

with him. Had Allah not been pleased with him, he would not have had the ability to be pleased with Allah's decree. The true believer's soul is pleased even on his death at the moment of death. Sayyidnā 'Uḅādah Ibn Ṣāmit رضي الله عنه narrated from the Holy Prophet ﷺ, as follows:

من أحب لقاء الله أحب الله لقاءه، ومن كره لقاء الله كره الله لقاءه.

"He who loves to meet Allah, Allah loves to meet him; and he who dislikes to meet Allah, Allah dislikes to meet him."

When Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها heard this, she asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "We will be able to meet Allah only after death, but we do not like death." The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied: "That is not the case. The truth of the matter is that when death approaches a believer, the angels give him the cheerful news of Paradise and Allah's pleasure. This news makes death dearer to him. Likewise, when death approaches an unbeliever, the torment and punishment is presented to him. This situation makes the death a hateful and reprehensible thing to him." [Transmitted by Bukhārī and Muslim - Maḥzarī]. In short, the love and hatred for death of the present time is not counted. What counts is [the love of] death, or [the love of] meeting Allah at the time of the extraction of soul [from the physical body] and [the love of] Allah's pleasure. This is the significance of the phrase: "Well-pleased, well-pleasing"

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي (So, enter among My [special] servants...89:29). In other words, the contented soul will be addressed [compassionately], and first asked to enter the fold of righteous and sincere slaves, and then to enter Paradise. This indicates that entry into Paradise depends on their being, first and foremost, in the fold of the righteous believers. Then they will enter Paradise all together. This shows that joining the company of the righteous in this world is a sign that he will enter Paradise with them. Thus Prophet Sulaimān عليه السلام prayed:

وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ

'...and admit me, by Your mercy, among Your righteous slaves...[27:19]'

Prophet Yūsuf عليه السلام prayed:

وَالْحَقِّنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ

'...and make me join the righteous. [12:101]'

The above supplications indicate that the company of the righteous is such a great blessing that even the Holy Prophets ﷺ cannot do without, as a result they pray for it.

وَادْخُلِيْ جَنَّتِيْ (and enter My Paradise.....89:30). In this verse, Paradise is attributed to Allah, and Allah said 'My Paradise'. This is a great honour, and indicates that Paradise will not only have all sorts of eternal comfort, but above all it is a place of Allah's pleasure.

The preceding verses describe the reward of the believers in such a manner that on behalf of Allah, the angels will address their souls honourably and in a befitting manner, as in the verses. It is not clear when they will be addressed. Some commentators say that they will be addressed on the Day of Reckoning after the reckoning is over. The context of the verses confirms this. The punishment of the unbelievers was described above. That will take place in the Hereafter after the Judgement has been passed. It is obvious that the believers will be addressed at the same time. Other scholars indicate that the believers will be addressed in this world at the time of death. Many authentic traditions bear testimony to the veracity of this view. Ibn Kathīr, on the other hand, reconciles the apparently conflicting statements thus: Allah will address the soul of the believers twice with these words. Once at the time of death, and again on the Day of Judgement.

Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Ṣāmit's ﷺ narration cited earlier supports the view that the address will be at the time of death. In a lengthy narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, recorded in Musnad of Aḥmad, Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "When death approaches a believer, the angels of mercy bring to him a piece of white silk and say: اخرجى راضية: 'Come out [from this body], well-pleased and well-pleasing, to Divine mercy and to the eternal comforts of Paradise' [to the end of narration.]" Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ says that one day he recited the verse يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ (O contented soul) in the presence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Abū Bakr ﷺ who was present in the assembly, said: "O Allah's Messenger, what a fine address and honour!" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Behold, the angel will address you thus after your death."

A Few Strange Incidents

Sa'īd Ibn Jubair ﷺ reports that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ passed

away in Ṭā'if. After the funeral was prepared, a strange bird, the like of which was never seen before, came and entered the body, but no one saw it coming out of it. When it was lowered into the grave for burial, an invisible voice was heard reciting from the side of the grave: يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ Everyone looked around, but could not find anyone. Another incident is recorded by Ḥāfiẓ Ṭabarānī in his book Kitāb-ul-'Ajā'ib. He narrates with his chain of authorities, an incident about Fattān Ibn Razīn Abī Hāshim that once they were imprisoned in a Roman city. They were presented before their king. The king was an infidel. He coerced them to adopt his religion, and threatened them that if anyone refuses to comply with his command, he would be beheaded. They were a few people. Three of them feared for their lives, adopted his religion and thus became apostates. The fourth person refused to adopt the king's religion. He was beheaded and his head was thrown into a nearby river. When it was thrown, the head went to the bottom of the river. Later, it emerged from the water and came to the surface. Then it looked at the other three persons, and calling each one of them by name, recited:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ﴿٢٧﴾ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَةً ﴿٢٨﴾ فَادْخُلِي فِي
عِبَادِي ﴿٢٩﴾ وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي ﴿٣٠﴾

"O contented soul, [27] come back to your Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing. [28] So, enter among My (special) servants, [29] and enter My Paradise." [30]

After that it dived back into the water.

