapter in the Qur'an named after him (Al-Yunus). He was a prophet sent to the residents of Nineveh,¹¹⁸ the capital of the Assyrian Empire. It is believed he lived around the 8th century BCE. His father was a righteous man by the name of Matta.

Jonah (as) was born and raised in Nineveh. When he reached the age of thirty, the Almighty made him a prophet. Ali (kw) says:

“Jonah became prophet at the age of thirty and called his nation to the truth for many years more.”

Regarding his prophethood, the Qur'an says:

وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“And Jonah was indeed one of the prophets.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 139)

وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ

“We sent him to a community of hundred thousand or more.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 147)

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَىٰ
وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا

“We have indeed revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him, and as We revealed to Abraham and Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus and Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon. And We gave David the Psalms.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 163)

118. The city of Nineveh was on the banks of Tigris River, close to present day Mosul.

The People of Nineveh

The Nineveh community worshipped statues and idols. They were extreme tyrants. When Jonah (as) began calling them to *tawhid*, only two people accepted. One of them was knowledgeable and wise, the other was pious and an ascetic. The others said to Jonah (as):

“When we have all these soothsayers, scholars and artists among us, you get up by yourself and claim that the ways of our ancestors are wrong! You reject our gods! Do you want to shackle our feet with teachings nobody is used to hearing?”

They did not make do with just these words. They began tormenting and abusing Jonah (as). Yet, Jonah (as) endured all the things his people put him through and continued to compassionately invite them to *tawhid*. He reminded them of the severity of Allah’s (jj) punishment. They laughed it off.

“If we are going to be punished just for the sake of one person, let it come!” they said.

Jonah (as) was deeply saddened by the stubborn denial of his people. He could not bear it any longer; and without waiting for the Almighty’s permission, he left.

On the way, Allah (jj) revealed:

“Turn back, Jonah! Invite them to the truth for another forty days!”

Following the order, Jonah (as) returned to the city and reminded the people of Allah’s (jj) commands and punishment. Again, they did not listen. On the 37th day, Jonah (as) said to them:

“In that case, wait just three more days for the punishment to seize you! As its first sign, your faces will turn pale!” After these words, a dejected Jonah (as) once again departed without waiting for the Almighty’s command.

Jonah’s (as) departure was neither an escape from duty nor a revolt against the One who had given him that duty. He simply wished to distance himself from a rebellious people.

Faith, Repentance and Amnesty

Finally, the day Jonah (as) had warned about arrived. All faces in Nineveh turned pale. That moment, they finally realized what was happening. They exclaimed:

“This is the sign of the punishment Jonah (as) had talked about! And to this day, we have never heard him lie about anything!” Suddenly, they were gripped by a terrible fear of divine punishment, which was now just around the corner.

Then, the skies began to turn black. People started screaming, desperately looking for a way out. A few of them said:

“If Jonah is still here, do not fear! But if not, we will soon perish!”

They were deeply remorseful. Their hearts overflowed with regret over what they had done. It was just a matter of time for divine punishment to arrive. So, they ran to a righteous man to find if there was still a way for them to repent. He said:

“There are still two more days to the punishment. Go on top of a high hill (i.e. the hill of repentance). Ask each other forgiveness for the things you usurped from one another. Then, offer sacrifices for the Lord of Jonah, and let everyone, young and old, rich or poor, eat from their meat. Then remove your headwear and plea:

“The Lord of Jonah! We repent. We believe You and accept Jonah’s prophethood. As soon as we find Jonah, we will learn and practice Your commands!”

The people of Nineveh did all that in tears. In turn, Allah (jj) forgave them under His divine name *Rahman*. It was Friday and also the day of Ashura. The Qur’an recounts:

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ أَمَنَتْ فَفَنَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمٌ يُؤَسُّ لَمَّا أَمَنُوا
كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

“Never has there been a town to benefit from believing out of despair, except the people of Jonah. Once they believed, We removed from them the punishment of disgrace in this life, and We provided for them for a while.” (Yunus, 10: 98)

Jonah’s (as) is the only nation to overturn a destined divine punishment through repentance. This is a unique manifestation of divine grace; and many verses of chapter Al-Yunus allude to how Allah’s (jj) mercy is greater than His wrath.

After Jonah (as) Departs from Nineveh

The Qur’an states:

وَذَا التُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا

“And the Man of the Fish, when he left in a rage...!” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 87)

Dhul-Nun is Jonah’s (as) nickname. It means ‘of the fish’, as he ended up being swallowed by one.



After leaving the city, Jonah (as) arrived at the banks of River Tigris, where he boarded a ship. The Qur'an says:

إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ

“Remember when he absconded toward the laden ship.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 140)

A short while after drifting off, the ship came to a halt in the middle of the river. They could not get it moving. They became worried it may sink and took it as a sign of bad luck, thinking there was a sinner onboard. To find out who that person was, they drew lots and Jonah's (as) name came up. Jonah (as) understood that this was a divine test. Fully resigned to what may happen, he said:

“Yes, that sinner is me!”

The passengers, however, realized that Jonah (as) was a righteous man. So, they drew lots a few more times. Yet, each time, the result remained unchanged. Without any other option, they thought, “This man must have really committed a crime”, and threw Jonah (as) overboard. The Qur'an says:

فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ

Then he drew lots with them and he was the one to be refuted.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 141)

فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ

“He thought We would not put him to hardship.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 87)

فَالْتَمَمَهُ الْحُوتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ

“Then the fish swallowed him while he was blameworthy.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 142)

Jonah (as) was now in the belly of a fish. It was dark. He was still alive and fully conscious. The Almighty had commanded the fish not to injure Jonah (as) or damage his bones.

Jonah (as) resigned and submitted entirely to the will of his Lord. The Qur'an recounts:

فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

“Then he cried out in the darkness, “There is no god except You! You are immaculate! I have indeed been among the wrongdoers!” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 87)

Meanwhile, Jonah (as) heard some noises. He became curious. At that moment, the Almighty let him know that he was inside the belly of a fish and that:

“Those are the sounds of creatures in the water chanting your Lord’s name!”

Despite this difficult and burdensome situation, Jonah (as), as always, still did not neglect exalting (*tasbih*) Allah (jj) and repeating (*dhikr*) His name. Once the angels became aware of his plight, they prayed to the Lord on his behalf. And after Jonah (as) kept repeating the words:

“There is no god except You! You are immaculate! I have indeed been among the wrongdoers!”, the Almighty forgave the blunder of this great prophet:

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنَجِّي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“So We answered his prayer and delivered him from the agony. And thus do We deliver the faithful.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 88)

Jonah (as) was forgiven, solely thanks to his frequent *tasbih*.

فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ لَلَبَثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

“And had he not been one of those who celebrate Allah’s glory, he would have surely remained in its belly until the day they are resurrected.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 143-144)

Jonah (as) was saved through remembering the Lord (*dhikr*), acknowledging his mistake and reliance (*tawakkul*). These became means for great mercy and grace.

It is important to note that after the Almighty gave Nineveh a 40-day notice for destruction, Jonah (as) remained there for 37 days; and it was only for three days that he could not keep patience. In return, the Almighty put him through a trial of patience inside the belly of a fish.

Eventually, the fish that carried Jonah (as) like a precious trust, dropped him off on the shore. The Almighty states:

فَنَبَذْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ وَأَنْبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِنْ يَقْطِينٍ

“Then We cast him on a bare shore, and he was sick. So, We made a gourd plant grow above him.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 145-146)

By the time Jonah (as) made it on shore, he had become frail, ill and in need of attention. His body was like jelly. It was also a very hot day. The Almighty grew a plant with big leaves to protect him from the scorching sun. There were neither any flies nor pests beneath its shade. From this plant, the Almighty produced milk for Jonah (as).

After Jonah (as) felt better, he set out towards Nineveh. On the way, he saw a shepherd and asked how his people were doing. The shepherd explained everything. He said the people had become remorseful and that the Lord had accepted their repentance. He also said that they were now waiting for Jonah (as) to return.

Meanwhile, after hearing he had returned, the townsfolk of Nineveh rushed to Jonah (as). When they arrived, Jonah (as) was in prayer. Afterwards, they warmly embraced him and apologized. Jonah (as) treated them with lenience and taught them the Almighty's commands. After that day, the people of Nineveh submitted to Allah (jj) and His messenger, and remained steadfast on the blissful true path. The Qur'an says:

فَأَمَّنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

“And they believed. So, We provided for them for a while.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 148)



People striving for a great cause need to be calm, patient and resolute. Jonah (as) had become fed up with the attitude of his people; and his broken heart led him out of the city without waiting for the Almighty's permission. In a way, he was impatient and haste. In spite of how difficult the situation must have been, this, for him, was a blunder.

The Prophet (saw), on the other hand, remained patient in the face of the tyranny and torment dished out by Mecca's pagans; and waited calmly until the divine command for Hegira arrived. And that command came in the form of the verse below, which is also a prayer:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ ادْخُلْنِي مَدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا

“And say, ‘My Lord! ‘Admit me with a worthy entrance, and bring me out with a worthy departure. And give me a favorable authority.’” (Al-Isra, 17: 80)

As Jonah (as) had abandoned his people without permission, the Almighty used him as a case in point to remind the Prophet (saw) that he needed to be patient in the face of all the troubles that came with his duty:

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَىٰ وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ لَوْلَا أَنْ تَدَارَكَهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ لَنُبْتَذِلَ بِالْعُرَاءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ فَاجْتَبَيْهُ رَبُّهُ فَجَعَلَهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“So submit patiently to the judgement of your Lord, and do not be like the Man of the Fish who called out as he choked with grief. Had it not been for a blessing from his Lord that came to his rescue, he would surely have been cast, with blame, on a bare shore. So, his Lord chose him and made him one of the righteous.” (Al-Qalam, 68: 48-50)

Jonah (as) could have remained in the fish’s belly until judgment day. Yet, he was saved for being among those who remembered God frequently. For that reason, the Qur’an says “...*we took him out, weak and ill.*”

The 49th verse of chapter Al-Qalam deals with Jonah’s (as) situation after he was saved from the fish. It is understood that had the Almighty not accepted his repentance and willed to send him back to his people, Jonah (as) would have been left in a deserted place, in an unsightly state. However, his repentance was accepted and he was saved. By the time the fish churned him out to a desolate place remote from any vegetation or settlement, he had been forgiven and was no longer in a bad state. As mentioned in chapter al-Saffat, he may have been weak physically, yet was healed in almost no time through divine grace. He was ultimately a prophet, blessed with his Lord’s forgiveness and mercy.



Lessons to take from the story of Jonah (as) include:

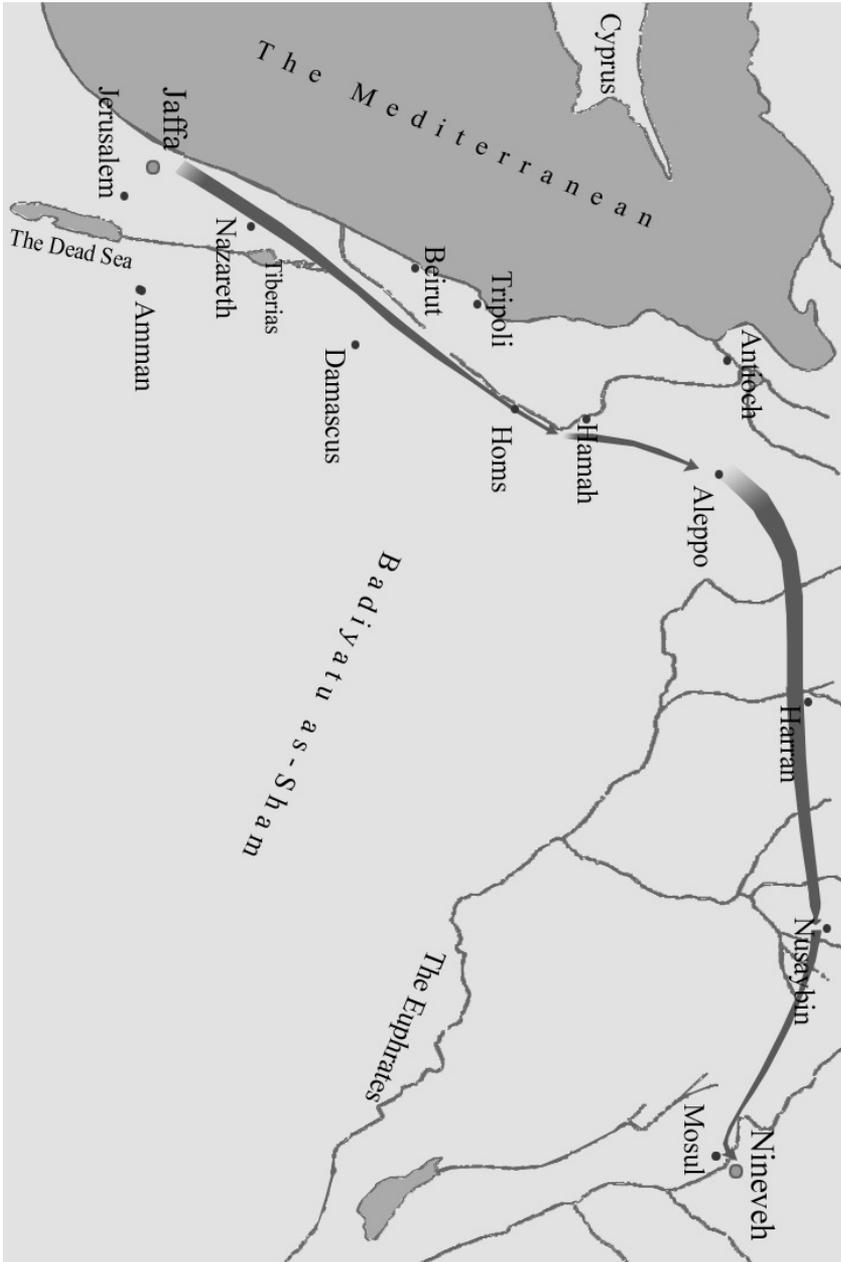
1. The need to have rigor, perseverance and patience in calling people to the truth.
2. The importance of remembrance (*dhikr*) and repentance.
3. How a genuine repentance is always accepted.
4. And how Jonah’s (as) nation were the only people who had their repentance accepted despite being in the throes of death.

Yet, they were not entirely in the final stages of destruction. At the time the people of Nineveh repented, apart from a few ominous signs, the punishment had not yet arrived. Thinking that Jonah (as) had never before lied to them, they realized the punishment was truly on its way and immediately repented. This is not the case with other nations that have perished. For example, the Pharaoh came round to believing only after the destruction; and because he believed out of despair, it was not accepted.

In relation to Jonah’s (as) virtue, the Prophet (saw) has said the following, which also goes to show his humility:

“No person has the right to say ‘I am better than Matta’s son Jonah.’” (Bukhari, Anbiya, 35; Muslim, Fadail, 166)

Prophet Jonah





PROPHET
ELIAS

-peace be upon him-

The Prophet who Left Behind a Name and Fame of Peace

ELIAS

-peace be upon him-

Elias (as) was a descendant of Aaron (as) and a prophet sent to the Israelites. The Almighty states:

وَإِنَّ إِلْيَاسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“And indeed Elias was one of the prophets.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 123)

After the capture of Jerusalem, a tribe from the Israelites settled north in Baalbek. They were ruled by a tyrant king. It is reported that the city was originally called Bek but the king had an idol made by the name of Baal, and forced people to worship it. Later, the names Baal and Bek were combined, and the city was henceforth called Baalbek.¹¹⁹ It was there that Elias (as) was sent as a prophet to invite its people back to the truth.

The idol, which people worshipped, was made of gold and stood about ten meters. Elias (as) called on them to:

“Leave the idol Baal! Believe in and worship Allah, the Creator of all things!”

The Qur’an says:

إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ
أَلَا تَدْعُونَ بَعْلًا وَتَذُرُونَ
أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأُولِينَ

“When he said to his people, ‘Will you not fear God? Do you invoke Baal and abandon the best of creators? Allah, your Lord and Lord of your forefathers?’”

(Al-Saffat, 37: 124-126)

Not only did the Israelites ignore Elias’ (as) advices, they expelled him from the city. For that, they were plagued with many troubles. They eventually understood why, and found Elias (as). They believed in him and were consequently saved from their troubles.

119. This city is presently known as Baalbek.

Yet, they were an unruly people; and it was not long before they again lost their way and became rebellious. Although Elias (as) advised them once more, they would not listen. Then, the divine command arrived and Elias (as) left the city. They all perished. They were met with a punishment here and are bound for another in the Hereafter. The Almighty declares:

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

“But they disputed him. So they will indeed be accused, except for Allah’s exclusive servants.” (Al-Saffat, 37: 127-128)

After leaving Baalbek, Elias (as) stopped by a village. He invited its people to the truth. They accepted the divine invitation and asked Elias (as) to stay. Elias (as) was lodged at the house of an old woman. She had an ill son. Elias (as) offered a two-rakah prayer and asked the Lord to cure the child. The child was healed. Later, Elias (as) took the child under his wings and taught him the Torah. The child’s name was Elisha.

Elias (as) later passed away to reunite with his Lord, leaving behind a lasting legacy. He is praised by the Almighty:

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ سَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ
نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“We left for him a good name in for those to come. ‘Peace be to Elias!’ Thus indeed do We reward the virtuous. He is surely one of Our faithful servants.”
(Al-Saffat, 37: 129-132)



It is narrated that when the Azrail, the angel of death, appeared, Elias (as) became terrified. Azrail (as) asked:

“Is a prophet of Allah afraid of death?”

“No”, Elias (as) said. “It is because I am about to bid farewell to life on earth”, and continued:

“All my life, I tried to serve my Lord, advise others to do good and discourage them from evil. I tried spending my time in worship and good deeds, and leading a life of good morals. This gave me peace and provided for my heart a source of joy. I am now sad that death will separate me from these pleasures and confine me to a grave until the Day of Judgment!”

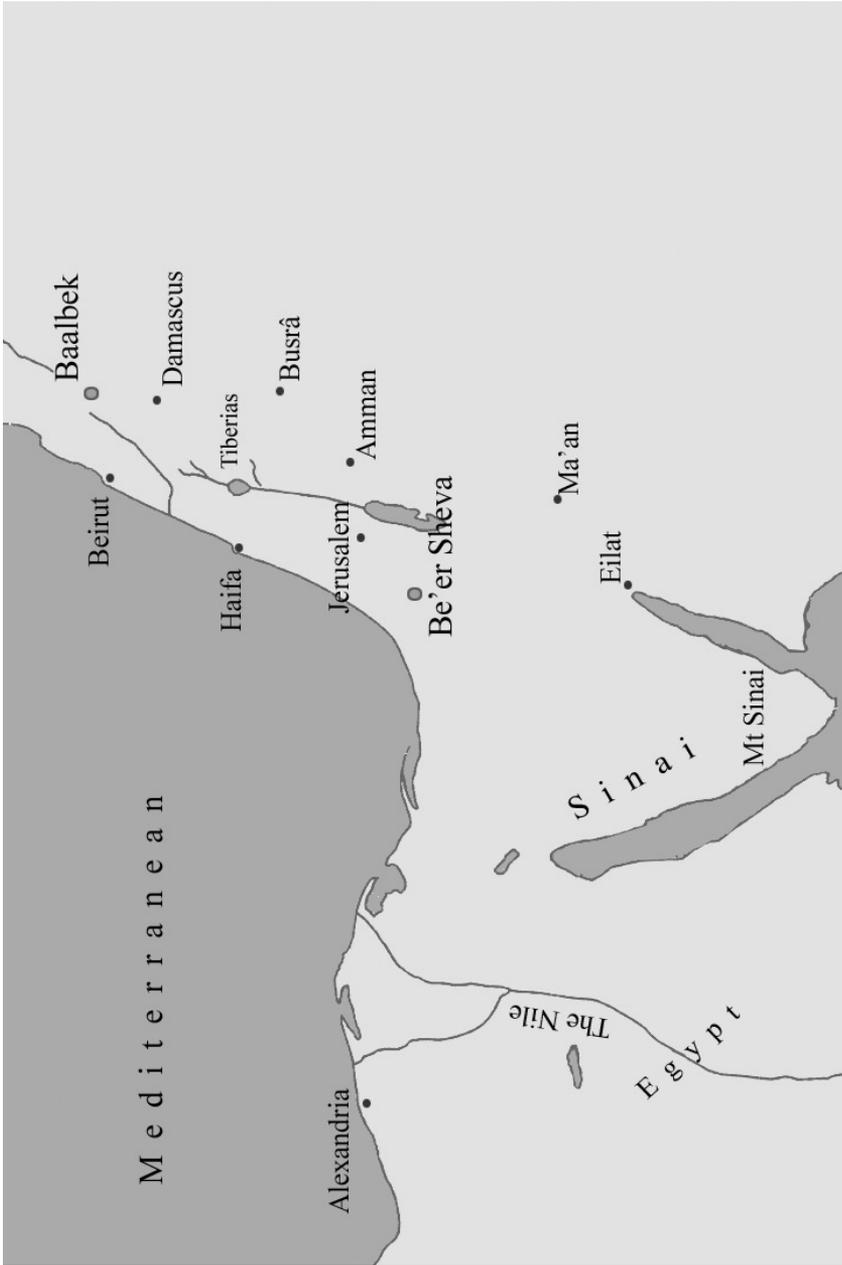
Peace be upon him...

May the Almighty grant each of us His nearness by letting us lead upright lives on His path; and take us to eternal pleasures by protecting us from falling for passing desires!

Amin...



Prophet Elias





PROPHET
ELISHA

-peace be upon him-

The Prophet Made Superior to the Worlds

ELISHA

-peace be upon him-

Elisha (as) was a prophet of the Israelites. As a child, he had caught a severe illness, and was cured through the prayer of Elias (as). After that, he remained by Elias' (as) side and learned the Torah.

Elisha (as) worked hard to set the unruly Israelites straight. At times, they complied with him, while at others they protested. The Qur'an mentions him twice:

وَأَذْكُرُ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِنَ الْأَخْيَارِ

“And remember Ismail, Elisha and Dhu'l-Kifl. Each was among the elect.”

(Sad, 38: 48)

The word 'remember' also alludes to how we also need to reflect on the tremendous effort, patience and perseverance those prophets showed in conveying the religion of Allah (jj).

The other verse about Elisha (as) is:

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

“And Ismail, Elisha, Jonah and Lot. Each We graced above the worlds.”

(Al-Anam, 6: 86)

During Elisha's (as) prophethood, the tribes of Israel began to vie with one another for leadership. Ignoring Elisha's (as) advices, they got into a tussle, with seemingly endless bouts of unrest and fighting. As a result, the Almighty set upon them the Assyrian Kingdom. Through their own doing, the Israelites had fallen remote from divine mercy. The Assyrians defeated them and consigned them to misery.

In his *Mi'rat-i Kainat*, Nisancizade Muhyiddin Mehmed Bey says the following on Elisha's (as) miracles:

The drinking water in Jericho had turned sour. The people rushed to Elisha (as) and asked for help. He threw some grains of salt in the water and said 'Be sweet!' And with the permission of Allah (jj), the water became sweeter than before.

It is narrated that a woman, who was a widow and in debt, came to Elisha (as). She said she was in need.

“What do you have at home?” Elisha (as) asked.

“Only a handful of oil”, she replied.

“Go home and put that oil in a container!”

The woman did exactly that. Soon, she all the containers in her home were filled with oil. With that, she paid all her debt but still had plenty of oil left over.

As his death approached, Elisha (as) called Ezekiel (Dhu'l-Kifl) (as) over, and said Allah (jj) had designated him as his successor.

Peace be upon him...





PROPHET
EZEKIEL

-peace be upon him-

The Prophet Inundated with Divine Mercy

EZEKIEL

-peace be upon him-

Ezekiel or Dhu'l-Kifl (as) was an Israelite prophet. He was also Elisha's (as) paternal cousin.

It is narrated that his actual name was Bishr; and that Dhu'l-Kifl was the nickname he was given for becoming a 'guarantor' of conveying the commands of religion to the Children of Israel after Elias (as), as well as receiving a multitude of rewards for doing the deeds that prophets do. In Arabic, the prefix 'dhu' refers to ownership, while 'kifl' can mean a guarantor, share or multiple. At the same time, this nickname points to the importance of character, and supremacy ranks of the Hereafter have over wealth and shares in this world.

The following is narrated by Ibn Abbas (ra):

"Allah the Almighty had given one of the prophets of Israel sovereignty and kingship. When his death drew near, it was revealed to him:

'Give My sovereignty to a man who prays every night until morning, spends the day fasting, and who will be able to judge between people without getting angry!'

The prophet informed the Israelites about the order he had received. A young man stood up and said:

'I can be a guarantor of this task! I can undertake this duty!'

The prophet said, 'There are people among this nation elder than you! It is best you sit down!'

The prophet then repeated the offer. The same young man stood and said, 'I can be a guarantor!' The offer was repeated for a third time; and again, the young man was the only person willing to accept it.

The prophet then left the young man in charge. This young man was Bishr."

Satan became jealous of the young man; and resorted to tricks to prevent him from his duty. But the man blocked out the whispers of the devil and fulfilled his duty in the best way possible. His effort was flawless. Hence, he came to be known as 'Dhu'l-Kifl'.

The Qur'an acknowledges Ezekiel (as) in two places:

وَأَذْكُرِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ وَكُلٌّ مِنَ الْأَخْيَارِ

“And remember Ismail, Elisha and Dhu’l-Kifl. Each was among the elect.”

(Sad, 38: 48)

وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ
وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“And Ismail, Idris, and Dhul-Kifl. They were each among the patient. We admitted them into Our mercy. They were indeed among the righteous.”

(Al-Anbiya, 21: 85-86)

Dhil-Kifl practiced the law of Moses (as) and informed people of the commands of the Torah.

It is narrated that he passed away in the region of Damascus.

Peace be upon him...





PROPHET
LUQMAN
-peace be upon him-

The Patriarch of Spiritual and Medical Doctors

Whose Advices Have Become Legendary

LUQMAN THE WISE

-peace be upon him-

Luqman (as) may have been either a prophet or a saint. He is the patriarch of doctors.

In the chapter named after him, the Qur'an tells us that Luqman (as) was a man of wisdom:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا
يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ

“Certainly, We gave Luqman wisdom, saying, ‘Give thanks to Allah; and whoever gives thanks, gives thanks only for his own sake. And whoever is ungrateful, Allah is indeed Sufficient, Praiseworthy.’” (Luqman, 31: 12)

Shukr, or gratitude, is for the servant to express his joy to the Lord for the blessings he is given, by giving thanks both verbally and physically. *Shukr* is the recognition of blessings. For that reason, both Islam and its creed (*iman*) are also referred to as *shukr*.



It is narrated that Luqman (as) was either Job's (as) maternal nephew or cousin.¹²⁰ Most Islamic scholars suggest he was not a prophet but rather a man of high wisdom or *hikmah*. Wisdom also implies the natural ability for precision in both words and conduct, which comes as a result of acquiring spiritual maturity after gaining depth in theoretical knowledge. The Almighty declares:

يُؤْتِي الْحِكْمَةَ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الْحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْرًا
كَثِيرًا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“He gives wisdom to whomever He wishes. And he who is given wisdom, is certainly given an abundant good. But no one takes a lesson except those who possess intellect.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 269)

120. See, Sa'labi, Arais, p. 391.

Wisdom is to grasp the reality and mystery behind matter. What makes this possible is a ray of divine light that shines upon the heart.

To give an example of Luqman's (as) wisdom, Zamakhshari explains the following incident:

One day, David (as) asked Luqman (as) to slaughter a sheep and bring him two of its best parts. So, Luqman (as) brought the sheep's tongue and heart. After a few days, David (as) this time asked him for the sheep's worst parts. Again, Luqman (as) brought its tongue and heart. David (as) asked why, and Luqman explained:

"When these two are good, there is nothing better. And when these two are bad, there is nothing worse!" (Zamakhshari, Kashshaf, V, 18)

A hadith narrated by Abdullah ibn Umar (ra) states:

"Luqman was not a prophet but a devout man. The Almighty protected him from sins. He used to contemplate a lot. His faith was strong. He loved Allah and Allah loved him...and gave him wisdom." (Qurtubi, Tafsir, XIV, 59-60)

Imam Malik explains:

"As far as what I have been told, Luqman the Wise was once asked:

'What is behind the quality we see in you?'

He replied, 'Honesty, fulfilling my trusts, abandoning things that do not interest me and keeping my word.'" (Muwatta, Kalam, 17)



The Qur'an conveys a number of Luqman's (as) words of wisdom and the advices he gave his son:

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

"When Luqman advised his son, 'O my son! Do not ascribe any partners to Allah. Polytheism is indeed a great injustice.'" (Luqman, 31: 13)

Ascribing partners to Allah (jj) is truly a great sin that condemns a person to eternal hellfire.

Luqman (as) continues his advices:

يَا بُنَيَّ إِنَّهَا إِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِي صَخْرَةٍ أَوْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ أَوْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ

“Son! Even if it should be the weight of a mustard seed; and even if it be inside a rock or in the heavens or earth, Allah will bring it forth. Allah is indeed Attentive, Aware.” (Luqman, 31: 16)

A similar verse in the Qur’an states:

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

“So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” (Al-Zilzal, 99: 7-8)

Luqman (as) goes on to say:

يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاصْبِرْ
عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

“Son! Maintain the prayer, bid what is right and forbid what is wrong; and be patient through whatever may visit you. That is indeed the steadiest of courses.” (Luqman, 31: 17)

The verse lays emphasis on ritual prayer, encouraging what is right, forbidding what is wrong, as well as being patient.

Prayer is a believer’s *Miraj*. It is one of the most important aspects in the duty of being a servant. Prayer cannot be abandoned even in the heat of battle. The Almighty says the marks of those who prostrate to him are **“...visible on their faces.”** (Al-Fath, 48: 29). Elsewhere, He tells us to **“...prostrate and draw near!”** (Al-Alaq, 96: 19)

Aisha (ra) says:

“When the Prophet (saw) stood to pray, you could hear a noise like a boiling cauldron coming from his chest. Once the adhan sounded, it was like he could not recognize those around him, as he was moments away from entering Allah’s presence.” (Abu Dawud, Salat, 157; Nasai, Sahw)

A believer is also obliged to encourage people to do what is right and discourage them from committing what is wrong. Essentially, this is to thank the Lord for all His blessings, above all faith and guidance, by spreading them to others. Through the Prophet (saw) himself, the Almighty teaches us the correct method of making this invitation (*tabligh*):

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا
 مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا
 عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

“It is by Allah’s mercy that you are gentle to them. Had you been harsh and hardhearted, they would have surely scattered from around you. So excuse them, plead for their forgiveness and consult them in affairs. And once you have decided, put your trust in Allah. Certainly, Allah loves those who trust in Him.”

(Al-i Imran, 3: 159)

Regarding the manner of enjoining good and forbidding evil, Allah (jj) also states:

أُدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ

“Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice.” (Al-Nahl, 16: 125)

As for patience, it is one of most underlined themes in the Qur’an. Patience is bitter in life but comes with sweet rewards in the hereafter. Every prophet has been put through the sieve of patience. The Almighty states:

وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

“And give good news to the patient.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 155)

Abdullah ibn Masud (ra) explains:

A man once came to the Prophet (saw) and said:

“Messenger of Allah...I truly love you!”

The Prophet (saw) told him to, “*Watch what you are saying!*”

“But by Allah, I love you!” the man said, repeating those words three times.

The Prophet (saw) thereupon said:

‘If you love me, then prepare yourself an armor against poverty. For poverty flows quicker to a person who loves me than flood rushing to its target.’ (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 36/2350)

In a way, the Prophet (saw) is saying:

“Since you love me for the sake of Allah, be prepared to endure trials, tribulations and hardships; for love requires the person to follow the beloved in every step of the way.”



The Qur'an goes on to relay Luqman's (as) advices:

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ
مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

“Do not turn your cheek disdainfully from people, and do not walk exultantly on earth. Allah does not like any swaggering braggart.” (Luqman, 31: 18)

Conceit, arrogance and self-love are traits that are rooted in hell. Grandeur belongs only to Allah (jj). Satan's arrogance toward Adam (as) and rebellion against Allah (jj) are the reasons why he was expelled from paradise and tasked with leading human beings astray. Again, despite his knowledge of spiritual sciences, Korah was condemned to perish due to his jealousy of Aaron (as).

Luqman (as) also tells his son:

وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ

“Be modest in your walk. and lower your voice. Indeed, the ungainliest of voices is the voice of a donkey.” (Luqman, 31: 19)

This teaches believers to be polite and elegant. Rudeness is embodied in the sound of a donkey, which proceeds from high to low pitch. It is an ugly and unpleasant voice that unnecessarily, and excessively, gets louder. To speak in this manner would be crude and uncourteous. Thus, through the verse, the Almighty calls on His servants to be polite in speech. In other words, it is uncouth for a person to raise his voice unnecessarily. He will only end up sounding like a donkey.

Hasan Basri says:

“The pagans use to pride themselves on their loud voices. The Almighty, in a way, said to them, ‘If there was any virtue in having a loud voice, then donkeys would have been superior to you!’”

While politeness may appear petty and unimportant in life, it is narrated that it will carry great weight on the day of reckoning. Therefore, we must abstain from reckless speech and measure the meaning and consequence of every word that comes out of our mouths. The Prophet (saw), in fact, says:

“A person can say something without thinking it through; yet, it could land him in a corner of hell more remote than the distance between east and west.” (Bukhari, Riqaq, 23)

“A servant says something Allah is pleased with, even though he does not think about gaining Allah's pleasure with it. Still, because of it, Allah will be pleased with the servant until He meets him on the Day of Judgment.”

And then a servant says something that warrants Allah's anger, without thinking it will. Yet, Allah becomes angry with him until He meets him on the Day of Judgment." (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 12; Ibn Majah, Fitan, 12)

Between the verses that contain Luqman's (as) advices, are two others, which are important in giving believers a direction. It is narrated that these were revealed about the mother of Sad ibn Abi Waqqas (ra).

Sad (ra) was a respectful son, who obeyed his mother. When he accepted Islam, his mother protested:

"What have you done, Sad? Know that if you do not leave this religion, I will neither eat nor drink until I starve to death. You will then be known as the man who murdered his mother!"

He responded by saying, "Mother, please...do not do that! I will not abandon this religion for anything!"

His mother did not eat or drink for the next two days. Seeing her become frail, Sad (ra) said:

"My dearest mother! I swear that if you had a hundred lives and lost each of them, one by one, I would still remain within my faith! So, whether you eat or not, is now all up to you!"

Afterwards, his mother resumed eating, and the following two (or the second) verses were revealed:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي
عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ وَإِن جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي
مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا وَاتَّبِعْ سَبِيلَ مَنْ
أَنَابَ إِلَيَّ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

"We have enjoined man to be good to his parents. His mother carried him through weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years. Give thanks to Me and to your parents. To Me is the return. But if they urge you to ascribe to Me, as partner, that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. Keep their company honorably in this world and follow the way of those who penitently turn to Me. To Me will be your return and I will then inform you of what you used to do." (Luqman, 31: 14:15) (Muslim, Fadailu's-Sahabah, 43-44; Ibn Asir, Usdu'l-Ghabah, v. II, p. 368)



Abu Umamah (ra) narrates the following from the Prophet (saw):

“*Luqman said to his son:*

‘Remain by the side of scholars! Listen to the words of the wise! Just as Allah revives the dead soil with abundant rain, He revives dead hearts with the light of wisdom!’ (Haythami, Majmau’z-Zawaid, I, 125)

Luqman (as) has also advised the following:

“I have served many prophets...and I have chosen eight of their sayings as a summary of their teachings. If you take care to practice these eight things, you will be saved:

1. Protect your heart during prayer,
2. ...your tongue when with people,
3. ...your hand when eating,
4. ...and your eyes when you are a guest.

Out of the remaining four, constantly remember two of them, while forget the other two.

At all times, remember Allah the Almighty, as well as death. Do not leave them out of your mind even for a moment!

Forget the good you have done to others and the bad others have done to you!



Below are some of Luqman’s (as) other advices as reported in reliable sources:

“Son! Make piety (*taqwa*) your capital for the hereafter! Piety is a trade that involves no money or property!”

“Son! Attend funerals, for they will remind you of judgment day. Sins, on the other hand, will increase your love of the world!”

“Son! A liar loses the radiance (*nur*) of his face! Bad traits increase a person’s grief and sorrow!”

“Son! Explaining something to a dim person is harder than moving a heavy rock!”

“Son! Do not send out an ignorant person to represent you! If you cannot find an intelligent and wise person, then go yourself!”

“Son! The world is like a deep sea. Many people have drowned in it. Let piety be your ship, faith your load, reliance your compass and good deeds your provision! If you keep afloat, it is through the mercy of Allah. If you drown, it is because of your own sins!”

“Son! Do not let the rooster outwit you! It wakes up every morning to exalt the Lord, while you are in deep sleep!”

“Once the stomach is filled, reflection falls asleep...and the organs are held back from worshipping!”

“Son! Choose such friends that once you go your own ways, you will not feel the need to speak ill of one another!”

“Protect your friends! Visit your relatives!”

“Son! Three things are known through three things: Gentleness in the moment of anger, courage in the heat of battle and brotherhood in time of need.”

“Comply with your friends except in sin!”

“Son! How are people not afraid of the destined punishment, when they neglect their duty to the Lord every day?”

“Son! Take from the world only what you need. Do not get caught up; it will damage your eternity. Do not entirely abstain from the world, either, as you would then be a burden on people. Stick to fasting, for it curbs desire. But do not fast too much that it holds you back from ritual prayer! For, in Allah’s sight, prayer is better than fasting.”

“Son! Do good to those who can appreciate it. There is no more friendship between good and evil than there is between a wolf and a sheep. He who likes to quarrel will be insulted. He who visits places of sin will draw suspicion. He who goes near evil will not be able to save himself. And he who does not bite his tongue, will regret it.”

“Serve the righteous, and do not befriend bad people!”

“Son! Be trustworthy, so that you become wealthy! Do not appear to others as if you fear God, when your heart is stained with the dirt of sin!”

“Practice what you preach! Otherwise, you will be like the candle that melts away, while giving light to others!”

“Son! If you learn manners when you are young, you will reap the benefits as you grow older!”

“Do not ignore small tasks! For, what is small today becomes great tomorrow!”

“Son! Do not occupy your heart with grief and sorrow! Refrain from greed. Be satisfied and content with what Allah has given, so that your days become beautiful, your heart filled with joy; and you become happy to be alive!”

“Son! Life on earth is short, your lifespan, shorter. And even shorter is what remains of it!”



The Prophet (saw) has said:

“Luqman said to his son, ‘Allah the Almighty protects what is entrusted in His care. And I place you, your property, religion and the outcome of your deeds in the care of Allah!’” (Ibn Hanbal, II, 87)

It is narrated that inscribed on Luqman’s (as) ring stone were the words:

“It is better to conceal what you see than to reveal what you suspect!”

Peace be upon him...



PRAISE AND GRATITUDE

“Certainly, We gave Luqman wisdom, saying, ‘Give thanks to Allah; and whoever gives thanks, gives thanks only for his own sake. And whoever is ungrateful, Allah is indeed Sufficient, Praiseworthy.’” (Luqman, 31: 12)

Praise (*hamd*) and gratitude (*shukr*) are two deeds integral to being a servant. This is verified by the fact that the first verse of the Qur’an reads:

“All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.”

To ‘*praise*’ is to exalt and glorify the Almighty’s infinite majesty, and manifestations of His art and attributes; while ‘*gratitude*’ is to thank and pay tribute for His innumerable gifts and blessings, through words, action and in the heart. Both concepts share similar meanings.

Hamd and *shukr* are naturally required from the human being, as he is the most honorable of all creation and stands on the peak of a hierarchy of existence that runs from the simplest to the most complex. For the same reason, this is among Islam’s profoundest issues.

A person who has maintained the dignity and nobility he was created with, feels a need within his conscience to thank, even if it be for just a glass of water. With this being the case, it is utterly inconceivable for him to remain aloof to his Lord, the source of all blessings and the provider of all things. This can only be explained with a lack of thought and feeling.

The fact that the cosmos is decked out as delicately as a bridal chamber way beyond the most imaginative mind and taste, that the atoms and cells display countless instances of divine power, that fruits and flowers wear a myriad of fragrances, and that animals from the meekest to the wildest are incredibly regulated and organized according to their particular dispositions, are only to ensure that the wonder of creation, the human being, properly fulfils his duty of servanthood.

A true believer is a virtuous person who is reasonable, conscious and aware of the duty he has as servant.

For servants who truly want to be thankful, recognizing blessings alone is not enough. They also need to recognize the Provider and fulfil their obligations to Him. Tracing blessings to their Origin inspires to draw people to the Lord, and enables wisdom and love to blossom within their hearts.

Without a doubt, there is no particle in the universe that does not exalt (*tasbih*) Allah (jj) with praise (*hamd*). Even animals know their own *tasbih*. The involuntary supplications of creatures other than human beings, are known as *tashiri tasbih*. These are felt and heard only by people of heart. And since man is the most perfect species on this chain of existence, the way he expresses praise and gratitude should reflect his standing.

Each blessing we neglect giving thanks for, turns into a burden. It leaves no trace behind but blame.

The essential duty of every servant is to acknowledge and thank the real Owner of blessings.

What is a blessing?

Again, its measure is provided by the inspiring light of the Qur'an. It is the Qur'an that teaches us the true nature of blessings. In turn, it is by giving thanks that we are able to grasp the wisdom underlying the cosmos and the nature of man. Allah (jj) says:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ

“Certainly We gave Luqman wisdom, saying, ‘Give thanks to Allah.’ (Luqman, 31: 12)

The verse alludes to how a thankful servant is given insight into the truth that underlies the realm of wisdom and mysteries; and it is through maintaining a thankful state of mind that one reaches this level.

The Almighty manifests His will in the universe in four ways:

1. Grace,
2. Wrath,
3. Wrath that appears as grace,
4. Grace that appears as wrath.

When the eye looks at events as if to stare at a mirror that only shows how things appear on the surface, it only grasps the appearance; and hence, is often deceived. Yet, a mind trained under divine revelation is able to peek into events, like an x-ray, through the eye of heart, beyond the point closed off to the mind. At that point, the grace of having grasped wisdom frees a person from many a pain and anxiety. The Qur'an, in fact, states:

وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا
شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Yet, it may be that you dislike something that is good for you, and love something that it is bad for you. Allah knows, you do not.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 216) This hints at both grace that appears as wrath and wrath that appears as grace.

On the other hand, once the comprehension develops and the heart matures enough to begin climbing to the peak of spirituality, what is understood by a ‘blessing’, also changes. It assumes a higher meaning, which the general public can hardly fathom. At that point, one is able to discern a positive warning or wisdom even within a manifestation of wrath. This level is symbolized in the words of Hacı Bayram Veli:

*Whatever comes from You is fine
Whether a rose or a spine*

A believer whose spirit has assumed this blend recognizes every manifestation as a blessing that calls for praising and thanking the Lord. While the general public may see grace within a wrath or wrath within a grace only when they look back on the event, wiser people can see this a lot earlier, because of the effort they have made in refining their souls. Thus, while the duty of the general public is to give thanks for a blessing and be patient with a wrath, for the spiritual elite (*khawas*), the four manifestations of divine will mentioned above, are one and the same. So, their conduct towards the Lord does not change. Praising the Lord during wrath not only protects one from a greater wrath, it also serves to overturn it. Whatever the situation may be, the Prophet (saw) has recommended saying:

«الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ حَالٍ»

“Praise be to Allah under all circumstances!” Standing outside this spiritual state of mind is to effectively declare war on fate, for no other reason than ignorance.

Yet, people who know how to reap profit from all situations by giving praise and thanks, are at the furthestmost point of joy Islam promises. Hearts are at peace and serenity, only to the extent they are able to reach this point.

An example for grace that appears as wrath, is the tribulation undergone by Jacob (as) and Joseph (as). The Almighty put them through severe grief, hardship and separation that required a maximum level of patience, only so that they could unravel the mystery of ‘being with the Lord’ at all times, cut connections with all things else and thereby ascend the grand heights of spirituality. It was in fact the

pain of having spent long years apart from each other that perfected them, and gave birth to an experience the Qur'an refers to as 'the most beautiful story of all'.

Similarly, for the companions, the Hudaibiyah Treaty the Prophet (saw) signed with the pagans, appeared like a defeat, a 'manifestation of wrath'. It was only afterwards they realized how great a blessing it in fact was. The treaty opened the gates of conquest; and the number of people who entered Islam in the next two years alone, was almost incomparably more than those who had become Muslim in the previous nine years. On top of all that, Mecca was taken without resistance.

As for wrath that appears like grace, the people of Aad provide a vivid example. After seeing black clouds appear in the skies, they mocked Hud (as), saying:

"You speak of destruction...but look, there is a great rain coming!" They had fooled themselves. The clouds came with storms that turned them upside down and brought only annihilation.

For those dazzled by the glitters of the world and lay waste to their hereafter thinking they will live here forever, this fleeting world is nothing but a wrath that will catch up with them on the day of resurrection. The Qur'an explicitly recounts how such fools, who supposed the earth was a paradise offering them endless pleasures, have met their end.

Again, wealth may appear like grace. However, unless it is spent in the way of Allah (jj), it will turn into a wrath in the hereafter and pile misery on its owner.

People of wisdom beautifully describe how the universe constantly shakes between manifestations of grace and wrath.

"For the wise, the world is a display of beauty, while for the fool, it is to satisfy the appetite and lust."



Whatever people own belongs to Allah (jj). The true owner of all blessings, whether they come from nature or humans, is their Creator. Being alert to this fact is required for having a sound heart. Created beings are only means that carry out a specific purpose.

In delivering these blessings, all means serve like employees. The true Owner and Provider of a blessing is the Lord of the universe. A believer should thus feel more indebted to the Sender than the deliverer, and lead a life of gratitude. Devotion to the means or the people transporting these blessings, at the expense of forgetting their real Provider, is incompatible with the dignity of being human.

With that said, morals and courtesy require us to also thank the person who has served as the means. The Prophet (saw) says:

“Upon receiving a favor, if one prays for the person with the words ‘May Allah grant you blessings!’, he would have more than repaid his debt of gratitude.” (Tirmidhi, Birr, 87/2035)

Yet, it would be ridiculous to thank only the mortal being, who is no more than a means or a cashier, and forget the real Provider. As part of Allah’s (jj) law, everything in the cosmos is tied to a cause. Yet, one must not dwell too much on these causes to the point of forgetting the Creator of each cause.

And the Almighty warns us so beautifully:

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ
لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

“Have they not regarded the birds taking flight in the sky? No one sustains them except Allah. In that, there are indeed signs for people of faith.” (Al-Nahl, 16: 78)

There are three ways to thank the Lord:

1. Thanking Verbally

This is the lowest degree of gratitude. It consists of showing appreciation to Allah (jj) with words like, “My Lord! An eternal thanks to You!”

While the Qur’an says:

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ

“and as for your Lord’s blessing, proclaim it” (Al-Duha, 93: 11), it is unfortunate that diseased or dead hearts say the Lord’s name even less than animals. This demotes them to a level the Qur’an describes as ‘lowest of the low’ (*asfali safilin*) and ‘lower than beasts’ (*bal hum adall*).

2. Thanking Physically

This is to spend the blessings the Lord has given on His path, in a manner He has prescribed. Thus, thanking for wealth is through charity, thanking for knowledge is through teaching others, and thanking for health is through using every limb on the way of the truth.

3. Thanking with the Heart

This is devotion to the Creator through love and wisdom, and being content under all circumstances.

The truth is that it is impossible to properly thank Allah (jj) for blessings. This is beyond human power. Even prophets have sought constant forgiveness due their inability to truly thank the Lord. The Prophet (saw) has said:

“I repent a hundred times a day...” (Muslim, Dhikr, 42)

Just to think how many times this should be for ordinary human beings, solely on account of their inability to thank the Lord properly!

On the other hand, even the ability to praise and thank is a gift from the Lord. It is yet another divine blessing. If we extend this logic to eternity, it becomes clear that each show of gratitude warrants another, making it impossible to reach the end of this chain to allow us to repay our debt of gratitude to the Lord. This is why even prophets are helpless in properly fulfilling this duty in its truest sense.

We must, therefore, accept our inability to truly grasp the Lord’s blessings and to properly thank for each and every one of them; and persist with thanking and praising the Lord as much as we can. The wisdom, ‘*Whoever knows his self, knows his Lord*¹²¹’ also alludes to how knowing the Lord runs through coming to terms with one’s own incapacity before the divine art and blessings that appear in the soul.

Blessings are infinite, while tongues are tied and bodies are weak. One of the greatest blessings is to not forget the Owner of blessings. Thanking increases a blessing, while its lack decreases it.

Gratitude is an investment in paradise, while ingratitude is a certificate for hell. Being ungrateful is foolish and brings the person only harm. For example, not thanking for wealth by withholding alms, transforms the wealth from a blessing into a tribulation. For its owner, it becomes trouble. About these people, the Almighty warns, **“Give them news of a grave punishment!”** (Al-Tawbah, 34)

Elsewhere, He declares:

ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ

“Then, that day, you will surely be questioned concerning the blessing.”

(Al-Takathur, 102: 8)

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

“If you are grateful, I will surely increase you in blessing, but if you are ungrateful, My punishment is indeed severe.” (Ibrahim, 14: 7)

وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ

121. See, Ajluni, Kashfu'l-Khafa, II, 361.

“And whoever gives thanks, gives thanks only for his own sake. And whoever is ungrateful, Allah is indeed Sufficient, Praiseworthy.” (Luqman, 31:12)

Giving thanks for every blessing, is man’s most important duty of servanthood. A believer with this awareness cannot spend a minute without praising the Lord. The ethics of gratitude towards the Creator constitutes one half of the entire gift that is faith. The Prophet (saw), in fact, says:

“Giving thanks is one half of faith.” (Suyuti, Al-Jamiu’s-Saghir, I, 107)

An intelligent person must look up to people who possess spiritual qualities, and strive to become like them. Financially, he must look at those below him and be thankful for his situation.

Prophets, as well as saints and scholars, have made thanks an integral part of their daily prayers.

Regarding Noah (as), the Qur’an says:

إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا

“Indeed, he was a grateful servant.” (Al-Isra, 17: 3)

About Abraham (as):

شَاكِرًا لِأَنْعَمِهِ

“He was grateful for his blessings.” (Al-Nahl, 16: 121)

And regarding Luqman (as):

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ

“Certainly We gave Luqman wisdom, saying, ‘Give thanks to Allah!’ (Luqman, 31: 12)

The Prophet (saw) would pray so much at night that his feet would swell from standing. When Aisha (ra) said:

“Messenger of Allah; you are the Lord’s beloved, and already forgiven. Must you put your body through so much pain?”

The Prophet (saw) replied:

“Should not I be a thankful servant, Aisha?” (Bukhari, Tafsir, 48/2; Muslim, Munafiqin, 81)



The subject of *shukr* is so vast and deep that it is impossible to properly explain. Only those who live and breathe it, can feel its blessings and inspiration.

The point, however, is that every person should make an effort to give thanks for the blessings he is given. Such that:

Scholars should give thanks by practicing what they know and teaching others denied of the knowledge God has gifted them. A wonderful example is Imam Azam Abu Hanifah. All his life, the founder of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence donated his knowledge in the best possible way, and raised scholars like Imam Abu Yusuf, Imam Muhammed and Imam Zufar, whose rulings will continue to illuminate the Islamic world until the final hour. To protect the honor and dignity of knowledge and avoid passing a ruling that suited the whims of a tyrant caliph, he even preferred being whipped and tortured in prison over accepting the post of the chief judge of Baghdad, one of the highest positions of the time.

The rich should give thanks by donating their wealth where needed in the way of God, in line with the message of the verse:

وَإِخْسِنُ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ

“Be good to others just as Allah has been good to you.” (Al-Qasas, 28: 77) They should not take pride in what they possess, knowing its true owner is Allah (jj). In short, they should strive to become what Islam describes as ‘the thankful rich’ (*aghniya-i shakirin*).

Wastefulness, which is the opposite of being thankful, is to take what Allah (jj) has given for granted and misuse it. The Qur’an warns:

وَأْتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تَبْذُرْ تَبْذِيرًا
إِنَّ الْمُبْذِرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا

“Do not squander wastefully. Indeed the wasteful are the brothers of devils. And the devil is ungrateful to his Lord.” (Al-Isra, 17: 26-27)

Wise people consider even eating, drinking, clothing and using anything while being negligent of the Lord, as waste.

People with good morals should give thanks by acknowledging that all their beautiful traits are through the Lord’s grace and generosity. They should strive to set an example to others by maintaining their nature and be careful not to look down on anyone.

Travelers on the Sufi path (*sayr-u suluk*) should attach their hearts to their spiritual master (*murshid*), observe what is permissible and what is not, and embody an overall conduct in the line with the verse that ‘aged’ the Prophet (saw):

فَاسْتَقِمَّ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ

“**So be upright, just as you have been commanded.**” (Hud, 11: 112) In short, they must personify the ethics of the Qur’an and Sunnah, look to reap a share from the knowledge of Allah (jj) (*marifatullah*) and serve all creatures. As they proceed along the spiritual ranks, they must also keep the showing off and self-love, which are traps of the ego, at bay.

The healthy and ill should give thanks through submission and remaining content, knowing that their conditions are a part of a fleeting trial the Almighty has willed for them on earth. A healthy person must be aware that his health is given only to be used for righteous deeds in the path of the Lord, and regulate his days accordingly. A sick person should think that his condition may in fact be a blessing in disguise, and have a state of mind that makes him say, ‘*Thank You, Lord under all circumstances*’. He must know that a blind person is really in a much better position than a person who has vision but cannot manage to keep his eyes away from sin. The truth of the matter will become visible in the hereafter.

The poor should give thanks by adorning themselves with patience. The ‘patient poor’ and the ‘thankful rich’ are of equal rank in the sight of Allah (jj). The dialogue between Ibrahim Adham and Shaqiq Balkhi offers a splendid example of gratitude in poverty:

Shaqiq Balkhi asks Ibrahim Adham:

“What do you do? How are you getting on?”

He says, “I offer thanks if I find something and remain patient if I do not!”

“The dogs of Khorasan do the same”, Shaqiq says.

“Then, what do you do?” asks Ibrahim.

“If we find something, we offer thanks and donate it. If we do not, then we thank and be patient.”



All blessings and gifts are from Allah (jj). Ibrahim Dasuki says:

“*Brother! Do not ever come under the false impression that you can do something on your own! Do not stake claim on anything as if you have achieved it through your own effort!*”

Know that if you fast, it is Allah the Almighty who makes you fast. Do you pray? Do you stand in the presence of Allah? Again, it is Him who makes you do so.

This is how all actions are. Know that everything comes from Him. When you see something, be fully aware that it is Him who makes you see it. And when you are offered spiritual beverage as you proceed along this path, you must say 'He offered me this drink!'"

Even though they may appear to be the result of human will, every action is really a manifestation of Allah's (jj) attribute 'the Creator'. Therefore, faith demands us to recognize that everything comes from Him. It is in fact a condition of faith to believe 'good and evil are from Allah.' However, one must not confuse Allah's (jj) will (*iradah*) with His consent (*rida*). While the Almighty's will is present in all things that come into being, His consent only lies with the good. The reason as to why the Almighty creates an action a human may desire yet which *He* does not like, is only for this life to assume the character of a 'trial'.

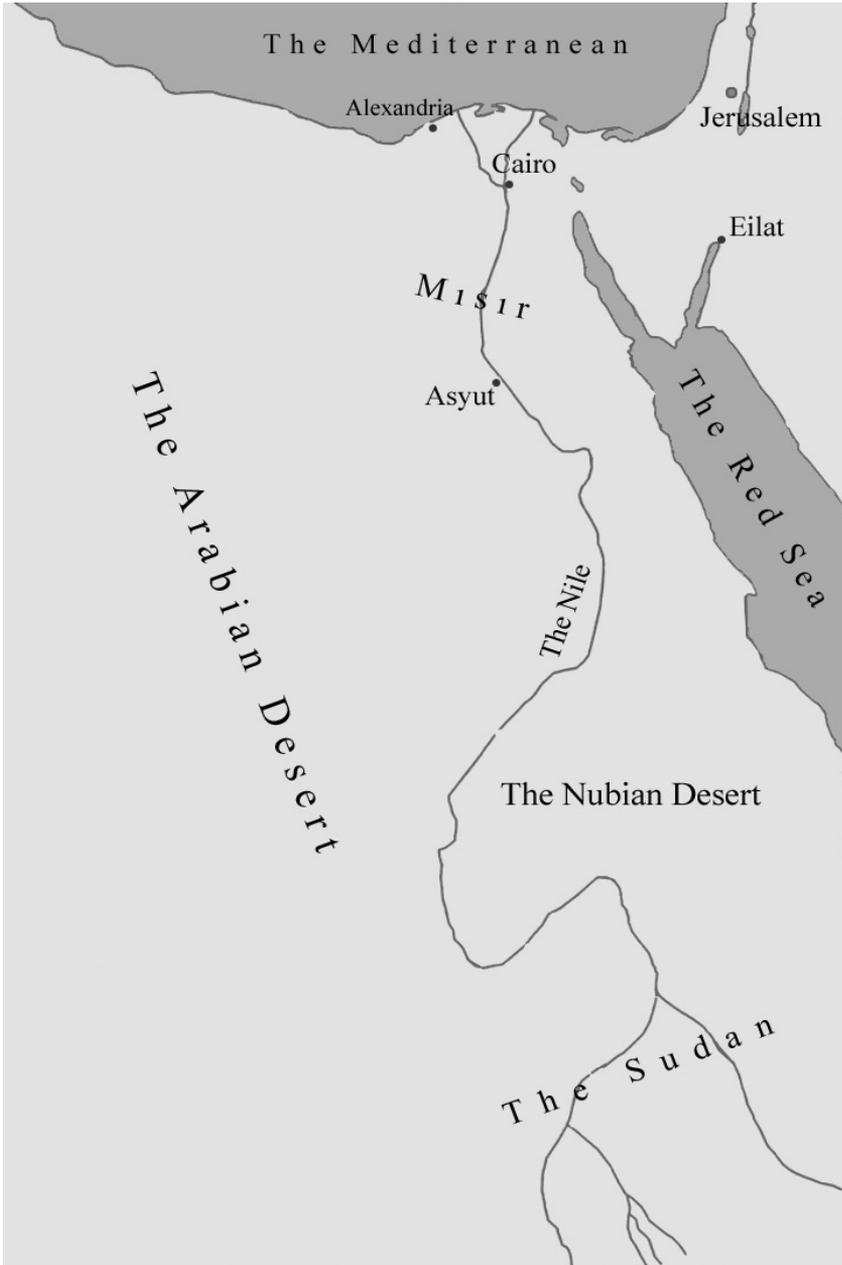
A doctor's aim is to cure the patient. It is not the doctor's fault if the patient does not take the prescribed medicine. Again, a teacher's aim is to teach the student. If the student does not study, there is nothing he can do. Allah (jj) calls the servant to paradise, the eternal land of peace. Yet, if the servant does not follow the steps that would take him there, he will be barred from entry without anyone but himself to blame. If the servant had not been given the power to choose between right and wrong, then 'punishment' and 'reward' would have contradicted divine justice. Among the most important actions that fall in the zone of 'choice' are praising and thanking the Lord. Thus, the servant must try to understand what these really mean and readjust his entire actions.

Our Lord! Give us a share of Luqman's (as) wisdom through thanking You; and turn us into servants whose words, actions and emotions benefit believers!

Amin...



Prophet Luqman the Wise





PROPHET
ZECHARIAH
-peace be upon him-

PROPHET
JOHN
-peace be upon him-
and

PROPHET
JESUS
-peace be upon him-

The Prophet Martyred by Being Sawed in Half

ZECHARIAH

-peace be upon him-

The Prophet who Welcomed Martyrdom Like His Father

JOHN

-peace be upon him-

The Prophet who Cured the Ill and Raised the Dead

JESUS

-peace be upon him-

These three prophets are quite similar in their struggle for *tawhid* and the ordeals they underwent.

All three of them exerted great effort to correct the Israelites who, since the time of Moses (as), had become deviant and corrupted. Yet, with the exception of a handful of people who believed them, they were so tormented and persecuted that their lives on earth were marked throughout by ordeal. Such that both Zechariah (as) and John (as) were martyred, while Jesus (as) was raised to the heavens just as he, too, was about to meet the same fate.

On top of the similar ordeals these prophets underwent as part of their duty, they are also related to each other, in both blood and spirituality. John (as) is the son of Zechariah (as) and Elisa. Elisa's sister Anne (Hunna) was married to Imran; and born from this marriage was Mary (as), the mother of Jesus (as).

Zechariah (as)

Zechariah (as) was an Israelite prophet and a descendant of Solomon (as). He was a Torah scribe at the Bayt Al-Maqdis in Jerusalem and also oversaw the rites of sacrifice. He sought to reinforce the religion of Moses (as). He was a carpenter by trade and earned a living through his own labor. He was martyred by his own people. He is buried in Aleppo.

During Zechariah's (as) time, the Ptolemaic dynasty ruled Damascus and Jerusalem. They respected the Holy Temple and were tolerant towards the Israelites. The upper members of the dynasty would spend most of their time in houses of worship. They would pray inside the Bayt Al-Maqdis day and night. At the time, the Israelites had no prophet; so they prayed to Allah (as) to give them one.

Eventually, the Almighty chose Zechariah (as) for the task.

There were around 400 freed slaves at the Temple, devoted to worship. If one of them sought nearness to Allah (as) and his wife happened to fall pregnant, he would say:

"Lord...If I have a son, I will dedicate him for You to the Bayt Al-Maqdis!"

In this way, the male children were dedicated to the Temple. It was a tradition that stretched back to the time of Moses (as). The Almighty had revealed to him:

"Moses...I love a servant who has spent his life, from his youth to old age, in worship; who has stayed away from sin in his youth, and who has earned My love by attaching his heart only to Me!"



Zechariah (as) married another of Solomon's (as) descendants, Elisa. She was the sister of Mary's mother Anne, whose husband was Imran.

From Zechariah's (as) marriage to Elisa, John (as) was born.

Zechariah (as) led a righteous life, loyal to God's will; and as will be discussed, he was brutally martyred by the Israelites.

John (as)

John (as) is Mary's (as) maternal cousin. He learnt the Torah at a very early age and became a prophet at adolescence.

The Qur'an recounts how the Lord blessed John (as) to Zechariah (as):

هُنَالِكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ
ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ

"Thereupon Zechariah prayed his Lord. He said, 'My Lord! Grant me a good offspring from You! Indeed, You hear all prayers.'" (Al-i Imran, 3: 38)

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَاسْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا
وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا

“He said, ‘My Lord! My bones have become feeble, and my head has turned white with age; and never have I, my Lord, been disappointed in praying to You.’”

(Maryam, 19: 4)

وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِيَ مِنْ وَرَائِي وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا فَهَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا

“I truly fear my kinsmen, after me, and my wife is barren. So, grant me from Yourself an heir.” (Maryam, 19: 5)

يَرِثُنِي وَيَرِثُ مِنْ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ وَاجْعَلْهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا

“...who may inherit from me and inherit from the House of Jacob. And make him, my Lord, pleasing to You.” (Maryam, 19: 6)

Zechariah’s (as) sincere prayer was accepted.

فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي فِي الْمِحْرَابِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيَى مُصَدِّقًا بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا وَنَبِيًّا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

“Then the angels called out to him, as he stood praying in the sanctuary: ‘Allah gives you the good news of John, as a confirmer of a Word of Allah, eminent and chaste, a prophet, among the righteous.’” (Al-i Imran, 3: 39)

Scholars of the Qur’an say that the ‘Word of Allah’ mentioned in the above verse, is Jesus (as). This is also clear in the 45th verse of Al-i Imran. Another verse reads:

يَا زَكَرِيَّا إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَى لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا

“O Zechariah! Indeed, We give you the good news of a son, whose name is ‘John.’ Never before have We made anyone his namesake.” (Maryam, 19: 7)

The expression ‘...never before have We made anyone his namesake’ is to honor John (as). He was the first person to be named Yahya (his real name as mentioned in the Qur’an); and moreover, this was a name given by the Lord. It also alludes to the other virtues he would be adorned with.

‘Yahya’ means alive. A child born from an elderly couple is like a living being created from the dead. The Qur’an says:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِيَ الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَأَتِي عَاقِرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ

“He said, ‘My Lord, how shall I have a son while old age has overtaken me and my wife is barren?’ He said, ‘So, it is that Allah does whatever He wishes.’”

(Al-i Imran, 3: 40)

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ وَقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ تَكُ شَيْئًا

“He said, ‘So shall it be. Your Lord has said, ‘It is simple for Me. Certainly I created you before when you were nothing.’” (Maryam, 19: 9)

The sign that Zechariah’s (as) prayer was accepted, was for him to dedicate three days to glorifying the Lord and not speak to anyone during that time except in signals:

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ إِلَّا
رَمْزًا وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَارِ

“He said, ‘My Lord, grant me a sign.’ He said, ‘Your sign is that you will not speak to people for three days except in gestures. And remember Your Lord greatly, and glorify Him morning and evening.’” (Al-i Imran, 3: 41)

For three days, Zechariah (as) did not speak to anyone. He conveyed his message by drawing signs on soil:

فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ مِنَ الْمِحْرَابِ فَأَوْحَى إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْ سَبِّحُوا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا

“So he emerged before his people from the Temple, and signaled to them that they should glorify Allah morning and evening.” (Maryam, 19: 11)

The Almighty states:

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ زَوْجَهُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ
فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ

“So We answered his prayer, gave him John, and remedied his wife. They were indeed active in performing good works, and they would pray to Us with eagerness and awe, and were humble before Us.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 90)

Once John (as) reached the age of discernment, the Almighty ordered him to seize onto the Torah:

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا

“O John! Hold on with power to the Book! And We gave him judgement while still a child.” (Maryam, 19: 12)

وَحَنَانًا مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا

“...and a compassion and purity from Us. He was devout.” (Maryam, 19: 13)

وَبِرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا

“And he was good to his parents, and was not a bully or disobedient.” (Maryam, 19: 14)

John (as) thus became a prophet. However, until Jesus (as) was made a prophet and given the Gospel, he followed the law of Moses (as). This makes him the final prophet to practice Moses' (as) law. Like his father, John (as) was also martyred.

According to Moses' (as) law, it was impermissible for a man to marry his brother's wife. If he did, he was punished with castration (Leviticus, 18/6-18; 20/19-21). While the Torah punished fornicators to death, it had a different penalty for those who married people they were not supposed to. (Deuteronomy, 22/22-27; Leviticus, 20/11, 12, 14, 17) 20/19-21) It was a related incident that led to John's (as) martyrdom.

King Herod had slept with his brother's wife. John (as) spoke up against it, saying it was against divine law; and a result, was thrown in prison. Later, Herod had a birthday celebration, and the woman he had slept with, attended with her daughter. The daughter put on a show that mesmerized the king, who told her he was ready to fulfil any wish she had. And under her mother's influence, she asked for John's (as) head. At first, Herod was saddened by the request. However, he remembered his promise and had John (as) beheaded. (Luke, 3/19-20; Matthew, 14/1-12)

According to one report, even after he was beheaded, John (as) repeatedly said to Herod:

“That woman is not permissible to you!”

How ignorant it was that Herod remonstrated against John (as) and killed him, even though he knew he was a prophet and had witnessed many of his miracles!

Parts of John's (as) blessed corpse is now in many different cities. His head is buried at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus.

As for the woman Herod married, she was later sunk into bottom of the ground.

It was around this time that Jesus (as) was also raised to the heavens. The Jews of the time had become so brazen that they had begun murdering their own prophets. For this and many other crimes, the Almighty had cursed them:

فَبِمَا نَقَضْتُمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفِّرْتُمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلْتُمْ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقِّ وَقَوْلِهِمْ
قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

“Then for breaking their covenant, their defiance of Allah’s signs, their unjust killings of prophets and for saying, ‘Our hearts are enshrouded.’ Rather, Allah has set a seal on them for their unfaith, so they do not believe except a few.”
(Al-Nisa, 4: 155)

At the time of his martyrdom, John (as) was just over the age of thirty. The Qur’an states he has gained the Lord’s mercy on three dangerous days:

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا

“Peace be to him the day he was born, the day he dies and the day he is raised alive!” (Maryam, 19: 15)

Baydawi interprets this verse as:

“The pestering devil shall not harm you in life! You shall be safe from the torment of the grave! And from the fear of account and the face of hell!”

Jesus (as)

Jesus (as) graced the earth in Jerusalem six months after the birth of John (as). He is the last prophet sent to the Israelites.

Jesus (as) is also the fourth of five major prophets of supreme rank, referred to as *ulu’l-azm*. He is also known as *Ruhullah*, the Spirit of Allah (jj). While being an honorary title, this also points to the fact that, like Adam (as), the Almighty created him by breathing into him His spirit.

Jesus (as) became a prophet at the age of thirty, received the divine book Gospel and was raised to the heavens alive at the age of thirty-three.

As the final hour nears, he will return to earth, get married and have kids, meet with Mahdi (as), make Islam reign supreme across the world and pass away in Medina. He will then be buried next to the chamber in Medina, where the Prophet (as) is interred.



Mary (as), the mother of Jesus (as), descended from David (as). Her mother was Anne (Hunna) and her father, Imran.

Sources say Anne was unable to have any kids. So, she vowed:

“My Lord! If I have a child, I will dedicate him to the Temple!”

Not long after, she fell pregnant. The Qur'an recounts:

إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَةٌ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا
فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

“When Imran’s wife said, ‘My Lord, I dedicate to You what is in my belly, in consecration. Accept it from me. Indeed You are Hearing, Knowing.’” (Al-i Imran, 3: 35)

Soon, she gave birth to a girl and named her Maryam.

فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ
كَالْأُنْثَىٰ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

“And when she bore her, she said, ‘My Lord, I have given birth to a female child!’ -and Allah knew better what she had borne- ‘and a female is not like a male. I have named her Mary, and I entrust her and her offspring to Your care against the outcast Satan.’” (Al-i Imran, 3: 36)

Until then, it was permissible and rewardable to devote male children to the Bayt Al-Maqdis. The devotees would stay there until they reached adolescence. After that, they were free to either remain or go wherever they wished. However, they could not leave until they reached puberty.

This applied only to sons. After the Almighty accepted the offering of Mary, however, daughters were also allowed to be dedicated to the Temple.

Anne handed her daughter Mary over to the Temple’s wardens. They cast lots to see who would take Mary in his care. The Almighty states:

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يُلقُونَ
أَقْلَامَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ إِذْ يَخْتَصِمُونَ

“These are accounts from the unseen, which We reveal to you. And you were not with them when they cast lots to see which of them would take charge of Mary’s care, nor were you with them when they were contending .” (Al-i Imran, 3: 44)

The lot fell on the imam of Bayt Al-Maqdis, Anne’s brother-in-law, Zechariah (as). He said:

“I am married to her aunt. I will take care of her.”

After Mary completed her period of being breastfed, she was allocated a room at the Temple. The Qur'an refers to this room as *mihrab*. The word also denotes any means of warfare. So, in that sense, this was a room of spiritual ordeal.

Only Zechariah (as) would enter the room to check up on Mary (as). This continued until she reached the age of twelve. Zechariah (as) would enter the room with his own key and lock it on his way out. He would come in once and drop off food to last her a day. Yet, upon entering, he would see different types of fruit inside the room. This would leave him startled. Upon asking where the fruit had come from, Mary (as) would reply, 'from Allah (jj)'. These would be summer fruits in winter and winter fruits in summer. The Almighty declares:

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا كُلَّمَا
دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّى لَكَ
هَذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

“Thereupon her Lord accepted her with a gracious acceptance, made her grow up in worthy fashion, and charged Zechariah with her care. Whenever Zechariah visited her in the sanctuary, he would find provisions with her. He said, ‘Mary, where does this come from?’ She said, ‘It comes from Allah. Allah provides whomever He wishes without any reckoning.’” (Al-i Imran, 3: 37)

The Lord's greatest blessings upon Mary (as) were:

1. Until then, only male children were dedicated to the Temple. Through the prayers of her mother, however, Mary (as) became the first female to be admitted.
2. The Almighty placed her in the care of Zechariah (as).
3. He fed her from the foods of paradise.
4. He made her meet Jibril (as), whom He only sends to prophets.
5. Her son Jesus (as) spoke in the cradle and responded to the slanders against her.

The Prophet (saw) says:

“Imran's daughter Maryam was the best woman of the time. And Khadijah is the best woman of this nation of believers.” (Muslim, Fadailu's-Sahabah, 69)



Mary (as) worshipped day and night. She became famous among the Israelites for her piety. She would perform extraordinary feats (*karamah*). The Qur'an has praised her as loyal (*siddiqah*).

Allah (jj) says:

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰٓكِ
وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفٰٓكِ عَلَىٰ نِسَاءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

“And when the angels said, ‘Mary, Allah has chosen you and purified you, and He has chosen you above the world’s women.’ (Al-i Imran, 3: 42)

يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِيْنَ

“Mary, be obedient to your Lord, prostrate and bow down with those who bow.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 43)

After these commands, Mary (as) became so pious that she would stand in prayer until her feet became swollen.

The Creator out of Nothing Can Also Produce a Child without a Father

When she was fifteen, Mary (as) got engaged to a carpenter by the name of Joseph (*Yusuf Najjar*). Before she got married, however, the Almighty inspired to her that she would give birth to a son without a father:

اِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيْحُ
عِيسَىٰ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ

“When the angels said, ‘Mary, Allah gives you the good news of a Word from Him whose name is Messiah¹²² Jesus, son of Mary, distinguished in the world and the Hereafter, and among those near to Allah.’ (Al-i Imran, 3: 45)

The angels, again, said to Mary (as):

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ

“He will speak to people in the cradle and in adulthood, and will be one of the righteous.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 46)

Thereupon:

قَالَتْ رَبِّ اَنْتَ اَنْتَ يَكُوْنُ لِيْ وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِيْ بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ اللّٰهُ
يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ اِذَا قَضٰٓى اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَّا يُقُوْلُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ

122. Messiah is the nickname of Jesus (as). It is originally a Hebrew word meaning ‘anointed’.

“She said, ‘My Lord, how shall I have a child when no human has ever touched me?’ He said, ‘So it is that Allah creates whatever He wishes. When He decides on a matter He just says ‘Be!’ and it is.’” (Al-i Imran, 3: 47)

The angels further said:

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

“And He will teach him the Book and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel.”
(Al-i Imran, 3: 48)

In the above verses, the term ‘angels’ refers to Jibril (as). The Qur’an refers to him in the plural to honor him.



The Almighty says:

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ اتَّيَبَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا

“And mention in the Book Mary, when she retreated from her family to an easterly place.” (Maryam, 19: 16)

The ‘easterly place’, according to scholars of the Qur’an, is either the eastern wing of Bayt Al-Maqdis or the eastern part of Mary’s (as) home. It is said this is the reason Christians turn to the east when praying.

Before long, the Almighty sent down Jibril (as). The Qur’an states:

فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا

“So she secluded herself from them, whereupon We sent to her Our Spirit; and he appeared to her as a well-proportioned human.” (Maryam, 19: 17)

Here, the ‘Spirit’ is Jibril (as). He was sent as a well-proportioned young man so that Mary (as) would not feel afraid. Had Jibril (as) appeared in his original form, she would not have been able to withstand it.

Still, seeing a young man suddenly appear, Mary (as) felt nervous, as she was chaste and innocent. She was anxious, not knowing that the man was in fact Jibril (as). So:

قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا

“She said, ‘I seek the protection of the Merciful from you, should you fear Him.’” (Maryam, 19: 18)

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا

“He said, ‘I am only a messenger of your Lord that I may give you a pure son.’ (Maryam, 19: 19)

قَالَتْ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكْ بَغِيًّا

“She said, ‘How shall I have a child, seeing that no human being has ever touched me, nor have I been unchaste?’ (Maryam, 19: 20)

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّئٌ وَلِنَجْعَلَهُ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ
وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَّقْضِيًّا

“He said, ‘So shall it be. Your Lord says, ‘It is simple for Me. And so that We may make him a sign for mankind and a mercy from Us. And this is a matter already decided.’” (Maryam, 19: 21)



Then, by the will of Allah (jj):

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَذَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا

“She fell pregnant, and retreated with him to a distant place.” (Maryam, 19: 22)

As her labor pains increased and the time to give birth neared, Mary (as) withdrew beneath a dried-up palm tree. The Qur’an explains:

فَاجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي
مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنْسِيًّا

“The birth pangs brought her to the trunk of a date palm. She said, ‘I wish I had died before this and become a forgotten thing, beyond recollection.’” (Maryam, 19: 23)

Finally, Jesus (as) was born beside a dry trunk. The Almighty had created him without a father.

Through His glory, Allah (jj) created Adam (as) from earth without a mother or father, Eve from Adam (as) without a mother, and Jesus (as) from Mary without a father,

There is similarity in the ways Adam (as) and Jesus (as) were born, in that they were both created through the command 'Kun' or 'Be'. The Almighty underlines this in the Qur'an:

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

“Indeed the case of Jesus with Allah is like the case of Adam. He created him from dust, then said to him, ‘Be,’ and he was.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 59)

This not only points to the infinity of the Almighty's power, it also proves Mary's innocence (as) in the face of the vile slanders of the startled Jews.



Sources do not mention Jesus' (as) exact date of birth; neither do the current Bibles. While one Biblical passage does suggest that Jesus (as) was born during the time of a Jewish king (Matthew, 2/1), Roman sources say the king had died before Christ. All the pieces of information clearly contradict one another, which means that Christmas can be nothing but a fabricated myth.

It is for the same reason that Catholics celebrate Christmas on the 24th-25th of December, while the Armenian church observes it on the 6th of January. Some Protestants do not even observe Christmas, saying its exact date is not given in religious sources.



Once Jesus (as) was born:

فَنَادَيْهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا

“Thereupon he called her from below her saying, ‘Do not grieve! Your Lord has made a spring to flow at your feet.’” (Maryam, 19: 24)

This is also interpreted as:

“Do not worry! Your Lord has created the baby beneath you as an honorable leader!”

The voice continued to say:

وَهْزَيْ إِلَيْكَ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رُطْبًا جَنِيًّا

“Shake the trunk of the palm tree. Freshly picked dates will drop upon you.” (Maryam, 19: 25)

Even though it was winter, when Mary (as) shook the tree towards her, it suddenly started blooming with fresh dates. She helped herself to the dates and drank from the spring in front of her. The fact that the tree gave fresh dates was only to console Mary (as). She was told:

فَكُلِّي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا فَمَا تَرَيْنَ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ
لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا

“Eat, drink, and be comforted. If you see any human, say, ‘Indeed I have vowed a fast to the Merciful, so I will not speak to anyone today.’” (Maryam, 19: 26)

On top of the usual fast, it is narrated that the Israelites of the time also fasted by not talking to anyone. They sometimes observed both forms of fasting at the same time.

The birth of Jesus (as) sparked a series of rumors and slanders. The Qur’an explains what unfolded:

فَاتَتْ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ قَالُوا يَا مَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا

“Then carrying him, she brought him to her people. They said, ‘Mary, you have certainly come up with an odd thing!’” (Maryam, 19: 27)

يَا أُخْتَ هَارُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكَ امْرَأَ سَوْءٍ وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَعْثًا

“Sister of Aaron! Your father was not an evil man, nor was your mother unchaste!” (Maryam, 19: 28)

The Aaron mentioned in the verse is not the brother of Moses (as). According to a stronger opinion among many others, this Aaron was Mary’s (as) brother. Like his parents, he was an honest and righteous man. So, the Israelites were saying they would never have expected the sister of someone so virtuous to commit adultery (!).

The Israelites kept taunting and insulting Mary (as). Yet, as she had been commanded, she patiently listened without speaking a word. Then, they began to increase their abuse. That was when divine help arrived.

The Qur’an explains:

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا

“Thereupon she pointed to him. They said, ‘How can we speak to a baby in the cradle?’” (Maryam, 19: 29)

Allah (jj) gave his future prophet the ability to talk; and he began to speak from the cradle:

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا

“He said, ‘Indeed I am a servant of Allah! He has given me the Book and made me a prophet!’” (Maryam, 19: 30)

وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا

“He has made me blessed, wherever I may be, and He has commanded me with the prayer and alms for as long as I live.” (Maryam, 19: 31)

وَبِرًّا بِالَّذِي لَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا

“...and to be good to my mother; and He has not made me a wretched bully.” (Maryam, 19: 32)

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا

“Peace is to me the day I was born, the day I die and the day I am raised alive.” (Maryam, 19: 33)

The people around were astonished to hear a baby talk. Mary (as) was cleared of all blame.

After that, if any doubter asked Mary (as) where she got the baby from, she would simply point at the baby and say, “Let him speak!” And Jesus (as) would say:

“My mother is a chaste and honorable woman. You ignorant people! Do not blame my mother, who is a pillar of integrity! Know that the Lord has brought me into this world without a father. This is a miracle of Allah (jj)!”

People would then comment:

“This is a clear miracle from God. Otherwise, how can a newborn speak? This has to be from God...an event that shows His glory.”

Some people, however, retained their malice. The Qur’an states:

لَكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ

“That is Jesus, son of Mary, the real word; about who they are in doubt.” (Maryam, 19: 34)

The reason why the verse refers to Jesus (as) as the ‘real word’, is because he was brought into existence through the word, ‘Be’. The Qur’an further explains this elsewhere:

وَالَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ

“And Mary, who guarded her chastity. We breathed into her Our spirit, and made her and her son a sign for all the nations.” (Al-Anbiya, 21: 91)

وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِنَا
وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتِبَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الْقَانِنِينَ

“And Mary, daughter of Imran, who guarded the chastity of her womb. So We breathed into it of Our spirit. She confirmed the words of her Lord and His Books, and she was among the obedient.” (Al-Tahrim, 66: 12)



Jesus (as) speaking from the cradle did end the slanders, but not for long. An ignorant mob resumed saying, “How can a baby have no father!”

Then they remarked, “Zechariah must have done this! Who else but him!”

Shortly after, they caught Zechariah (as) alone at the Temple and shouted, “You slept with Mary!” before charging towards him. Zechariah (as) escaped and hid inside a tree hollow. Satan appeared in the guise of a man and pointed the mob to the tree, saying:

“Saw that tree in half! You have nothing to lose! Zechariah is hiding inside it!”

The vile mob immediately began to chop the tree down. As the saw began to split his head, Zechariah (as) was about to sigh with pain but heard a voice saying:

“Zechariah! Do not complain!”

And he did not. Zechariah (as) was patient and resilient as he was sawn in half, and martyred. In doing so, he reached majestic ranks.

Incidentally, Mary’s (as) former fiancée Joseph also faced the same slander.



To ensure that the miserable mob that martyred Zechariah (as) would not harm Mary and Jesus (as), the Almighty took them under His protection:

وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ آيَةً وَآوَيْنَاهُمَا إِلَى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ

“And We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign, and sheltered them in a highland, level and watered by a stream.” (Al-Muminun, 23: 50)

It is said that ‘highland’ mentioned is in Egypt. Mary (as) and Jesus (as) stayed there for twelve years, during which a number of extraordinary incidents took place:

For a time, they stayed at a place, where the landowner once lost a bit of money. It was a house that lodged poor and underprivileged people. The landowner could not figure out who had taken the money. This made everyone a suspect, including Mary (as) herself, who became deeply distressed by the whole incident. Among the lodgers were two men, one blind and the other crippled. After seeing her mother upset, Jesus (as) looked at both and told them to:

“Take the money out of its hiding spot!”

Even though they had not said a word to anyone about their theft, Jesus (as) miraculously knew; and they had no choice but to return it. After the incident, Jesus’ (as) reputation grew.

Jesus (as) as Prophet

After staying in Egypt for twelve years, Jesus (as) returned to Jerusalem and settled in the town of Nazareth. It is for this reason that Christians were also called *Nasrani*, literally, those from Nazareth.

Jesus (as) was thirty when he became prophet. He immediately began calling people to believe that God is one.

The Almighty declares:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ
وَالكِتَابَ فَمِنْهُمْ مُهْتَدٍ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

“Certainly, We sent Noah and Abraham and We proclaimed prophets from among their descendants and gave them the Book. Some of their descendants are guided, and many are transgressors.” (Al-Hadid, 57: 26)

It is understood that the four divine books mentioned in the Qur’an were revealed to the descendants of Noah (as) and Abraham (as).

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ
وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا

عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ
أَمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ

“Then We followed them up with Our prophets and with Jesus son of Mary. We gave him the Gospel, and We put in the hearts of those who followed him kindness and mercy. But as for monasticism, We did not prescribe it for them. They innovated it only seeking Allah’s pleasure. Yet, they did not duly observe it. So, We gave the faithful among them their due reward, but many of them are transgressors.” (Al-Hadid, 57: 27)

Monasticism is a concept and way of living Christians introduced much later. Reports suggest that after Jesus (as), pagans tried to wipe out believers and heavily defeated them in three successive wars. Fearing there would be no one left to deliver the message, the believers who survived decided to no longer fight, and devote themselves to worshipping instead. They thus turned their backs to the tribulations of the time and showed sincerity in their religion by abstaining from worldly pleasures, including excessive eating and drinking, as well as marriage. They took refuge in mountains and caves, where they spent their time in deeds of worship. Most of those who remained, however, abandoned the religion of Jesus (as) and subscribed to the beliefs of kings. It was them who came up with the doctrine of trinity, and later, along with other deviancies, rejected the call of Prophet Muhammed (saw).



Jesus (as) continued to make the call. Yet, most of the people were mired in stubborn denial.

He showed many miracles. He told people that while he confirmed the Torah revealed to Moses (as), the Almighty had changed some of its rulings:

وَمُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلَأُحِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي
حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

“And I have come to confirm the truth of the Torah before me, and to make lawful some things you had been forbidden from. I have brought you a sign from your Lord; so be wary of Allah and obey me.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 50)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

“Indeed, Allah is my Lord and yours. So, worship Him. This is a straight path.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 51)

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ
بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

“And when Jesus son of Mary said, ‘Children of Israel! Indeed I am the prophet of Allah to you, to confirm the Torah before me, and to give the good news of a prophet after me, whose name is Ahmad.’ Yet, when he brought them clear proofs, they said, ‘This is plain magic.’” (Al-Saff, 61: 6)

The 14th section of the current Gospel of John quotes Jesus (as) as saying:

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate (Paraclete) to help you and be with you forever.” (John, 14/16-17)

And in the 16th section:

“But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate (Paraclete) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.” (John, 16/7-9, 12-13)

Paraclete, translated as ‘the advocate’, comes from the Greek term *periklutos*, which means the ‘praised one’. Some Christians have interpreted this as ‘the savior’, while others have taken it more literally, as referring to ‘one of high praise’. It is therefore clear that the meaning of *paraclete* is one and the same as that of **Ahmed** and **Muhammed**.

The 97th section of the Gospel of Barnabas also includes the following:

“Then said the priest, ‘How shall the Messiah be called, and what sign shall reveal his coming?’

Jesus answered: ‘The name of the Messiah is admirable, for God himself gave him the name when he had created his soul, and placed it in a celestial splendor. God then said:

‘For your sake I will create paradise, the world, and a great multitude of creatures, to which I will make you a present; so that whoever blesses you will be blessed, and whoever curses you shall be accursed. When I send you into the world, I will send you as my messenger of salvation, and your word shall be true; such that even if heaven and earth shall fail, your faith never will.’

Ahmed is his blessed name.’

Then the crowd lifted up their voices, saying: ‘O God, send us thy messenger: O Ahmed, come quickly for the salvation of the world!’¹²³



The deniers’ hatred of Jesus (as) had increased by the day. Realizing this, Jesus (as) picked twelve apostles from among his believers and asked:

“Who will help me in serving and protecting Allah’s (jj) religion?”

All twelve of them said, “We are your helpers! We will aid the way of Allah with everything we have! We have given our hearts to His religion! Bear witness that we are true believers devoted to your religion!”

The Qur’an recounts:

فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَى مِنْهُمْ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ
قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

“And when Jesus sensed their faithlessness, he said, ‘Who will be my helpers toward Allah?’ The apostles said, ‘We will be the helpers of Allah. We have faith in Allah, and bear witness that we are Muslims.’” (Al-i Imran, 3: 52)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا أَنْصَارَ اللَّهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيِّينَ مَنْ
أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ فَأَمْنَتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ
وَكَفَرَتْ طَائِفَةٌ فَأَيَّدْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَى عَدُوِّهِمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا ظَاهِرِينَ

“O you who have faith! Be Allah’s helpers, just as Jesus son of Mary said to the apostles, ‘Who will be my helpers for Allah’s sake?’ The apostles said, ‘We will be Allah’s helpers!’ So a group of the Children of Israel believed, and a group disbelieved. Then We strengthened the faithful against their enemies, and they became the dominant ones!” (Al-Saff, 61: 14)

The Qur’an refers to the apostles of Jesus (as) as *hawariyy*. It comes from the Abyssinian word *hawarya*, which means helper or a chosen person.

The apostles are the twelve genuine believers, who kept faith with and helped Jesus (as) before anyone else. They have also been called *ansarullah* or helpers of Allah (jj). Jesus (as) chose them to spread the message of the Lord. The famous Barnabas, who wrote the Gospel of Barnabas, is also one of them.

123. For similar passages, see the 39th and 41st chapters of the Gospel of Barnabas.

The Feast From Heaven (*Maidah*)

The apostles asked Jesus (as) to pray for a feast to descend from the skies. Jesus (as) said:

“Do you doubt the power of the Lord? How can you dare ask for such a thing?”

“We have no hidden intention”, they explained. “We only want to attain the Lord’s grace and become even more content than we are.”

Jesus (as) took a bath and offered a two-rakah prayer. For humility, he wore some old clothes and pleaded to Allah (jj). He prayed for the feast and for that day to be festive.

His prayer was accepted and the feast (*maidah*) made its way down. It had a roasted fish. At the head of the fish, there was salt; and vinegar by its tail. The table was adorned with salads of many sorts. There was also some bread, as well as olives, cheese and honey.

This time the apostles said:

“Prophet of Allah...Show us a miracle within this miracle!”

Jesus (as) said to the fish:

“Come to life with the permission of the Lord of the universe!”

The fish came to life. The apostles were overcome with fear. Jesus (as) said:

“Fish...return to your former state with the permission of the Lord of the universe!”

The fish was, once again, dead. The apostles said:

“Spirit of Allah...please, eat first!”

“No”, said Jesus (as). “Whoever wanted this should eat!”

The apostles were still afraid. So, Jesus (as) said:

“Invite the poor and the ill. Let them eat from it!”

They sent for the poor and the ill. A total of 1,300 people arrived. They all ate; but by the time they were done, there was still more fish. Everyone who ate was cured. Those who did not, were left to regret it.

According to another narration, Jesus (as) had asked the apostles to fast for thirty days. After completing the fasting, they asked Jesus (as) for a feast, so that they could be sure their fasts had been accepted. They also asked that day to be a festive day and for the feast to be enough for everyone; all the rich, poor and ill.

Jesus (as) was concerned they would not be able to properly thank for such a blessing. He advised them against it.

However, the apostles insisted. Jesus (as) then stood to pray and the apostles lined up behind him in prayer. He began to plead to the Almighty in tears. Just as his supplication was coming to an end, a feast arrived from the heavens, carried by two men in turbans. Jesus (as) prayed for the feast to be a means of mercy and not of punishment.

As the table came closer, Jesus (as) stood before it and said:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ خَيْرِ الرَّازِقِينَ

He then lifted the cloth. There were seven fish, seven breads, vinegar, pomegranate and various fruits.

The feast kept arriving once every two days, over the next forty days. It would come at mid-morning. The rich, poor and everyone else would eat from it. At afternoon, the feast would then make its way back up, and cast its shadow on the ground.

Later, the Almighty banned the rich and the healthy from the feast. Those among them with malice in their hearts, did not take this well. They yielded to their egos; and angry at having been deprived from the feast, started ridiculing others.

“Do you really believe this feast is from God?” they mocked.

They were either 30 or 330 people. One night, divine wrath seized them, and they woke up as pigs. They received the punishment the Almighty had warned them of. Others saw them and became afraid. They sought Jesus’ (as) protection.

Those turned to pigs would signal Jesus (as) for a cure, each time they saw him. They would walk around him, using gestures to communicate. Jesus (as) would, at times, address them by their names. Hearing that, they would cry, and move their heads up and down, asking to be saved. Yet, as they had engaged in a great rebellion, they had gotten what they deserved. Three days later, all of them perished. Their carcasses also disappeared.

It is reported that when a pig walked past him, Jesus (as) would say, “Peace be to you!” Those around would ask:

“Why do you say that when these people have met divine punishment?”

He would reply, “Just so my mouth does not get used to bad words!”



The Qur’an talks about the feast in the following:

إِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ هَلْ يَسْتَطِيعُ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ
عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“Recall when the apostles said, ‘Jesus son of Mary! Can your Lord send down to us a table from the sky?’ He said, ‘Fear Allah, if you are faithful.’ (Al-Maidah, 5: 112)

قَالُوا نُرِيدُ أَنْ نَأْكُلَ مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُنَا وَنَعْلَمَ أَنْ قَدْ صَدَقْتَنَا
وَنَكُونَ عَلَيَّهَا مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

“They said, ‘We want to eat from it, and it will put our hearts at rest. We will know that you have told us the truth, and be among the witnesses to it.’ (Al-Maidah, 5: 113)

قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا أَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ تَكُونُ
لَنَا عِيدًا لِأَوَّلِنَا وَآخِرِنَا وَآيَةً مِنْكَ وَارْزُقْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ

“Jesus son of Mary said, ‘Allah! Our Lord! Send down to us a table from the sky, to be a festival for us, and for the first and last among us; and as a sign from You. Provide for us, for You are the best of providers.’ (Al-Maidah, 5: 114)

قَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مُنزِّلُهَا عَلَيْكُمْ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بَعْدَ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنِّي أُعَذِّبُهُ
عَذَابًا لَّا أُعَذِّبُهُ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

“Allah said, ‘I will indeed send it down to you. But if any of you disbelieve after this, I will indeed punish him like I have never punished anyone in all creation.’ (Al-Maidah, 5: 115)

As understood by the Qur’an, the apostles wanted the feast only for their hearts to rest at ease. Otherwise, they had no doubt. They simply wanted to gaze at the scene of a divine miracle. Still, this was a request that came with great responsibility. Jesus (as) hence said:

“Fear Allah, if you are faithful!”

There are two points to note here:

1. Jesus (as) is saying, “Fear Allah from specifying the kind of miracle you wish to see!” Wishing for a miracle according to personal desire is to overstep one’s limits. It is a kind of effrontery. Also, asking for another miracle despite having

previously seen so many others, is futile. For a believer, it is improper. It harms submission.

2. On the other hand, by saying “Fear Allah, if you’re a faithful”, Jesus (as) is signaling that the apostles need to stick to *taqwa* if they want to see their wish fulfilled.



Ammar ibn Yasir (ra) narrates the following from the Prophet (saw):

“The feast would descend from the heavens. It contained bread and meat. Those who ate from it were ordered not to betray it; not to take any of the food and hide it, or spare it for the next day. But they ignored the command and betrayed it. They took and hid food from the table. Thereupon, they were turned to monkeys and pigs.” (Tirmidhi, Tafsir, 5/3061)

Jesus (as) and the Apostles’ Journey to Nusaybin

Salman Farisi (ra) narrates the following:

Jesus (as) was tasked with going to Nusaybin (in present day Mardin, Turkey) to invite a king known for his arrogance and tyranny, to the truth. Before he went there in person, Jesus (as) first thought about sending a few of his disciples:

“Who will go?” he asked.

James (Yaqub) said, “I will.”

Jude Thaddeus (Tawman) and Simon (Shamun) joined him. Simon said:

“Spirit of Allah. If you allow me, I will go, too. But if I may find myself in trouble and call you, please do not withhold your help!”

Three of them set out. Simon waited at the city’s entrance.

“I will come if you need me”, he said.

James and Jude entered the city. They gathered the people and invited them to believe in God’s oneness. Yet, the people had already been duped by the slanders against Mary (as) and Jesus (as); thus, they not only rejected the call, they also cursed the two. They then arrested Jude and took him to the king. The king had Jude’s hands and legs cut off, eyes branded and thrown into prison.

Meanwhile, Simon entered the city in disguise. He approached the king without revealing his identity. In time, he struck a good bond with the king and became one of his close friends. Later, Simon asked for the king’s permission to see Jude and tell him a few things. The king allowed him to go. Inside the prison, the two apostles acted as if they did not know each other.

Simon asked, "What is it that you say, stranger?"

"All I say is that Jesus is the servant and messenger of Allah", responded Jude.

"What proof does he have?" Simon inquired.

"He can cure all illnesses", Jude said.

"Doctors can do that, too", Simon replied. "Does he have another proof?"

"He can reveal what people hide inside their homes", Jude said.

"Soothsayers can do that, too", Simon responded. "What else?"

"He can mold a bird out of mud and make it fly", Jude said.

"Magicians can do that, too", Simon commented. "Anything else?"

"He can raise the dead!"

That is when Simon said, "Now, that is no human feat! Let us then call Jesus. We will believe in him, if he can really raise the dead."

The king liked Simon's offer. They immediately delivered the invitation. Soon, Jesus (as) arrived in Nusaybin and acted as if he did not know Simon.

"If you wish", Simon suggested to the king, "let us test him through Jude."

They brought Jude in. Jesus (as) rubbed his legs and arms, and Jude returned to his former state. He then wiped his eyes; and once again, Jude could see.

Simon turned to the king and said, "This is genuine proof that this man is a prophet!"

He then turned to Jesus (as) and asked, "Could you tell us what the people assembled here ate at this evening and what they are hiding at home?"

Jesus (as) told them one by one.

They then asked him to mold a bat out of mud. Jesus (as) molded a bat and made it fly. They next asked him to cure the ill. He did. He was finally asked to raise a dead; but not just anyone. They wanted Jesus (as) to raise Noah's (as) son, Sam. With the permission of Allah (jj), Jesus (as) raised Sam.

The people asked Sam, "Were you this old when you died?"

"No!", he replied. "I thought the Day of Judgment had arrived!"

Sam then affirmed that Jesus (as) is a prophet and died once more.

After having witnessed so many clear miracles, the king and his soldiers believed in Jesus (as).

This incident shows that a Muslim must have reason and sense, and act with prudence. The truth cannot be said everywhere. Sometimes it is better to wait and lay the groundwork.

Habib the Carpenter

Jesus (as) sent another two apostles; this time to Antioch. They called on the people to give up worshipping idols and embrace the truth. Yet, the pagan king had the two apostles arrested and thrown into prison.

Jesus (as) thereupon sent Simon, the leader of the apostles, to Antioch.

Again, Simon struck a friendship with the king. After gaining influence in the king's inner circle, he gently invited them to the truth. The king and his men liked what they heard. They embraced the truth. The people, however, did not.

A man by the name of Habib the Carpenter heard about the people's protests, and ran out of his house on the other side of the city. He told the people that he had wholeheartedly accepted the call of these envoys and advised them to do the same. But not only did the ignorant mob not listen to him, they yielded to their anger which had now reached boiling point and martyred Habib on the spot.

The Qur'an recounts the incident:

وَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا أَصْحَابَ الْقَرْيَةِ إِذْ جَاءَهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ

“Cite for them the example of the inhabitants of the town when the apostles arrived.” (Ya-Sin, 36: 13)

إِذْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ اثْنَيْنِ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَعَزَّزْنَا بِثَالِثٍ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم مُّرْسَلُونَ

“When We sent to them the two, they rejected both of them. Then We reinforced them with a third, and they said, ‘We have indeed been sent to you.’” (Ya-Sin, 36: 14)

قَالُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَمَا أَنْزَلَ الرَّحْمَنُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا تَكْذِبُونَ

“They said, ‘You are nothing but humans like us! The Merciful has not sent down anything, and you are only lying.’” (Ya-Sin, 36: 15)

قَالُوا رَبُّنَا يَعْلَمُ إِنَّا إِلَيْكُم لَمُرْسَلُونَ

“They said, ‘Our Lord knows that we have indeed been sent to you.’” (Ya-Sin, 36: 16)

وَمَا عَلَيْنَا إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ

“...and our duty is only to communicate in clear terms.” (Ya-Sin, 36: 17)

قَالُوا إِنَّا تَطَيَّرْنَا بِكُمْ لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْتَهُوا لَنَرْجُمَنَّكُمْ وَلَيَمَسَّنَّكُم مِّنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“They said, ‘Indeed, we take you for bad luck. If you do not give up we will stone you, and you will surely meet a painful end.’” (Ya-Sin, 36: 18)

قَالُوا طَائِرُكُمْ مَعَكُمْ أَئِن ذُكِّرْتُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ

“They said, ‘Your bad luck is with you. What if you are being warned? Rather, you are a wasteful lot!’” (Ya-Sin, 36: 19)

وَجَاءَ مِنْ أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ رَجُلٌ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُوا الْمُرْسَلِينَ

“Then a man from the outskirts of the city ran to them, hurriedly. He said, ‘My people! Follow the apostles!’” (Ya-Sin, 36: 20)

اتَّبِعُوا مَنْ لَا يَسْئَلُكُمْ أَجْرًا وَهُمْ مُّهْتَدُونَ

“Follow them who do not ask you for any reward, while they are rightly guided.” (Ya-Sin, 36: 21)

After hearing that advice, the mob turned to him and yelled:

“So, you, too, are of their religion?” The man then replied:

وَمَا لِي لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

“Why should I not worship Him who has originated me, and to whom you will be brought back?” (Ya-Sin, 36: 22)

ءَأَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً إِنْ يُرِدْنِ الرَّحْمَنُ بِضُرٍّ لَا تُغْنِ عَنِّي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُنْقِذُونِ

“Should I take gods besides Him? If the Merciful desired to cause me any distress, they could not help me in any way, nor could they rescue me!” (Ya-Sin, 36: 23)

إِنِّي إِذَا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

“I would then indeed be in manifest error.” (Ya-Sin, 36: 24)

إِنِّي آمَنْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاسْمَعُونِ

“I truly have faith in your Lord, so listen to me!” (Ya-Sin, 36: 25)

قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ بِمَا
غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ

“He was told, ‘Enter paradise!’ He said, ‘Alas! If only my people knew that my Lord forgave me and made me one of the honored!’” (Ya-Sin, 36: 26-27)

Abu Mujahid says:

“The most foolish of all creation, is the ego. It always wants things that are bad for it.”

So, the city’s foolish people snubbed Habib’s wonderful invitation; and as it conflicted with their personal desires, they accused him of brining bad luck. Habib had only wanted what was good for them, both in this life and the next. They instead chose to follow their egos, rejected faith and, in doing so, laid waste to their eternity.

Jesus’ (as) Ascension to Heaven

The Israelites had proven to be slack in obeying the religion sent to Moses (as). They remonstrated and deviated entirely from the true path. Although the prophets who followed constantly warned them, they were too disobedient to listen. They even went so far as to become ‘prophet killers’.

By the time Jesus (as) arrived, the Israelites were scattered. They were waiting for a savior. They wanted the awaited prophet to be an aggressive fighter with brute force. They supposed only a prophet with these qualities could deliver them from captivity and take them to the world’s riches.

Thus, when Jesus (as) arrived to save them, the Israelites found him too gentle, and did not wish to believe him.

Despite it all, Jesus (as) showed patience and tried to cultivate peace on earth and between people. He strived to save the Jews from their deviant path. Yet, the Jews already had the blood of prophets on their hands. Now, they were annoyed by Jesus (as), and decided to deal with him the same way. They first began by terrorizing both Jesus (as) and those around him.

The tyranny reached such a point that apostles Judas, Ishar and Judah renounced their faith. On top of that, Judas acted as an informer to a mob of Jews that included the murderers Zechariah (as) and John (as). He told them of Jesus’ (as) whereabouts. However, he was soon met with divine wrath. As punishment, he was

made to look like Jesus (as) and the Jews crucified him instead. Jesus (as), on the other hand, was raised to the skies.



There are various views regarding Jesus' (as) ascent to heaven:

Ibn Abbas (ra) narrates that a group of Jews insulted Jesus (as) and his mother Mary (as). So, Jesus raised his hands and prayed:

“Oh Lord! You created me with the command ‘Be!’ Curse those who malign us!”

Allah (jj) accepted the prayer and transformed the slanderers and mockers into monkeys and pigs.

It was after this point that the Jews decided to murder Jesus (as). They paid Judas a few pennies and found out where Jesus (as) was. Jibril (as), however, remained by Jesus' (as) side. The Qur'an states:

وَأَتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ

“**And We gave Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit.**” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 253)

Ultimately, the Almighty raised Jesus (as) to the heavens. Jesus (as) was 33 years old at the time.

When the Jews stormed inside Jesus' (as) home, the Almighty made Judas assume the appearance of Jesus (as); and the Jews killed him instead. Allah (jj) declares:

وَبِكْفَرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَى مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيمًا وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا

“**And for their faithlessness, their monstrous slander against Mary. and for saying, ‘We killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the prophet of Allah!’. They neither killed nor crucified him, but that is how it was made to appear to them. Those who differ concerning him are surely in doubt about him. They have no knowledge of it beyond conjecture. And they certainly did not kill him.**” (Al-Nisa, 4: 156-157)

بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا

“Rather Allah raised him up toward Himself. And Allah is the Mighty, the Wise.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 158)

Allah (jj) protected Jesus from the Jews and prevented them from murdering him. That is certain. Also certain is the fact that Allah (jj) raised Jesus (as) to a rank by His side. As to the manner and time in which this incident took place, there are a number of reports. Most scholars say that Allah (jj), through His power, lifted Jesus (as) to his specific position in the heavens, to be sent back down before the final hour. Then, all Christians will become Muslim and Islam will be the only religion on earth.

The Qur'an says:

وَمَكَرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ

“Then they plotted against Jesus, and so did Allah. And Allah is the best of devisers.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 54)

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنِي مَتْوَفِيكَ وَرَافِعِكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرِكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلِ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

“When Allah said, ‘Jesus, I shall take your soul and raise you up toward Myself. I shall clear you of slanders of the faithless, set those who follow you above them until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me will be your return, whereupon I will judge between you about which you had differed.’ (Al-i Imran, 3: 55)

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَأَعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

“As for the faithless, I will punish them with a severe punishment in the world and the hereafter. And they will have no helpers.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 56)

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ

“But as for those who have faith and do righteous deeds, He will pay them their rewards in full. And Allah does not like the wrongdoers.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 57)

After the Ascension of Jesus (as)

Gradually after Jesus (as) was raised to the heavens, Christians split into 72 groups. The doctrine of trinity was invented. The Jacobite Church said:

“God was incarnate in Jesus. He assumed Jesus’ form and appeared in his shape. Therefore, God is Jesus.”

This view has its roots in Indian philosophy. Jerusalem was constantly under the influence of Rome and the Indian civilization. A strand of Indian philosophy holds that God descended on earth and became incarnate in Krishna, who was born from a mother and father. Krishna, hence, became the creator, God.

Yet, the Qur’an states:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ
يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ
حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوِيَهُ النَّارُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ

“They are certainly faithless who say, ‘Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary.’ But the Messiah had said, ‘Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Whoever ascribes partners to Allah, Allah will forbid him from paradise, and his refuge will be the fire. Wrongdoers will not have any helpers.’” (Al-Maidah, 5: 72)

مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا
يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ أَنْظِرْ أَنِّي يُؤْفَكُونَ

“The Messiah, son of Mary, is but a prophet. Certainly, other prophets have passed before him. His mother was truthful. Both of them would eat food. Look how We clarify the signs for them, and yet, look how they go astray!” (Al-Maidah, 5: 75)

In these verses, the Almighty reveals that the doctrine of trinity, which ascribes partners to Him, is nothing but deviation.



The 72 sects that formed following the ascension of Jesus (as) can be classified under three groups:

1. Those who say “Jesus was God among us, but now he is gone”;
2. Those who say “Jesus was the son of God, but he is now gone”;

3. And those who say, “Jesus is the servant and messenger of God, who graced him by raising him to the heavens.”

The first two strayed away from the path of truth, while the third are true believers.



The Jews continued tormenting the apostles. The true apostles braved all the torture with patience. One of them was Barnabas. In the 216th, 217th, 220th, 221st and 222nd sections of his gospel, Barnabas gives the following detail on Jesus’ (as) final days:

“When the Roman soldiers entered the home of Jesus (as) to detain him, with the order of God, the four archangels carried him out of the window and raised him to the heavens. The soldiers shouted:

‘You are Jesus!’ and got hold of Judas. And despite all his pleas, they killed Judas on the cross.

Jesus later appeared to his mother Mary and the apostles. He said to his mother:

“As you can see, dear mother, I was not crucified. Judas was crucified in my place. Beware Satan; for he will try to deceive you by making the world appear charming!”

After praying to the Lord to protect the believers, Jesus (as) turned to the apostles and said:

“May the grace and mercy of Allah be upon you!”

Following these words, the four archangels once again raised him to the heavens.



Forty years after Jesus’ (as) ascension (around 70 CE), the Romans under general Titus sacked Jerusalem. They killed many Jews and took the rest as prisoners. They burnt the Torah, as well as the other books. By the time they were done, Jerusalem was in ruins and the Temple of Solomon was destroyed, except for the Western Wall. Today, the Jews call it the Wailing Wall, and shed tears beneath it in memory of the destruction. The Jews were unable to recover, as they were scattered into exile as outcasts, often reviled.

After Judas became an apostate, the apostles chose Matthias to replace him. They spread out to other regions to deliver the message of Jesus (as).

Once the message started to spread, Jews joined forces with Romans, Greeks and other pagans to wipe this religion out. Former Jews who had accepted Jesus' (as) message were thrown in front of lions. They suffered enormous tyranny and torture.

In Yemeni city of Najran, the Jewish leader Dhu Nuwas and his men would throw believers who desisted Judaism into pits of fire, and watch them burn. Despite this, none of the loyal believers of Jesus (as) would waver, as they fearlessly walked to their deaths for what they believed in. The Qur'an refers to these believers as the 'People of the Ditch':

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ قُتِلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأُخْدُودِ
النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوُفُودِ إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ

“By the sky with its houses, by the Promised Day, by the Witness and the Witnessed, killed were the Men of the Ditch! The fire, abounding in fuel, above which they sat, as they were themselves witnesses to what they did to the faithful.”

(Al-Buruj, 85: 1-7)

This cruelty was not the end of it. They made plans to wipe out the religion of Jesus (as). A Jew by the name of Paul wrote many epistles, often mixing them with his own lies. He presented himself as a follower of Jesus (as), only to say:

“Jesus is the son of God!”

Paul also said wine and pork were permissible, and that it was useless to observe the Sabbath or for males to get circumcised. Thus, he effectively got rid of all the commands of Moses' (as) law. He said deeds are unnecessary and that faith alone is enough. Jesus (as), on the other hand, had observed the law of Moses (as). A passage of the Bible in fact quotes Jesus (as) as saying:

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” (Matthew, 5/17)

For that reason, Jesus (as) prayed in Jewish houses of worship, got circumcised, abstained from consuming wine or pork; and called on others to do the same. Paul and his friends, on the other hand, legalized these bans without having any authority from the Almighty or Jesus (as), and corrupted Christianity by shaping it in line with their egos.

Paul said, “God is one, His attributes are three.” He merged the religion with Platonic philosophy, which has:

1. An invisible creator,
2. A visible and knowable vizier or helper of the creator, referred to as logos,
3. A visible and knowable universe.

Paul regulated Christianity along those lines:

1. God as Father
2. Jesus as Son
3. The Holy Spirit

Christianity was thus infiltrated by the doctrine of trinity.

The conditions at the time were also fertile for this belief to take hold. People did not like Judaism, as they found it too conservative. On the other hand, a belief that centred on trinity seemed closer to the pagan religions they had inherited from their forefathers.

From this perspective, Christians divided into two:

1. Paulists. They grew strong, as they had kings who believed in them.

Paul became Christian after the ascension of Jesus (as). He then took this faith away from its origin and transformed it into a system of belief based on trinity. He wrote 14 separate epistles, which would later become the basis of the four gospels and form an important part of the current Bible. In Christianity, these epistles are as important as the four gospels.

2. Barnabists, who said “Jesus (as) is a man and prophet, who can never be worshipped.” Ebionites led by apostle Jacob also defended the same belief. Yet, they remained weak, as they found no support from kings.

Meanwhile, Paulists became more hostile by the day, gradually melting the influence of Barnabists. Also, the clerics that gathered for the Council of Nicaea in 325 organized by Emperor Constantine, canonized four gospels from among numerous others, and ruled the gospel of Barnabas invalid. These are the gospels of Luke, John, Mark and Matthew. The Church scrapped all the other gospels, saying they were fabricated.

From that point onward, only these four distorted gospels were officially written and read. Thus, despite being the most reliable of them all, the Gospel of Barnabas disappeared along with the rest. Barnabas was among the first apostles. He had accurately written down what he saw and heard from Jesus (as). Yet, as this did not suit the interests of Paul the Jew and his followers, they ostracized Barnabas. As a result, based on the decision taken in the Council of Nicaea, Christians today do not even regard Barnabas, who was martyred thirty years after the ascension of Jesus (as), an apostle. They accept Thomas instead.

After Barnabas, a priest known as Arius struggled against Paulists. He was consequently excommunicated. He then went to Egypt, and was martyred while trying to spread belief in the oneness of God.

The Church's response to Arius' criticisms did not satisfy even Christians. When conditions were ripe, similar criticisms emerged throughout the later periods and shook the authority of the Church and its official doctrine. To respond to these questions, reunite Christianity and most importantly determine the principles of the Christian faith, bishops convened for many other councils and came up with different rulings in each.

For instance, in the First Council of Nicaea in 325, Jesus was declared god; while in the Council of Constantinople (present day Istanbul) held in 381, the Holy Spirit was also accepted as god, with which the circle of trinity was completed. While the Council of Ephesus in 431 adopted Mary as the mother of God, the 451 Council of Chalcedon saw debates surrounding the nature of Jesus, which led to splits within the Church. The eighth council, held once again in Istanbul set off another argument, this time about the origin of the Holy Spirit. Following long debates, Christianity split into the Catholic Church based in Rome and the Orthodox Church based in Istanbul. And in the 16th century, the Protestant sect emerged in reaction to the oppressive scholasticism of the Catholic Church.

The fact that the most fundamental principles and essential beliefs of Christianity –which concern all Christians- were determined by human beings, clearly shows the extent in which Christianity has been distorted and corrupted. Plus, the decisions taken in each of these councils often contradict one another. No other religion on earth has been as manipulated, added to or subtracted form, as Christianity.



As for the reason why so many bibles were written:

According to the doctrine of trinity accepted by the current distorted version of Christianity, there is God, His son Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Many clerics of this belief wrote bibles casually, claiming they were inspired to do so by the Holy Spirit. They explained this through vague and confused terms, like how the Holy Spirit - Jibril or Gabriel - is the spiritual force that inspires the heart. There is no clear explanation. Even today, there are people who write bibles under this pretext.

The Second Coming of Jesus (as)

As the Day of Judgment nears, Jesus (as) will return from the heavens to earth. There are many hadith about this. The Qur'an also says:

وَأَنَّهُ لَعَلَّمَ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا وَاتَّبِعُونِ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ

“Indeed he (Jesus) is a portent of the Hour; so do not doubt it and follow Me. This is a straight path.” (Al-Zukhruf, 43: 61)

Here, Jesus (as) is referred to as a portent, a sign of the coming of the final hour, which points to how he will return as the time draws near. The relevant word is *ilm*, which means knowledge; but it has also been recited as *alem*, a sign.

After his return, Jesus (as) will rule by the law of our Prophet Muhammed (saw).

He will join Mahdi (as), who will obliterate Dajjal. Mahdi (as) will be a descendant of the Prophet (saw) and will transfer the rule over to Jesus (as).

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“If I live long enough, I would like to meet Jesus. If I do not, whoever among you sees him, send him my greetings.” (Ibn Hanbal, II, 298)

The second coming of Jesus (as) will serve as a means of mercy for entire humanity. Another hadith states:

“Jesus will land wearing a two-piece garment of the color of red soil. He will break the cross, slay the pig, abolish the jizya (poll) tax (off non-Muslims) and call people to Islam. In that time, Allah will eliminate all religions apart from Islam. The earth will meet peace, through the blessings of which the lions will eat with camels, and kids will play with snakes.” (Ibn Majah, Fitan, 33, No. 4077)

And in another hadith:

“I promise by the Almighty One in who has my life in His Hand, time is near for Mary’s son Jesus to land as a judge to rule among you with justice (Islamic law), to break the crosses, slay the pigs, abolish the jizya (poll) tax from the people of the book (i.e. Judaism and Christianity will no longer exist and people of those faiths will all become Muslim). Wealth will then increase to such an extent that nobody will accept it; and a single prostration will be better than the world and everything in it.”

The narrator of this hadith, Abu Hurayrah (ra) adds:

“If you wish, read the verse, ‘There is no one among the People of the Book who will not but believe in him before his death. And on the Day of Resurrection, he will be a witness against them.’ (Al-Nisa, 4: 159)” (Bukhari, Buyu, 102; Anbiya, 49; Muslim, Iman, 242)

The Miracles of Jesus (as)

With the permission of Allah (jj), Jesus could:

1. Raise the dead.
2. Cure the ill.
3. Know what people ate and hid in their homes.
4. Mold a bird out of mud and make it fly.

5. He received a feast from the heavens.
6. He heard and knew what people spoke around him even in his sleep.
7. He received food and fruits from the heavens whenever he wished.
8. He heard what was spoken near and far.

When the angels gave Mary (as) the news about the birth of Jesus (as), they said:

وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ
لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ
وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا تَدَّخِرُونَ فِي
بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنِّي فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“He will be a prophet to the Children of Israel, and declare, ‘I have certainly brought you a sign from your Lord: I will create for you out of clay the form of a bird, then I will breathe into it, and it will become a bird by Allah’s permission. I heal the blind and the leper, and revive the dead by Allah’s permission. And I will tell you what you have eaten and what you have stored in your houses. There is indeed a sign in that for you, should you be faithful.’” (Al-i Imran, 3: 49)

And elsewhere in the Qur’an:

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أُجِبْتُمْ قَالُوا لَا عِلْمَ
لَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ

“The day Allah will gather the prophets and say, ‘What was the response to you?’ They will say, ‘We have no knowledge. Indeed, You are the Knower of all the unseen.’” (Al-Maidah, 5: 109)

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ
وَالِدَتِكَ إِذْ أَيَّدتُّكَ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا
وَإِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّينِ
كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي فَتَنْفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِي وَتُبْرِئُ الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ
بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَنْكَ إِذْ جِئْتَهُمْ
بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ

“When Allah will say, ‘Jesus son of Mary! Remember My blessing upon you and your mother. I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit, so you would speak to the people in the cradle and in adulthood. I taught you the Book and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel. You would make a bird from clay, with My permission; you would breathe into it and it would become a bird, with My permission. You would heal the blind and the leper, with My permission, and raise the dead, with My permission. And I held off the evil of the Children of Israel from you when you brought them clear proofs, whereupon the faithless among them said, ‘This is nothing but plain magic!’” (Al-Maidah, 5: 110)



CHRISTIANITY TODAY

As mentioned before, after Jesus (as), Christianity has many times been subjected to human intervention. The Qur'an thus refers to the People of the Book as **"...those who have split their religion up."** (Al-Rum, 30: 32) The Prophet (saw) has also said:

"The nation of Jesus remained on his path and guidance for 200 years (they then corrupted their religion and changed direction)." (Haythami, Majmau'z-Zawaid, VIII, 207)

Christianity was certainly distorted by its own clerics; and as a result, it has come to us entirely stripped from its monotheistic origin.

Due to this distortion, Christianity, like other divine religions, lost its authority and validity, and Allah (jj) sent down Islam as the final and true religion. The Almighty declares:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

"Indeed, for Allah, the only true religion is Islam." (Al-i Imran, 3: 19)

Both Christians and Jews nonetheless rejected Islam and its great Prophet (saw), as they presumed the final messenger would hail from among them. While the adherents of both faiths had eagerly awaited the final messenger based on the information they had received in their books, they had a sudden change of attitude once he came. They became jealous that the Prophet (saw) and the final religion did not rise from their ranks and resisted believing in him.

The Almighty states:

وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ
بَغِيًّا بَيْنَهُمْ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

"And those who were given the Book did not differ except after knowledge had come to them, out of jealousy among themselves. And whoever defies Allah's signs, know that Allah is swift at reckoning." (Al-i Imran, 3: 19)

The People of the Book not only resisted out of jealousy, they also altered the passages of their books, which heralded the coming of Islam, the final religion, and its Prophet Muhammed (saw). They made the changes, as upon reading those passages, many prudent Christians and Jews were grasping the truth and wholeheart-

edly becoming Muslim. These included the likes of former Jewish scholar Abdullah ibn Salam, and Christians such as Salman Farisi and Abyssinian king, Negus. The Qur'an says:

وَأَنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ
وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ خَاشِعِينَ لِلَّهِ

“Among the People of the Book, there are surely some who have faith in Allah, in what has been sent down to you, and in what has been sent down to them. They are humble toward Allah.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 199)

After hearing that the Final Prophet (saw) had emerged, even the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius became excited, as he told the Prophet's (saw) envoy:

“That man will soon capture these lands I now step on. All along, I knew that this prophet would come, but I did not expect him to hail from among you. If I knew I would be able to make it there, I would go to great trouble just to see him. If I was by his side, I would wash his feet.”

After witnessing scenes like these, Jews and Christians blinded to the truth began to worry that, in time, all their faithful would enter Islam. To prevent that, they resorted to altering the passages of their books that spoke about the Final Prophet (saw) and the religion he would bring.

This, however, would prove to be their own undoing. Allah (jj) states:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَشْتَرُونَ بِهِ
ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَئِكَ مَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي بُطُونِهِمْ إِلَّا النَّارَ وَلَا
يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“Those who conceal what Allah has sent down of the Book and sell it for a paltry gain, do not take inside their bellies anything except fire. Allah shall not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor shall He purify them. And for them is a painful punishment.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 174)

بِئْسَمَا اشْتَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بَغْيًا أَنْ يَنْزِلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ
عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ فَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ

“Evil is that for which they have sold their souls, by defying what Allah has sent down, out of jealousy that Allah should bestow His grace on any of His serv-

ants that He wishes. Thus, they earned wrath upon wrath; and for the faithless, there is humiliating punishment.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 90)

As the verse states, the People of the Book who resisted coming under the banner of Islam only to follow their false books shaped in line with their desires, have laid waste to their lives both here and the hereafter. It is Allah (jj) who sent down all divine religions; and He says He will not accept the faiths of those who desist Islam and stick with religions He has annulled:

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

“Should anyone follow a religion other than Islam, it shall never be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the hereafter.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 85)

A quick look at the principles of faith and worship of all religions outside of Islam, including Christianity, shows that they not just defy the commands of the Lord but also logic. Christians, in fact, believe that:

All humans are born sinners. That is because Adam violated God’s command and was subsequently expelled from paradise. This sin is passed on generation after generation to every human being. Jesus was sent to save humanity from this ‘original sin’; and for that, God sacrificed his own son on the cross.

Yet, in do divine book does the Almighty suggest punishing one person for the crime of another. Sacrificing an innocent person for the sins of other would be nothing short of tyranny.

On the other hand, to believe that humans are born with sin, is to ascribe tyranny to the Almighty. The truth of the matter is beautifully stated by the Prophet (saw) himself:

“Every baby is born upon the disposition of Islam! (clean, sinless and with a natural tendency to believe God is one)” (Muslim, Qadar, 22)

Allah (jj) declares:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, according to the disposition in which Allah originated mankind. There is no altering Allah’s creation. This is the upright religion but most people do not know.” (Al-Rum, 30: 30)



Another false practice that has taken root in Christianity, is baptism. The Church decrees for all Christians to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The priest carries out the baptism by either splashing water on one's face or dipping his body in water. There is also belief that baptism absolves a person from the original sin. Christians consider people who die without getting baptized as sinners.

Also according to Christians, the world is a land of trouble. Humans should seek no pleasure, as they have been created to suffer. Yet, how contradictory it is to say this, while trying to indulge in every pleasure life has to offer.

It is unthinkable for a way of life that promises eternal peace in this trial on earth, to be full of such contradictions. The truth is that Allah (jj) tests His servants in various ways. It can be through poverty or wealth, just as it can be through joy or grief.

Christians also believe that a person cannot establish a direct link with God. They cannot ask God for anything. Only priests can ask on their behalf. Again, only priests can forgive their sins. In other words, priests act as means between a person and God. Hence, confessing sins, in Christianity, has become a rite of worship. The church makes the person confess a sin, while the priest has the authority to forgive in return for either some money or making the person do chores inside the church. Christians base this on the following words found in the corrupted Bible:

“Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” (John, 20/21-23)

Rather than guiding people, this in a way ascribes divinity to priests and encourages others to sin knowing they will be forgiven anyway.

How is it possible for priests to forgive the sins of others when they cannot even forgive their own? How can man who is not exempt from sin forgive the sins of another man? Not even messengers, including the six major prophets, were given this power. When even prophets spent their entire lives repenting for sins they had never committed, could there be anything more deviant than to think that divine mercy lies in the hands of priests?

In response to the People of the Book believing they can have their sins forgiven in exchange for money or working in the church, the Almighty declares:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لِيَآكُلُونَ
أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

“O you who have faith! Many scribes and monks wrongfully eat up the people’s wealth, and bar them from the way of Allah.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 34)

Still, Christians blindly follow their clerics. Even though the Bible is filled with slanders against prophets, they consider the pope innocent and without sin. They regard the pope’s every action infallible.

It is remarkable that Christians hold the prophets chosen by the Almighty in low esteem¹²⁴ and claim that they engaged in vile actions like adultery, drinking, lying and idolatry, for no other reason that their egos found it hard to cope with the truth to which the prophets invited them. In contrast, they glorify the pope chosen by none other than themselves, with sublime attributes, when he is in fact just an ordinary human being.¹²⁵

The Qur’an says:

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا
أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

“They have taken their scribes and monks as lords besides Allah, and also Christ, Mary’s son, even though they were commanded to worship only the One God. There is no god except Him. He is far too immaculate to have any partners that they ascribe.” (Al-Tawbah, 9: 31)

Christianity’s false conception of God highlighted in the verse above, also transpires in a false conception of man. For Christians, the spirit and body are separate entities. Only priests can cleanse the spirit. As for the body, it is regarded a vile and sinful being.

Yet, this is an unjust characterization of the human being, who has been created as the kernel of the universe and the most honorable of all creation. The truth of the matter is told by the Qur’an:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ

“We certainly created man in the best of forms.” (Al-Tin, 95: 4)

Sheikh Galib expresses this truth wonderfully:

*See yourself with joy, you are the core,
You are man... the eye of the world*

124. For baseless allegations levelled against prophets in Christianity’s holy book, also see, Genesis, 12/11-13, 19/30-38, 20/1-7, 30/1-24 II. Samuel, 11; I. Kings, 11/1-13.

125. Protestants, however, reject the pope’s innocence and power to forgive sins.

The human being is created so perfectly that, in a universe adorned with innumerable streaks of divine power, he represents the pinnacle of divine art.

Yet, those who do not live up to this status by shunning a life of faith and worship, lose the sublime qualities with which they have been created. Consequently, they betray the divine trust and fall to a level the Almighty calls 'the lowest of the low'. Otherwise, at the beginning, all human beings are endowed with the honor conveyed in the verse:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

“We have certainly honored the Children of Adam.” (Al-Isra, 17: 70)



Christians bring several proofs from the Bible to claim that Christianity is a religion of peace. Yet, the same Bible also contradicts that claim. For example, Luke quotes Jesus as saying:

“And as for these enemies of mine who didn’t want me to be their king, bring them in and execute them right here in front of me.” (Luke, 19/27)

Similarly, Paul’s letters contain:

“For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.” (I Corinthians, 15/25)

Elsewhere, Jesus (as) supposedly says:

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law!” (Matthew, 10/34-35)

And in the Old Testament, which Christians also accept, it is said:

“However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them.” (Deuteronomy, 20/16-17)

“Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys!” (I Samuel, 15/2-3)

As can be seen, Christianity’s sacred book contains messages of violence and tyranny that cast a shadow on any claim of love and peace.

The Qur’an explains what war really should be:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

“Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress. Allah certainly does not like transgressors.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 190)

Warfare, in Islam, is only to uphold the truth and justice. The verses of the Qur’an that enjoin war are only directed against those who have declared war and are already in the process of fighting. Women who do not take up arms, as well as children, the elderly and ill are untouchable. Even harming animals and nature is forbidden.



Like other prophets, Jesus (as) urged his followers to observe the commands and bans of Allah (jj). It is also certain that he did not condone conduct that appeared correct, yet contradicted the spirit of religion. Yet, today’s Christianity has adopted a number of innovations as worship. One of them is what is called communion.

Communion is where Jesus’ (as) last supper is re-enacted by eating bread dipped in wine. The bread supposedly symbolizes Jesus’ flesh, and the wine his blood. By consuming these, Christians believe they become one with Jesus (as). After baptism, communion is the second most important type of worship. All Christians observe this rite.

At first, communion was conducted only once a year. Later, it was increased to once a week and adopted as a principle of faith. The belief that one can receive a share of godliness by participating in such an activity, can have no place in monotheistic faith.

Worshipping, in Christianity, consists mostly of prayers and hymns sung for God. Apart from communion, it does not contain obligatory rites like Islam does, such as ritual prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and so forth. In Christianity, fasting is no more than a diet. A person may not eat certain foods while fasting, but can have a light breakfast or dinner.

Allah (jj) declares these rites and others which Christians have incorporated into their religion, as false; and says these are not what they had been commanded with:

وَمَا تَفَرَّقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَةُ
وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ خُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ

“And those given the Book did not split except after the proof had come to them. Yet, they were not commanded except to worship Allah, dedicate their faith to Him as men of pure faith, and to maintain the prayer and pay the alms. That is the upright religion.” (Al-Bayyinah, 98: 4-5)

Beside all this, Christianity’s greatest handicap is another belief introduced much later; and that is the doctrine of trinity. It was this issue that the Prophet (saw) laid emphasis on in the letters he sent to Christian kings. Below is his letter to Byzantine Emperor Heraclius:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From Muhammed, the servant and messenger of Allah, to Heraclius, the leader of the Romans:

Peace be upon those who follow guidance!

I hereby invite you to Islam. Enter Islam, so you find peace and Allah gives your rewards in double. If you do not accept, you will bear the sins of the peasants under your command.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ
إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

“O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that we will not take each other as lords besides Allah.’ But if they turn away, say, ‘Be witnesses that we are Muslims.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 64)

Trinity: Belief in Three Gods

Trinity denotes the Christian belief in the ‘Father, Son and Holy Ghost.’ Generally, Christianity is cited among religions that believe in one God. Whereas the Old Testament, which forms the basis of the Christian faith, lays strenuous emphasis on monotheism, Christianity in time turned into its opposite, as its capital Jerusalem wavered under the influences of Indian and Greek cultures.

Trinity entered Christendom much later. It did not exist at the time of Council of Nicaea in 325. The council only spoke of how the Father and Son were gods from the same essence. It was only at the Council of Constantinople in 381 that the Holy Ghost was also declared god and Christians were told to worship one divinity that consisted of three persons.

In the face of current criticisms, explanations like ‘God is one and has the power, while Jesus is simply his son and the Holy Spirit, his force’ do not bring trinity any closer monotheism. Furthermore, ascribing a son to Allah (jj), who is above all deficiencies and human qualities, is nothing but a deviation that will take a person to a grave punishment. On this subject, the Almighty declares:

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ بَلْ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلُّ لَّهُ قَانِتُونَ

“And they say, ‘Allah has taken a son.’ Immaculate is He! Rather to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. All are obedient to Him.”

(Al-Baqarah, 2: 116)

قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ عِنْدَكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ بِهَذَا أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“They say, ‘Allah has taken a son!’ Immaculate is He! He is the All-sufficient. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and in the earth. You have no authority to say this. Do you attribute to Allah what you do not know?” (Yunus, 10: 68)

قُلْ إِنْ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ

“Say, ‘Those who fabricate lies against Allah will certainly not be saved.’”

(Yunus, 10: 69)

مَتَاعٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ إِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ ثُمَّ نُنذِقُهُمُ الْعَذَابَ الشَّدِيدَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ

“A small enjoyment in this world; then to Us they will return. We will then make them taste the severe punishment because of what they had rejected.” (Yunus, 10: 70)

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا لَدَّهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ

“Allah has not taken any offspring, neither is there any god besides Him; for then each god would take away what he created, and some of them would surely rise up against others. Clear is Allah of what they allege!” (Al-Muminun, 23: 91)

Christianity began purely as a monotheistic faith. While the doctrine of trinity was added much later, it has no clear proof in the Bible. None of the current gospels even mention the word ‘trinity’. In the history of Christianity, Tertullian was the first person to use the concept; and that was at around the second century CE.

Also, nowhere in the New Testament does Jesus (as) say 'I am God.' Quite the opposite, he stresses that he is but a man, a servant.¹²⁶ Allah (as) also declares in the Qur'an that Jesus is His servant.¹²⁷ And in no way did being a servant offend Jesus (as). On the contrary, both the Old and New Testaments say he took pride in it,¹²⁸ and led an exemplary life as a servant of Allah (jj). Moreover, Jesus (as) spent his entire nights worshipping. This is not a sign of being god. It rather confirms the fact he was a human.

The only proof for trinity Christians can come up with, is this Bible passage:

"As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." (Matthew, 3, 16-17)

Similar words are found elsewhere in the Bible.¹²⁹ Yet, a closer inspection shows that it is impossible to interpret this and other passages as pointing to a god that consists of three persons.

Despite having undergone human intervention, even Christianity's sacred book, the Bible, offers no strong and clear proof that could justify the doctrine of trinity; and regardless of how it is interpreted or understood by Christians, trinity is absolutely incompatible with the belief of *tawhid* brought by Allah's (jj) final religion, Islam.

Also, the term 'Father' Christians use to refer to God, is demeaning. As well as there being good fathers, there are also types of fathers that evoke a bad image. At the same time, the word 'father' calls to mind things like a relationship between man and woman, having children and dying, which all relate to human life, and from which the Creator is exempt.

It certainly is a tremendous miracle that the Almighty created Jesus (as) without a father. Yet, this does not require Jesus (as) to be god. Adam (as) was not only created without a father, but also without a mother. What is more, Eve (as) was created through him. One cannot call Jesus (as) god any more than he can call Adam (as) god. If a child is born without a father from a virgin, it makes infinitely greater sense to worship, not the child, but the One who created that child.

Islam announces Allah (jj) as the Lord with endless glory and power, endowed with sublime attributes and free of all deficiencies. He does not resemble creation

126. See, Matthew, 12/18.

127. See, Al-Nisa, 172.

128. See, Matthew, 12/18; Isaiah, 42/1.

129. See, John, 1/1, 14.

in any way; and apart from Him, there is no god. This is succinctly told in chapter Al-Ikhlās:

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

“Say, ‘He is Allah, the One. Allah is the All-embracing. He neither begat, nor was begotten; nor has He any equal.’”

As short as it may be, this chapter summarizes every aspect of *tawhid*. It also suffices to dismiss claims that a man like Jesus (as), bound by the limitations of life and death, can be god; and thus makes the doctrine of trinity impossible to defend.

For that reason, the Almighty severely warns those who believe in trinity:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوِيَهُ النَّارُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ

“They are certainly faithless who say, ‘Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary.’ But the Messiah had said, ‘Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Whoever ascribes partners to Allah, Allah will forbid him from paradise, and his refuge will be the Fire. The wrongdoers will not have any helpers.’” (Al-Maidah, 5: 72)

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهُوا عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

“They are certainly faithless who say, ‘Allah is the third person of a trinity,’ when there is no god except the One God. If they do not stop what they say, for the faithless among them, there will be a painful punishment.” (Al-Maidah, 5: 73)

أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَهُ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Will they not repent to Allah and plead to Him for forgiveness? Yet Allah is the Forgiving, the Compassionate.” (Al-Maidah, 5: 74)

مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا يَأْكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ أَنْظِرْ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ

“The Messiah, son of Mary, is but a prophet. Certainly, other prophets have passed before him. His mother was truthful. Both of them would eat food. Look

how We clarify the signs for them, and yet, look how they go astray!” (Al-Maidah, 5: 75)

The verse says ‘both of them ate’ to emphasize how Jesus (as) and his mother Mary (as) were both humans. Being human comes with needs like hunger, from which Allah (jj) is most certainly exempt.

Only ignorance can explain why, in spite of all this, Christians still incline towards a belief that ascribes divinity to Jesus (as) and Mary (as). Not even did Jesus (as) himself open the slightest window that would justify a belief of this kind. Allah (jj) declares:

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أُجِبْتُمْ قَالُوا لَا
عِلْمَ لَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ

“The day Allah will gather the prophets and say, ‘What was the response to you?’ They will say, ‘We have no knowledge. Indeed, You are the Knower of all that is unseen.’” (Al-Maidah, 5: 109)

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلَهَيْنِ مِنْ
دُونِ اللَّهِ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقِّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ
عَلِمْتَهُ تَعَلَّمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوبِ

“And when Allah will say, ‘Jesus son of Mary! Was it you who said to the people, ‘Take me and my mother for gods besides Allah?’ He will say, ‘Immaculate are You! It does not befit me to say what I have no right to say. Had I said it, You would certainly have known. You know whatever is in myself, and I do not know what is in Your Self. You are indeed the Knower of all that is unseen.’” (Al-Maidah, 5:116)

مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ
وَكَُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ
أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

“I did not say to them anything except what You had commanded me: ‘Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.’ And I was a witness to them so long as I was among them. But when You took me away, You Yourself were watchful over them, and You are witness to all things.” (Al-Maidah, 5: 117)

People with reason must ask, since Jesus (as) never existed prior to his birth and came into existence long after the earth's creation, how could it be possible to add something to God? How can a 'divine' Jesus (as) who the Gospel of John addresses as 'Our Lord,' not have any power against those who crucified him on the cross? The Bible has passages indicating that Jesus was crucified unwillingly. When being taken towards the cross, Jesus supposedly 'cried with a loud voice':

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew, 27: 46)

Are not these words of helplessness and rebellion an expression of human deficiency?

Islam commands utmost sensitivity regarding *tawhid*. Even the slightest thing that harms monotheistic belief, is considered idolatry (*shirk*). Just a small example is how the Qur'an refers to a person, who puts aside the Lord's commands and follows his own whims, as having "...taken his own desire as god." (Al-Furqan, 25: 43) Moreover, the Qur'an refers to people who overrule Allah's (jj) commands and bans as pseudo 'gods', and their followers as 'those who have adopted them as god'. Showing off while worshipping is also called secret idolatry.

The Qur'an maintains its sensitivity for *tawhid* to sternly reject the Christian doctrine of trinity, calling it a heresy (*kufir*).

In His final revelation, Allah (jj) cautions Christians against the heresy of trinity they have fallen into:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقِيَهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ مِنْهُ فَامِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةً انْتَهُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا

"O People of the Book! Do not exceed the bounds in your religion, and do not attribute anything to Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only prophet of Allah; His Word that He cast toward Mary and a spirit from Him. So have faith in Allah and His prophets, and do not say, 'God is a trinity.' Let it go! That is better for you. Allah is but the One God. He is far too immaculate to have any son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and on the earth, and Allah suffices as trustee." (Al-Nisa, 4: 171)

لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ وَمَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعًا

“The Messiah would never disdain being a servant of Allah, nor would the angels near to Him. And whoever disdains His worship and is arrogant, He will gather them all.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 172)

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا
إِنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

“They are certainly faithless who say, ‘Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary.’ Say, ‘Who can avail anything against Allah should He wish to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother, and everyone upon the earth?’ To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them. He creates whatever He wishes, and has power over all things.” (Al-Maidah, 5:17)

As mentioned before, according to many researchers, the idea of ‘a divine Jesus’ entered Christianity through the influence of Greek, Alexandrian and Indian philosophies.

In Encyclopedia Britannica, it is said:

“Jesus never claimed to be supernatural. Neither did he say he had a nature above humans.” (V. 5, p. 636)

Jesus (as) stated:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” (Mark, 12,:29. Also see, Matthew 23, 8; Luke, 13, 33)

The Bible also contains the following:

“Great fear swept the crowd, and they praised God, saying, ‘A mighty prophet has risen among us!’” (Luke, 7/16)

“When the people saw him do this miraculous sign, they exclaimed, ‘Surely, he is the Prophet we have been expecting!’” (John, 6/14)

Clearly, even Christianity’s own sources are enough to show that Jesus (as) was the Lord’s servant and messenger, and had nothing to do with divinity. Yet, bogus clerics like Paul carried out a campaign against religion under the guise of being religious; and not only deceived people about the nature of Jesus (as), but also dragged them into error through countless false information. Despite that being the case, Christians today still fool themselves by thinking they are God’s beloved nation and will be the only people to enter paradise. This assumption is answered by the Almighty Himself:

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تِلْكَ
أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

“And they say, ‘No one shall enter paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian.’ Those are their false hopes! Say, ‘Produce your evidence, if you speak the truth.’ (Al-Baqarah, 2: 111)

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى نَحْنُ أَبْنَاءُ اللَّهِ وَأَحِبَّاؤُهُ قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ
بِذُنُوبِكُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ مِمَّنْ خَلَقَ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ

“The Jews and the Christians say, ‘We are Allah’s children and His beloved ones.’ Say, ‘Then why does He punish you for your sins?’ Rather you are humans from among His creatures. He forgives whomever He wishes, and punishes whomever He wishes. To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them. And to Him is the return.” (Al-Maidah, 5: 18)



This sad end, which Christians have wound up in, is due to the fact that just like the Jews, they corrupted the divine word in line with their own desires and humanized its content. This not only appeared more attractive to their egos, it also gave them a chance to legitimize their sins by incorporating them into their sacred book. Naturally, however, this has come at the expense of their eternal happiness in the hereafter. How sad is the situation of the People of the Book, mired so deep in perversion that even the arrival of the Final Messenger (saw) could not wake them up!

A group of priests from Najran once came to the Prophet (saw) and said:

“Since the Qur’an accepts that Jesus was born without a father, he must be god!”

It was then that the Almighty revealed the verse of *mubalahah*, which is the act of cursing one another to reveal who is right:

فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ
وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ

“Should anyone argue with you concerning Jesus, after the knowledge that has come to you, say, ‘Come! Let us call our sons and yours, our women and yours, our souls and yours, then let us pray earnestly and call down Allah’s curse upon the liars.’ (Al-i Imran, 3: 61)

The Prophet (saw) then offered to proceed with the act but the Christians of Najran refused. They signed a pact, where they agreed to enter Muslim protection and returned to their land.

Allah (jj) also cautions:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ

“People of the Book! Why do you defy Allah’s signs while you are witness to them?” (Al-i Imran, 3: 70)

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

“People of the Book! Why do you mix the truth with falsehood, and conceal the truth while you know it?” (Al-i Imran, 3: 71)

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ تَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا وَأَنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءُ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

“Say, ‘People of the Book! Why do you bar the faithful from the way of Allah, seeking to make it crooked, while you are witnesses to its truth? And Allah is not oblivious to what you do.’ (Al-i Imran, 3: 99)

The ‘truth’ the Qur’an says Christians are well aware of, is the fact that their religion is corrupted and subverted, for which reason Allah (jj) has sent the Qur’an as the final word and Prophet Muhammed (saw) as the final messenger. Although they keep this knowledge a secret, the Almighty unravels it as follows:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِنْهُمْ لَيَكْتُمُونَ الْحَقَّ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

“Those whom We have given the Book recognize him just as they recognize their sons. Yet, some of them conceal the truth while they know.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 146)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَى مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ

“Indeed those who conceal what We have sent down of manifest proofs and guidance, after We have clarified it in the Book for mankind, will be cursed by Allah and the cursers.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 159)

What a shame it is that Christians and Jews stand so distant from Islam, the only valid religion in the sight of God! But what a bliss it is for those among them who understand the great truth and turn to serving Allah (jj) in the most genuine sense! The Qur'an, in fact, tells us that near the final hour, and with the second coming of Jesus (as), the People of the Book will embrace Islam:

وَأَنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لِيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا

“There is no one among the People of the Book who will not but believe in him before his death. And on the Day of Resurrection, he will be a witness against them.” (Al-Nisa, 3: 159)

The only reason why today's Christians are unable to abandon their false path, are the current Bibles. Their authors have transformed the true, original Gospel to such an extent that the Almighty states:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُوبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ
ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ

“So woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say, ‘This is from Allah,’ so that they may sell it for a paltry gain. So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 79)

Interfering in the content of a divine book -which they have committed- is a strict ban that even prophets are not allowed breach. Even to the Prophet (saw) received this divine edict:

وَلَوْ وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ لَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ ثُمَّ
لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ

“Had he faked any sayings in Our name, We would have surely seized him by the right hand and then cut off his aorta, and none of you could have held Us off from him.” (Al-Haqqah, 69: 44-47)

At the same time, by stating:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ

“Indeed, the only religion with Allah is Islam.” (Al-i Imran, 3: 19) Allah (jj) has willed for the final religion to be valid until the Day of Judgment. There will be no more religions after Islam. The Holy Qur'an is therefore protected from human intervention, as expressed in the verse:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

“Indeed, We have sent down the Reminder, and indeed We will preserve it.”

(Al-Hijr, 15: 9)

The Nature of the Four Gospels

The Gospel Allah (jj) revealed to Jesus (as) was certainly the truth, and is among the ‘divine books’ all Muslims must believe in as part of the declaration of creed (*amantu*). Regarding many verses of the Qur’an, the Almighty declares He had made similar revelations in the Torah and the Gospel. Therefore, like the Qur’an, the Gospel was a divine book of guidance.

Yet, as discussed earlier, the Christian Church has seriously pruned the life and teachings of Jesus (as). The first part of the tree it chopped was the trunk itself. Monotheism was entirely removed from Christianity.

Contrary to Islam and what most Christians imagine, revelation in Christianity consists of testimonies by certain people that have been passed on in an indirect manner. Even Christian scholars admit that Christianity lacks any eyewitness knowledge from the time of Jesus (as).

One of the biggest problems of the Bible is the fact that the Old Testament, which comprises the books before the time of Jesus (as), was originally written in Hebrew, while the language of the New Testament is Greek; even though that, too, was originally Hebrew. While the Greek translations exist, the Hebrew original of the Bible is missing. So, how could one be sure that the translations have been loyal to the original, which they claim to be based on but which is nowhere to be seen?

With the exception of Matthew, the oldest copies of the gospels are in Greek. Christian sources, however, say Jesus (as) spoke in Hebrew and Aramaic, and gave his sermons in those languages. In light of this fact, should not the original copies of the Bible have at least been written in a language native to Jesus (as)? Neither today’s gospels, nor the words of Jesus (as) himself, are written in his native tongue.

Looking at how the first Hebrew copies of the Bible were lost and the remaining editions were translated into Greek and quickly destroyed; and how these were later merged with a new Greek translation of the Old Testament, clearly shows the extent of Greek influence on early Christianity. With this being the case, Greek culture took hold of Christianity as much as Greek philosophy, corrupting it and changing its original monotheistic direction in line with its own mentality. It is for that reason that the Qur’an says:

“So woe to those who write the Book with their hands...and woe to them for what they earn!” (Al-Baqarah, 79)

It is for the same reason that there are chasms between the current gospels and positive science. When Galileo spoke of the earth's rotation based on the idea he received from the works of Muslim scientists, the Church reacted to it, as it contradicted the information given in the Bible. Galileo was told:

“Recant your words or face death!”

After being threatened with his life only because he spoke the truth, a helpless Galileo simply said:

“Have it your way”, as he quietly murmured:

“But the earth is still moving!”

Due to these chasms, and perhaps from an urgency to hide the Bible's contradictions, handbooks about Christianity usually come in selected pieces. The Bible is almost never read from start to end. Various Christian sects and communities even pick and choose the books they read. This fact alone is enough to logically convince any person with common sense that there is nothing authentic about the Bible.

E. Jacob says the flow of stories in the Bible gradually start to resemble fables. Maurice Bucaille writes:

“The Bible consists of what people, who have changed the scripture as they wished, wanted to hand down to us. Hence, it does not even dwell on the most fundamental questions pertaining to how the books were written. It simply glosses over them. Like an object put through a sieve, these books were many times subjected to human intervention. And the innumerable factual errors are never analyzed but passed over in silence. How painful it is for a ‘sacred book’ to ignore something that cannot be condoned even in a book written by a human!”

Even though many people may not admit to it, it suffices for the Almighty to declare that the Gospel He sent has been corrupted. Not only does the Almighty state this fact, He also warns Muslims against falling into the same error:

مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيعًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ

“...of those who split up their religion and became sects: each faction exulting in what it possessed.” (Al-Rum, 30: 32)

It is understood from this that as is the case with all divine religions and books sent prior to Islam, Christians have corrupted and distorted the religion and the Gospel Allah (jj) had handed down to Jesus (as). Therefore, the present four gospels have nothing to do with the original Gospel, as we shall see.

Matthew

As a Jew who collected tax on behalf of the Roman Empire, Matthew wrote his gospel for Christians of Jewish origin. It is said that he wrote it around the year 65 CE. In a way, the gospel was penned to prove that Jesus (as) marked the completion of the history of Israel. A group of researchers, however, argue that gospel's author was not Matthew but an anonymous Palestinian Jew. A closer inspection does show that the gospel is more a reflection a Judaic system of thought than it is of Christianity.

Further, the Gospel of Matthew takes as its source the Gospel of Mark, who was not an apostle. It is really senseless for Matthew, who is regarded as an apostle, to benefit from a gospel written by a person who was not. A. Tricot comments:

“The Gospel of Matthew is dressed in Greek clothes, while its flesh, bones and spirit is Jewish. The traces of Judaism are plain to see; and they form the book's distinctive characteristic.”

Mark

Mark had, at first, written a shorter gospel, which he later expanded. Afterward, however, three quarters of it was lost, and Mark rewrote the gospel based on his previous collections. Considering this fact, it is quite futile for Christian scholars to try to give credibility to Mark's gospel by citing him as a student of both Peter and Paul.

There are also serious questions about the author. Some believe the gospel was written, not by Mark, but by Peter.

The fact is Mark never saw Jesus (as). What he wrote is basically what he could remember from what he had heard about him. These writings are disorganized and blemished with many flaws. The content and structure of his sentences lack the least concern for chronology.

About the author of this gospel, believed to have been written between 63-70 CE, M.P. Roguet says:

“Mark is a novice writer. Of all the authors of the gospel, he is the most banal.”

Luke

Luke was a doctor by profession. He is also the author of the book titled ‘Acts of the Apostles’.

Luke wrote his gospel for the Greeks. However, the gospel is riddled with serious historical errors. In writing his gospel, Luke made use of Mark, as well as other

manmade works, including oral sources; and added a number of stories. For that reason, M.P. Kannengiesser calls him 'a true novelist!'

Being a man of Greek origin, Luke describes Jesus (as) in the manner of a Greek historian speaking about a Greek hero; and adopts a novelist approach, which instantly give his gospel away as a manmade work. Thus, the Gospel of Luke is another attempt for human effort to replace divine revelation.

John

It is claimed that this fourth gospel was penned by John, the son of apostle Zebedee and Salome. Yet, based on the logic of the Alexandrian school -again rooted in Greek philosophy- which is visible throughout the work, researchers believe its author was another person by the name of John. Otherwise, it would be a stretch to think that apostle John would have been trained in Greek philosophy and reflected this influence onto the Bible. Moreover, the fact that the gospel sets out to prove Jesus' divinity, also shows that he could not have been an apostle.

The Gospel of John is believed to have been written between 90-110 CE. As is the case with the others, it is impossible to find in it any trace of revelation. It quotes the apostles as referring to Jesus as 'the Lord!' In this regard, John comes across as a person who takes up where Paul the Jew left off in distorting Christianity. Thus, P. Roquet says:

"Whereas the synoptic gospels (the first three gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, which resemble one another) relay the words of Jesus in a striking and conversational manner, every theme in the Gospel of John is drowned in the author's contemplation. At times, this reaches such a point that we are forced to ask, 'Is it really Jesus who is speaking, or is the author stealthily expounding his words?'"



A number of Christian scholars have also confessed to these oddities in the Bible.

Tauste, who lived around the 3rd century and subscribed to the Manawiyah school, has said the following on the issue of the Bible's authorship:

"Everybody knows that the Bible was written neither by Jesus (as) nor the apostles, but much later by anonymous authors. People are also aware that because these authors knew no one would believe them talking about events they never saw, they added the names of apostles or their disciples for credibility."

The Qur'an declares that although now lost, this is definitely not the Gospel revealed to Jesus (as), which was a book of guidance and advice for the righteous:

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
 مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
 مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

“And We followed them with Jesus son of Mary, to confirm the Torah before him. And We gave him the Gospel containing guidance and light, confirming the Torah before, and as guidance and advice for the pious.” (Al-Maidah, 5: 46)

The Almighty also assures that the People of the Book will be saved by embracing Islam, which He has sent to compensate for the distortion of their religions, and by observing His commands:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَكَفَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ
 سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأَدْخَلْنَاَهُمْ جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ

“Had the People of the Book believed and feared, We would surely have absolved them of their misdeeds and admitted them into gardens of bliss.” (Al-Maidah, 5: 65)



As mentioned before, apart from these four, there is another famous gospel known as the Gospel of Barnabas. Barnabas was a leading apostle of Jesus (as) and subscribed to *tawhid*. Thus, great battles took place between the monotheist Barnabists and the trinitarian Paulists.

The main points that set the Gospel of Barnabas apart from the others, are:

1. Jesus (as) is neither God nor the Son of God. He is a prophet sent by the Almighty.
2. The son Abraham (as) wanted to sacrifice was not Isaac (as) but Ismail (as).
3. Jesus (as) was not crucified on the cross.
4. The awaited Messiah is the *Paraclete*, who is Prophet Muhammed Mustafa (saw).

Contradictions in the Four Gospels

Before delving into this issue, let us remind that of all the religions on earth, only Islam holds that Jesus (as) was born without a father from a devout and virgin mother. Prophet Muhammed Mustafa (saw) also taught his companions that Jesus (as) was a great prophet sent to guide people out of the swamp of ignorance. Islam

has never attacked the true religion conveyed by Jesus (as). Much to the contrary, it has commanded the need to believe in and respect Jesus (as), his mother Mary (as) and the true Gospel he received. However, this acceptance and respect is valid only for the original, uncorrupted form of Jesus' (as) religion.

Following this short reminder, we may now proceed to examine the current gospels, which have lost their original nature:

Jesus (as) neither saw nor commanded the writing of the four gospels. No two scholars even agree on the dates of their authorship. Therefore, the countless errors, contradictions and distortions do not go unnoticed. Human intervention has combed out all traces of the sublime; and the gospels are consequently filled with obscure and conflicting information.

Some of the most striking ones are as follows:

- The four gospels recount the same events many times over, with at times the same gospel retelling the exact event twice or three times, with all of the versions contradicting one another. It is evident that the Almighty would not give such false, conflicting reports.

- Whereas the gospels of Mark and John do not speak of Jesus' (as) genealogy, Matthew and Luke do. But while Matthew counts 40 people from Jesus (as) to Abraham (as), Luke counts 55. Moreover, Luke adds another 20 people up to Adam (as). As for Matthew, he gives no information about the genealogy of Jesus (as) prior to Abraham (as). (Matthew, 1/17; Luke, 3/23-38)

It is not a simple case of Matthew forgetting to mention the 15 names Luke did. A closer look at the names listed in both these gospels easily shows that they are all different; and in some cases, the same names appear in different slots.

These are serious contradictions that cannot be tolerated even in books authored by humans. What should we make of the fact people today uncritically believe in these gospels, when people of yesteryear would ask prophets for more miracles, despite seeing them and their divine books in the flesh?

- According to Matthew, Prophet John (as) is Elijah. The Gospel of John, however, says he is not. (John, 1/21)

- There are different reports as to whether John (as) ever met Jesus (as). While the gospels of Matthew and Mark give detailed accounts of his martyrdom, John's gospel passes over it in one or two sentences. (John, 19/28-30; Matthew, 27/32-56; Mark, 15/33-41)

- There are entirely different reports between the Gospel of John and others as to how Jesus (as) met the apostles and took them by his side. (Luke, 5/1-17; John, 1/35-51; Mathew, 4/18-22)

- There are also conflicting reports regarding the ethnicity of the woman in Tyre and Sidon, who asks Jesus (as) to cure her bewitched daughter. Matthew says she is from Canaan (Matthew, 15/21-22), while Mark holds she is Greek (Mark, 7/26). It is bizarre to think that the Almighty, free of all deficiencies, would confuse the birth-place of a person He created, when even a person herself would not.

This shows the Bible is full of information which different authors, unaware of each other, have cobbled together in line with their cultural levels and personal desires.

- Despite the gospels associating Jesus (as) with divinity, they also refer him as a 'son of man' and 'a servant of God.' (Matthew, 12/17-18; Acts, 3/13, 4/27-28) How can it be explained that person is, at once, 'a son of God' and a human? In that case, humans must equal God, which is too absurd to even debate. God is the Creator, while humans are the created.

Aware of this problem, Christians ignorantly argue that the Biblical term 'son of God' refers to how God became incarnate in Jesus (as), settled in his body and, through it, appeared to other humans, for which reason Jesus supposedly became god. Even giving this the slightest consideration is incompatible with the quality of Allah (jj) as the greatest and beyond any need.

Again, the gospels also refer to others as 'children of god.' For example, Jesus allegedly tell his apostles:

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Matthew, 5/9)

This superstition of 'God the Father' that has crept into Christian culture, is so blatantly false that no curtain of interpretation could possibly veil it. On the other hand, Christians use this expression to claim supremacy over all other people.

The Almighty, however, responds to them with the words:

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى نَحْنُ أَبْنَاءُ اللَّهِ وَأَحِبَّاؤُهُ قُل فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ
بِذُنُوبِكُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ
وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ

"The Jews and the Christians say, 'We are Allah's children and His beloved ones.' Say, 'Then why does He punish you for your sins?' Rather you are humans

from among His creatures. He forgives whomever He wishes, and punishes whomever He wishes. To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them. And to Him is the return.” (Al-Maidah, 5: 18)



The Bible's list of contradictions goes on and on.

- All the four gospels detail the events that unfolded on the night Jesus (as) was arrested. Yet, the account of one belies the others, presenting great variations and contradictions. (Matthew, 26/47-56; Mark, 14/13-52; Luke, 22/47-53)

- Luke notes Heli as the father of Mary's husband, Joseph; while according to Matthew, it was Jacob. (Luke, 3/23; Matthew, 1/16)

- While Matthew, Mark and Luke say Jesus (as) was baptized by John (as), the Gospel of John makes no mention of it. (Matthew, 3/17; Mark, 1/9-12; Luke, 3/21-22)

- Matthew, Mark and Luke cite Jesus' (as) birthplace as Galilee, whereas John says it is Judea. (Matthew, 13/54-58; Mark, 6/4; Luke, 6/29; John, 4/3, 43, 45)

- The Gospels of Matthew and Mark say Jesus' (as) duty began after John (as) was imprisoned. However, the Gospel of John says it started before. (Matthew, 4/12-17; Mark, 1/14-15; John, 3/22-26, 4/1-3)

- Another set of contradictions in the Bible involves the conflicting information given about Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion, burial, resurrection, appearance to the apostles and ascension to the heavens, which make it impossible to classify it as a divine book. (Matthew, 27-28; Mark, 15-16; Luke, 23-24; John, 19-20)

- Also, according to the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, while being taken to the cross, Jesus (as) yelled:

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew, 27: 46; Mark, 15/34) A prophet could not have said these words, as they, in a way, show attitude towards the Lord.

- Jesus is taken captive by demons on reaching Gadara, where according to Matthew, he encounters two mad men. Luke says it was just one. (Matthew, 2/28; Mark, 5/1-2; Luke, 8/27-29)

- When Jews ask Jesus (as) for the sign of Jonah (as), Mark quotes him as replying that ‘they shall never be given any sign.’ Yet, according to Matthew, he says ‘they will be given a sign.’ (Matthew, 12/38-41; Mark, 8/11-12)

This is a religion stuck between as many details as historians! And such is today's Christianity!

The Reason why Jesus was Crucified According to Christians

Christians believe that by eating the forbidden fruit in paradise, Adam (as) and Eve committed the original sin. (Genesis, 2/34) God, therefore, sentenced all their descendants to burn in hell. Yet, because Jesus (as) had mercy on humans, he shouldered the sins of all humankind by sacrificing himself on the cross. With it, humanity was relieved of the sin it had inherited. (Epistle to the Romans, 3/23-26)

The Qur'an, however, tells us this could not be further from the truth:

وَبِكْفُرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيمًا وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَىٰ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا

“And for their faithlessness, their monstrous slander against Mary and for saying, ‘We killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the prophet of Allah!’. They neither killed nor crucified him, but that is how it was made to appear to them. Those who differ concerning him are surely in doubt about him. They have no knowledge of it beyond conjecture. And they certainly did not kill him.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 156-157)

بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا

“Rather Allah raised him up toward Himself. And Allah is the Mighty, the Wise.” (Al-Nisa, 4: 158)

Be that as it may, how bizarre is it to believe that, to quell His anger, God would kill His own son for a fruit his ancestor ate. It is to make someone else pay for a crime, when the Almighty says he will not punish a person for the sins of another. The fact that such a belief exists in a religion originally sent by the Lord, only goes to show that it has become corrupted. Moreover, missionaries today invite people to Christianity by inately arguing ‘Jesus died on the cross for our sins’, which is nothing but to make a deformed religion look and sound appealing.

Still, it must be asked that given that Christians consider even the consumption of a forbidden fruit a sin against humanity, how do they possibly approve their crimes against human dignity and which are too disgraceful to even mention? On top of many examples throughout history, there is the recent Bosnian genocide and other similar massacres, which Christians watched on in silence, along with the Vatican and other clerical institutions. How can this attitude be reconciled with being followers of a prophet of mercy like Jesus (as)? Are they not sinning when

they slash the bellies of pregnant women or kill children just because they are different to them?

Jesus (as) was a great prophet with an exceptional standing among people and in the sight of the Lord; and who was sent to convey beautiful morals. Therefore, for Allah (as) to consign a prophet He loved to a punishment like crucifixion, is impossible to even consider, let alone believe. On another level, it also ignorantly accuses the Almighty of tyranny, which is absurd. The fact is Allah (jj) has promised His prophets many sublime ranks and rewards. Besides, if Jesus (as) was really God as they claim, would it be reasonable to think that a god would be so helpless as to allow a few people to hang him on the cross?

When we refer the claim that Jesus (as) burdened the sins of others back to divine ruling, we are met with the truth in all its clarity:

مَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرُ
وَأَزْرَةَ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا

“Whoever is guided is guided only for the good of his own soul, and whoever goes astray, goes astray only to its detriment. No bearer shall bear another’s burden. We do not punish any community until We have sent it a prophet.” (Al-Isra, 17: 15)

Given the verse states that not even a sinner is burdened with the sins of another, how contrary to divine justice and even illogical is it to claim that an innocent person has shouldered the sins of entire humanity? Who would want to be responsible for a sin he has nothing to do with?



On the issue of Adam (as) approaching the forbidden tree in paradise, the truth is that the act was a blunder; in other words, an involuntary error. In a way, it occurred as part of divine will. The Almighty had willed for Adam (as) and Eve to descend on earth, which was created for humankind, and for human species to multiply and prevail there until the Day of Judgment. The Lord wanted those able to refine their spirits to eventually return to paradise from which Adam (as) had come, and for those tricked by their egos to accompany the devil in hell.

The Prophet (saw) explains this divine will below:

“Adam (as) and Moses (as) had an argument. Moses (as) said to Adam (as):

‘Are you not the one who committed the sin that had humankind expelled from paradise and thrown into misery?’

Adam (as) replied:

'Remain the person who Allah chose as prophet and spoke to...and do not blame me for a thing Allah willed for me to do before I was ever created!'

Moses (as) was silenced." (Bukhari, Qadar, 11; Muslim, Qadar, 13)

On the other hand, both Adam (as) and our mother Eve repented with the words:

قَالَ رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

"Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves! If You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers." (Al-Araf, 7: 23) And through it, they were graced and forgiven.

With that divine pardon, not only did Adam (as) become sinless, he was also honored with prophethood, the highest and nearest rank to the Lord, which is received only through divine grace and not gained through personal effort.

In short, it is impossible for man to inherit a forgiven sin, when even an unforgiven sin is not inherited! Besides, sins that are forgiven through sincere repentance are converted, through divine grace, into rewards. The Qur'an states:

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

"Except those who repent, attain faith, and act righteously. For such, Allah will replace their misdeeds with good deeds, and Allah is the Forgiving, the Compassionate." (Al-Furqan, 25: 70)



All the divine books Allah (as) has sent to humankind have the quality of being 'clear' (*mubin*). This is made obvious by the last of them, the Holy Qur'an. It insistently repeats the word 'clear' to draw attention to this fact. Yet, it is impossible to notice a similar clarity in the Bible. It was obscured to the point of necessitating the revelation of the Qur'an.

Each of the Bible's contradictions gives plenty of insight into whether it is the product of divine revelation. All people of sound mind can grasp that God would not send His servant a book so murky and laced with deficiencies, when He Himself is free of all deficiencies and has power over everything. Allah (jj) is the Transcendent (*Subhan*) who does not admit any shortcomings.

The fact is that almost immediately after Jesus (as), Christianity was corrupted. It quickly lost its quality of being a true religion, and assumed a pagan character instead.

The very pagan motif of a 'crucified folk hero' was applied to Jesus (as), and the centerpiece of the story, the cross, became a sacred symbol. The cross existed in the pagan beliefs of Europe long before Christianity.

During the first years of Christianity, January 1st was not marked as the start of the new year. Pagans celebrated new year on various dates between December 24th and January 6th. This influenced Christianity; and on the back of a claim regarding the birthdate of Jesus (as), it adopted a new calendar starting from January 1st. This date was thereafter celebrated as the beginning of the new year.

The kings and emperors of Rome and Greece had the sole desire of becoming gods after death. This was also applied to Jesus (as). The Bibles portrayed him as a legendary hero who reached the status of god.

In brief, the Bibles entwine the words of God with the words, as well as superstitions, of men.

The Jews, who were materialist from the beginning, distorted the monotheist belief Jesus (as) had brought. This, to them, came naturally, as they were people who rarely minded being burdens on their own prophets or trying to manipulate them for their personal interests and welfare.



It should be remembered that just as Moses (as) and the Torah were shining lights on the path of guidance, so was Jesus (as) and the Gospel for as long as they lasted; and now, so is Prophet Muhammed (saw) and the Qur'an. What is certain is that if a legislator who makes a ruling at one point in time and then later overrides that with another ruling, it is always the final ruling that is valid. For example, in the time of Moses (as), people would not have been obeying Allah (jj) if they adhered not to what was revealed to Moses (as) but to that which was revealed to Abraham (as). On the contrary, they would have been rebelling against Him. As Allah (jj) has sent Islam as a final religion and willed for it to be last until the end of time, that leaves the Qur'an as the only divine book still valid.

The source of all divine books is the One and Only Allah (jj). All prophets came with the same purpose, confirming the prophets before them and giving news of the prophets to come. The Prophet of Islam Muhammed (saw) also affirmed the prophets before him but also conveyed the message that Islam is the final religion, he is the final prophet and the Qur'an is the final book.

The Prophet (saw) has said:

“Among all people, I am the closest to Mary’s son Jesus, both in this life and the next. Between him and I, there are no prophets. Prophets are brothers. They are brothers from different mothers but the same father. Their religion is also one.

“Whoso among you gets to meet him (near the final hour when comes back down), send him my greetings.” (Jam’ul-Fawaid, V, 16)



In stark contrast to today’s Church, Jesus (as) led a simple and ascetic life. He set himself apart with a focus on cleansing the ego and refining the heart, which can be summarized as leading a spiritual life away from worldly desires that appeal to the ego; as well as his sublime morals, mercy and a promotion of brotherhood.

‘Loving for Allah and hating for Allah’ is one of the most distinct features of the Sufi way. And it was revealed to Jesus (as):

“If you were to offer the worship of every being in the heavens and on earth, they will be of no benefit to you unless you loved for Me and hated for Me!”

Our deeds and conduct are perfect only to the extent of our spiritual depth. In other words, we must love for the sake of Allah (as) and dislike only for His sake.

Jesus (as) has said:

“Become the friends of Allah by becoming the enemies of rebels! Get close to Allah by keeping a distance from rebels; and gain Allah’s pleasure by hating them!”

Oh Lord! Grant us the ability to know the truth and seize it, to know the false and avoid it; and grace us by turning us into Your righteous servants immersed in Your blessings in the gardens of Your pleasure, in both this world and the next!

Amin...



EXILE

The Sufi path is mostly a path of exile (*ghurbah*). Yet, the estrangement and loneliness people feel towards one another takes them closer to the Lord.

Aspects of exile and estrangement appear in the lives of Zechariah (as), his son John (as), as well as Jesus (as). The fact that their followers were only a few, and that two of them were martyred by the people they were trying to guide, while the other faced attempted murder, meant they underwent a tough exile in their own homeland. Yet, at the same time, this estrangement enabled them to lead such sincere and selfless lives that they ended up among the other prophets Allah (jj) has forever hailed: Zechariah (as) and John (as) until the day they were martyred, and Jesus (as) until the day he was raised to the heavens.

This idea of loneliness and exile ascribed to prophets finds an interesting expression in the hadith below. The Prophet (saw) says:

“Count yourself as a traveler on this earth.” (Bukhari, Riqaq, 3; Tirmiz, Zuhd, 25)

“Good news to the estranged!” (Muslim, Iman, 232)



Through spiritual circles (*suhbah*) divine remembrance (*dhikr*), self-denial (*riyazah*) and sincerity (*ikhlas*), Sufism aims to ripen the sublime qualities innate to man's natural predisposition, and transform him from rawness to maturity. Still, humans come with different aptitudes; and the Sufi method of letting man in on the mystery behind the human being and matter does not have the same effect on all. Yet, despite a difference of degree, there are some tendencies that all individuals share. One of them is the inner desire to return from this land of exile to the land of origin.

Thus, through *dhikr*, Sufism also seeks to raise man's desire and search for reuniting with his Lord in that peaceful clime prior to his physical creation, from his subconscious to his conscious mind. This marks the pinnacle of spiritual maturity; and the Qur'an tells us how to get there:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Know that only in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.” (Al-Rad, 13: 28)

This state of mind most beautifully appears in the *insan-i kamil*, the spiritually perfect human being. This is a person, who has unraveled the mystery of:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

“We surely belong to Allah, and to Him we shall return.” (Al-Baqarah, 2: 156)

Once man and jinn begin to severely desire this return to origin, because they have been created with higher levels of cognition, the feeling becomes a source of pain and anguish. After that point, a person is reminded at every breath that he is indeed in exile.

As beings pass through various stages beginning from their point of origin, exile manifests differently at each phase. For example, man was first in the realm of spirits. He then departed into the mother’s womb. He also changes places during his stay on earth. From there, he departs to the grave. And finally, he returns to his Lord.

The poet must have felt this feeling of exile deep within his heart, when he described some of its phases below:

*From one stage you see the sun and the sea
And you see both worlds from another
The final stage is an autumn, and it lasts
Where past and future is all but a dream*

In light of all that we have just said, exile is something that is intertwined; it comes in stages and layers. The only way to eliminate it is to retrace all the middle stages back to the first point, to the Lord. Reuniting with the Lord is how one can relieve the deepest yearning caused by exile, which gives the spirit the acutest pain. Even though they may not have come to terms with this greater longing and spiritual anguish, people who have had to leave their villages and towns for foreign lands, still carry a sense of exile deep in their subconscious. Only saints endowed with a high level cognition grasp this spiritual pain, and live only with the concern of divine reunion, without the least worry for all those middle stages. Junayd Baghdadi thus defines Sufism as:

“...for the Real to kill you in yourself, and revive you through Himself.”

The most beautiful manifestation of this state of mind is for the servant to decrypt the secret of being with the Lord and continually persist in His remembrance.

Dhikr is not just to repeat Allah’s (jj) names. It is to become truly aware of Allah (jj), and for divine manifestations to take hold of the heart and envelop one’s entire existence.

Persisting with *dhikr* carries a person to such a level that the truth of the *dhikr* becomes one with the truth of man's creation. A person becomes a mirror of the *dhikr* he repeats. The truth of *dhikr* is beyond letters, words or sound. And the essence of the heart, as it comes from the Lord, is subtle, beyond the flesh. Once the *dhikr* and the heart become abstracted from matter, they become one and realize unity (*tawhid*) in the truest sense. There, the heart reaches nothingness. Everything is erased apart from the gist of the *dhikr*, who is the Lord. At this station, the heart becomes the focal point for the divine names to appear; and like a lens that burns everything under it by drawing in the rays of the sun, the heart burns everything else apart from the Lord (*masiwa*). This is the state of *fana*, annihilation. This is where mortals make way for the Immortal (*Baki*). This is the stage of contentment, of peace.



It was this freedom from the exile of earth and attaining reunion that made Rumi (qs) describe death as 'the wedding night.'

One of the most important qualities of saints is that they burnt with a longing in this land of exile, which took them to true immortality. Rumi (qs) says not even death is enough to quell the intensity of this fire:

"After I die, open my grave and see the smoke that rises out of my shroud from the fire deep inside!"

A saint whose face was aglow despite being on his deathbed, was asked:

"How can you smile when you are about to die?"

He replied:

"My entire body has now merged into my lips. And my lips now beam with a different smile!"

A moth longs for light. It is not just a simple butterfly. It is also called a 'propeller,' as its longing makes it spin around the light. The moment it sees the light, it is drawn to it and loses all its willpower. It crashes into the light and is burnt. It may seem though it is gone; but it has now reached reunion.

Rumi (qs) has said:

"It is impossible to taste divine love without incinerating the flesh!".

Following a deep spiritual turbulence, Hallaj-i Mansur began to yearn for death, and said:

"In death lies my revival, my life and reunion!"

Going by these profound manifestations, exile is:

Separation from the Creator.

A fire inside the heart.

Burning with longing.

And loneliness.

This is because man is on an eternal journey. This journey began in the spiritual realm prior to physical creation and proceeded through to earth, the land of exile. Subsequently, his free spirit fell captive to the body and the five senses. Yet, his separation from the source has resulted in a longing and desire to return to the place of origin. And depending on the distance he has covered, his cognition becomes clear, whereby the longing and desire to return becomes more intense. This means that the human being is always estranged and ever in exile.

Exile has many types:

For prophets and saints, there is a second exile beyond the exile of earth; and that is the pain of separation from companions. It was decreed that Jacob (as) and Joseph (as) undergo severe pangs of separation, for their bond with the Lord to become even stronger; so that they constantly turned to Him, cut connections with all things else and attained to the highest of spiritual ranks.

This is the wisdom that underlies the fact that all prophets have spent some time in exile, away from their homelands, and experienced the feeling of estrangement in all its forms.

The Prophet (saw) felt the severest kind of exile in Taif. He was stoned and left bloodied. Yet, through his deep compassion, he showed complete patience and consent; and instead of cursing the people of Taif who stoned him, he prayed for their guidance. As a divine reward, he was subsequently taken on the Night Journey, the *Miraj*.

Hence, exile is a window to pain and anguish. That Rumi (qs) begins his sea of wisdom, the *Mathnawi*, with the words:

*Listen to what the reed flute is telling
From the pain of separation it's wailing*

...underlines the weight of estrangement and exile in human life.

For long years, Adam (as) also cried and ached with the pain of longing, for having been separated from paradise, his place of birth, and sent to an exile on earth. That was because his homeland was paradise, near the Lord. In a way, he passed on this feeling of estrangement to his children. The old saying, 'a nightingale in a golden cage still sings songs of home', makes it easier to understand why man moans about being exiled from a sublime realm to a lowly place.

Rumi (qs) explains exile by drawing a resemblance between the human being and the reed flute:

“The reed flute says, ‘Since the day they ripped me out of the marsh, my wails have reduced everyone on earth to tears.’

‘Let separation rip my heart to shreds to it can better express the pain of love!’

‘Whoever falls remote from his origin, will forever wait for the moment of reunion.’

‘I am the crier of all circles, the friend of both saints and sinners.’

‘Everybody thinks they are my friend, and seek to learn something from my words.’

‘My wails, though, expose my secret; but then again, many hearts lack the light to perceive it!’

‘The soul and skin are not hidden to one another. But there is no permission to see the soul.’

‘The sound of the reed flute is fire. Do not think it is a vain song! Shame on anyone who lacks this fire!’”

In a poem, Rumi (qs) also says:

Listen to the reed flute, hear what it’s saying

The secrets of the Lord it is exposing

Its face pale, insides empty, head severed

And to the player’s breath it is deserted

But without words or a tongue

‘Allah, Allah’, it is wailing

The flute reed was ripped out of the marsh where it was raised, and had its chest branded and punctured with holes. It had shackle-like metal rings strapped around its head, feet and between its joints, and imprisoned, for which it dried up and turned pale.

Man is exactly like this. He was sent to this world from his home in the divine realm, constrained to the limits of being human, and had its heart branded and melted with the fire of separation. While this is the reality for all human beings, it only comes to the surface when one attains to the level of *insan-i kamil*, through contemplation and spiritual feeling.

All visible and invisible creatures in the universe receive a certain share of the Almighty’s names. As for human beings, they carry all the manifestation of divine names. Man has attained to the mystery behind the verse, **“I breathed into him My Spirit...”** (Al-Hijr, 15: 29) Hence, he is a wonder of creation, a masterpiece of art. The Almighty’s art, power and creative force is most consummately manifest in

the human being. So, by purifying the dirt and desires of the ego, the human being becomes perfect in the truest sense. Like metal dust close to a magnet, he will begin to feel an intense yearning and desire to return to his land of origin.

This is possible because the spirit of man comes from Allah (jj) and is therefore also endowed with the ability to return to Him. The fuel of this return journey, is love. Love is a fire in the heart that smolders all things other than Allah (jj). Through this fire does the desire rise for man to return to where he came from. His excitement and wish for his Lord surges, and his yearning gains force.

Rumi (qs) beautifully explains Bilal's (ra) desire to leave this world of exile and reunite with his Lord:

"Bilal (ra) had become thin like a crescent. Death had cast its color and shadow on his face. His wife could not stand seeing him like this.

'Oh no, my house is destroyed' she said.

'No, no, do not say that', Bilal replied. 'This is the time to rejoice. My house is now built!'

He added:

'Until now, I have lived with the sorrow of earth, of the exile of being away from the Lord!'

As Bilal said these words, his face was blooming with daffodils, roses and tulips. His already bright face was even more aglow.

But seeing Bilal's breath shorten and his energy decrease, his wife said:

'My good-willed, honest Bilal! So, now is the time to say goodbye!'

But Bilal replied:

'No, no! Now is the time to reunite! Now is the time for this longing and exile to end!'

She said:

'Tonight is the night you will go into exile and disappear from your family and children!'

Bilal said:

'No, tonight is perhaps the night my spirit returns home!'

She asked, 'So, we will no longer see your face?'

He said, 'If you look high enough, you will see my face among the Lord's true servants! Do not look down; that is where the ugly faces of the dirty world are!'

His wife again said, 'Woe to me, my home is destroyed!'

Bilal, this time, said, 'Look at the spirit, not the flesh! I had many kids and a small house. Allah has destroyed the house that is my body to make it better and more adorned! If my body is not destroyed, my exile will never end, and I will never be able to return to my land of origin, the land of beauty that contains no nonsense; and I will never be able to reunite with the Absolute Beauty!'"

Saint Aziz Mahmud Hudayi, who lived and breathed this state of mind, articulates his feelings in exile, as:

*What could I do with the world?
All I need is my Lord
No need for anything else
All I need is my Lord*

*Some chase this life
Others pursue the next
All in one love or another
All I need is my Lord*

*Cast out vain desire
Go and seek out the Real
Hudayi's final words are
All I need is my Lord*

Another who came into this land of exile, yet did not get caught up in its fleeting passions and burned instead with the fire of reunion, was Yunus Emre. Like a loyal lover, he did not throw an eye at anyone but the beloved and marveled at how anyone could possibly be fooled by the world. As a result he felt estranged in a land of exile, which he describes as:

*I have come with a wonder
My true state no one knows
I speak but only I listen
My tongue no one knows*



Physically, man is from the earth. He, therefore, lives on earth and feeds from it. Ultimately, he dies and returns to earth, and becomes one with his origin.

Thus, this world is ideally expressed as 'exile'. It has also been famously referred to as a 'guesthouse' to emphasize its fleeting nature. That is because a person in exile

does not necessarily have to return. In contrast, a guest has to sooner or later move on, and the thought of leaving enters the mind as soon as the stay begins.

One day, the Prophet (saw) had slept on a straw mat, which had left marks on his body. The companions thereupon suggested:

“We should at least lay something softer on the mattress.” To this, the Prophet (saw) replied:

“Why would I have anything to do with the world? I am like a traveler who pauses for a shade beneath a tree and then moves on.” (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 3; Ibn Hanbal, I, 39)

At another time, the Prophet (saw) put his hand on Umar’s (ra) shoulder and advised:

“Be on earth like a person estranged or a wayfarer!” (Bukhari, Riqaq, 3; Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 25)

It is due to this reality of exile stressed by the Prophet (saw) that many people with hearts burning for the Lord, have lived like strangers on earth in search for the paths of reunion. The pleas they have made with the love of Allah (jj), such as:

*Let us, Lord, inside the home of heaven
Just to join those who gaze at Your Beauty
...were complemented with their love for the Prophet (saw):
We are burning, Prophet of Allah
Quench us with Your sight*

And these voice the sentiments of all burning hearts.

One of the great Sufi masters of the later period, Esad Erbili makes this passionate plea to his beloved:

*The heart, my beloved, craves a light of your beauty
The eyes, my doctor, some kohl from the dust you tread
No comfort in tears, no answer to heartfelt pleas
My burden of sin needs the grace of the Prophet King
Those in love with you can desire nothing but you
They want neither wealth, nor rank, nor pleasure, nor joy
He begs you to appear in all your splendor for once
A poor Esad, who wants no more than to die for you*



For every mortal born into this world of exile, the last leaf on the calendar of life is death. Those who live like travelers conscious of the fact they have only come into this world to ultimately go, try to pass the trials of anguish and sorrow, in anticipation of their eternal rewards. They are always resigned and content in the

face of various experiences this exile presents, whether they be of pleasure or pain. For such fortunate people, death is merely a gate that opens to eternal mercy and reunion with the Lord.

The final mementos of this exile are gravestones. Each tells a different story, articulating many lessons of wisdom.

Once, a woman had died while giving birth, along with her twin babies. Tahiru'l-Mevlevi, a commentator of Rumi's *Mathnawi*, felt moved by the incident, and he found the woman's family. He told them he wished to write a gravestone for the deceased woman and her babies, and penned the following lines:

An Epitaph for a Gravestone

*Death didn't let me hug them just once
With my babies it put me in the grave
To You My Lord I have now come
Holding my orphans by their tiny hands*

This is the reason why the great Rumi depicts life on earth as both an exile and a journey. Life on earth, he says, is fickle, fleeting and deceiving; those who rest their hopes on it will inevitably be disappointed. Based on the limited nature of life, Rumi also likens it to a guesthouse. He even says the spirit is a guest inside the body, as it only stays there for a certain period.

Thus, it is clear that being a guest takes many shapes and appearances, which are often intertwined. Rumi elaborates this through his style of wisdom, pointing to how opposites, in this universe, exist together, entwined:

"Take note, young man. This skin is a guesthouse. Every morning, your guests joy and sorrow come running to it.

Rest at ease. Do not ever think these guests will stay for good! Joy and sorrow will check out to nothingness. They are not immortal.

Whatever comes from the unseen arrives as a guest in your heart. Treat it kindly. Do not be saddened by sorrow, or elated from joy.

The thought of sorrow blocks the path to joy. It does not care! But the reality is, sorrow itself opens the road to a joy of a much different kind.

Ideas and sorrow sweep the home of the heart of other kinds of sadness. All the way until new goodness and joy arrive inside the heart.

The hand of sorrow shakes yellow leaves off the branch of your heart. All the way until green leaves burst one after another.

Whatever sorrow sheds from the heart, it always replaces it with something better."

In his poem titled 'Exile', which he wrote during the time he spent away from his homeland, contemporary poet Kadir Misiroglu voices this reality as:

... ..

*Not at home but at the Lord
The land of peace
Does exile end
The inevitable
But until then
Ebbs and flows
Of all sorts*

... ..

*There's a famous saying
Stop! Don't waste a breath
Allah is enough
The rest is whim*

**Lord! Grant us a mindset of reunion in this land of exile! Include us among
Your servants who will gaze at Your Beauty!**



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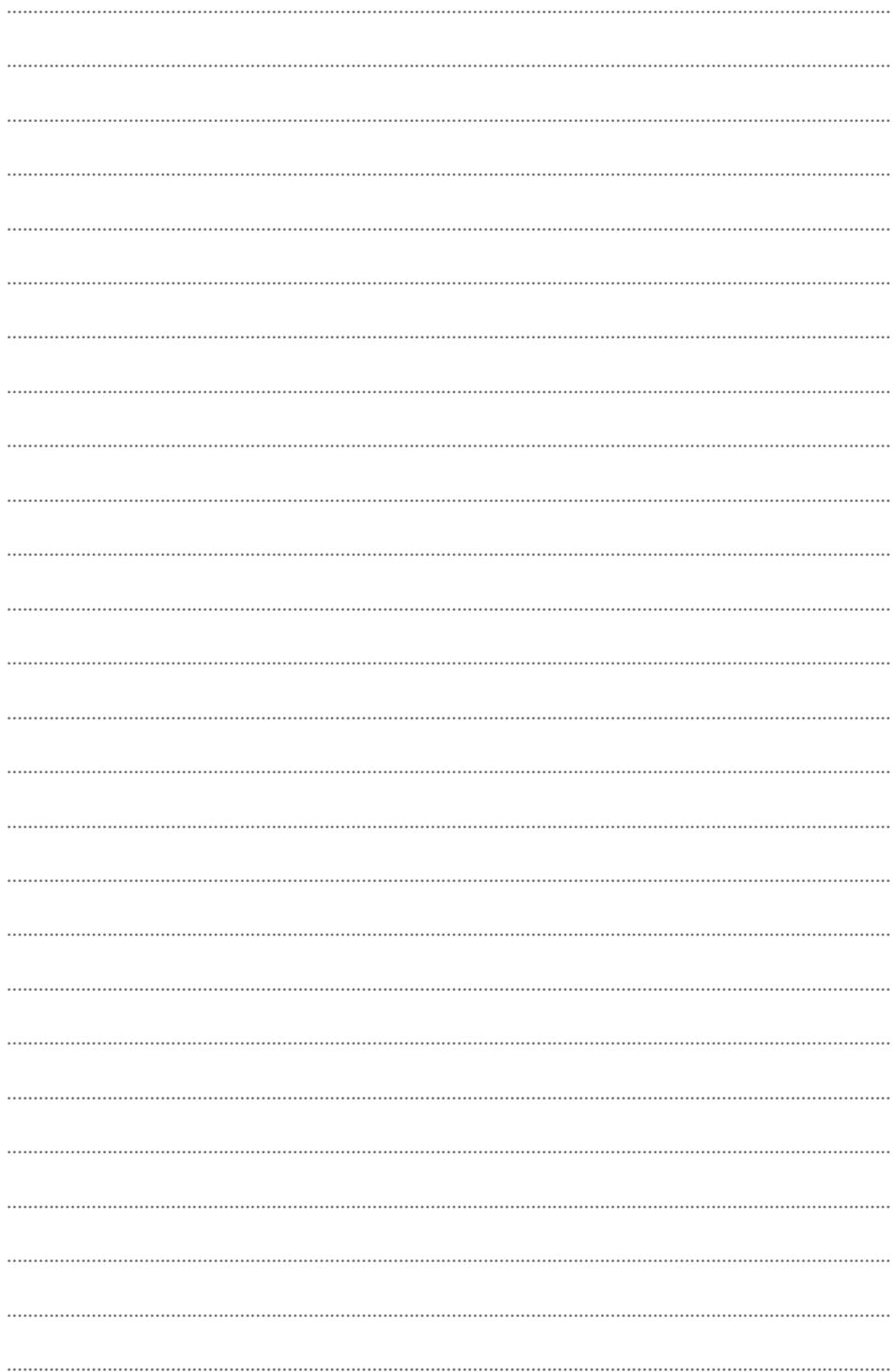
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