This was an unusual incident which everyone witnessed and heard. When the Christians of that place witnessed this, almost all of them embraced Islam which shook up the king's throne. The three persons who had become apostates reverted to Islam. Caliph Abū Ja'far Manṣūr had them all released from their [enemy's] prison.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Fajr
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Balad

(The City)

This Sūrah is Makki, and it has 20 verses

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 20

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ ﴿١﴾ وَأَنْتَ حِلٌّ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ ﴿٢﴾ وَوَالِدٍ وَمَا وَلَدَ ﴿٣﴾ لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ ﴿٤﴾ أَيَحْسَبُ أَنْ لَنْ يَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ ﴿٥﴾ يَقُولُ أَهْلَكْتُ مَالًا لُبَدًا ﴿٦﴾ أَيَحْسَبُ أَنْ لَمْ يَرَهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿٧﴾ أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ ﴿٨﴾ وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ ﴿٩﴾ وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ ﴿١٠﴾ فَلَا اقْتَحَمَ الْعَقَبَةَ ﴿١١﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ ﴿١٢﴾ فَكُ رَقَبَةً ﴿١٣﴾ أَوْ إطعمُ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْغَبَةٍ ﴿١٤﴾ يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ ﴿١٥﴾ أَوْ مَسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ ﴿١٧﴾ أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ﴿١٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بآيَاتِنَا هُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ ﴿١٩﴾ عَلَيْهِمْ نَارٌ مُّؤَصَّدَةٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

I swear by this city, [1] and (O Holy Prophet,) you are going to be allowed to fight in this city [2] and by the father and that which he begot, [3] Indeed We have created man (to live) in hard struggle. [4] Does he think that no one has power over him? [5] He says, "I have spent a lot of wealth." [6] Does he think that no one has seen him? [7] Did We not make for him two eyes, [8] and a tongue and two lips, [9] and showed him the two

ways? [10] Yet he did not make his way through the steep course, [11] And what may let you know what the steep course is? [12] (It is) freeing of the neck of a slave, [13] or giving food in a day of hunger [14] to an orphan near of kin, [15] or to a needy person lying in dust [16] then he did not join those who believe and advise each other to be patient and advise each other to be merciful. [17] Those are the People of the Right Hand. (i.e.their books of deeds will be given in their right hands) [18] As for those who reject Our verses, they are the People of the Left Hand. (i.e. their books of deeds will be given in their left hand.) [19] Upon them will be the Fire, enveloping them with closed exits. [20]

Commentary

لَا أَقْسَمُ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ (I swear by this city...90:1). The particle *lā* ('no') in the beginning of this sentence has no meaning here. Such particles in Arabic language are commonplace. However, the more appropriate view is that when a Sūrah begins with a *lā* (no) followed by an oath, it was revealed in refutation to a false assumption of the opponents. In other words, Allah is saying, 'No, what you [the unbelievers] are saying or thinking is not correct, but the truth is what We are swearing about...'. The word *al-balad* 'the City' refers to the Holy City of Makkah, as in Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭīn [95:3] where Allah swears an oath 'by this peaceful City [of Makkah] وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ'. The adjective attached to the 'City' is 'peaceful'. This shows the superiority and honour of Makkah over other cities. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Adiyy رضي الله عنه reports that when the Holy Prophet of Allah ﷺ was migrating from Makkah to Madīnah, he addressed the city of Makkah and said: "By Allah, you are dearer to Allah than the entire earth. If I was not forced out of this place, I would never have abandoned you." [Transmitted by Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah vide *Mazharī*].

وَأَنْتَ جِلٌّ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ (and [O Holy Prophet,] you are going to be allowed to fight in this city....90:2). The word *hillun* bears two possibilities: [1] It could be derived from *hulūl* which signifies to reside in or to descend on some place. In this sense, *hillun* signifies 'a dweller or resident' and the verse purports to say that the city of Makkah itself is sacred, and since Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ is the inhabitant of this city, it adds to the sanctity, honour and glory of the place. Thus, on account of the Holy Prophet's residing in that city its honour and sanctity has been enhanced and augmented. The second possibility is that it is derived from *hillatun*

which means 'the thing the doing of which is lawful'. From this point of view, *hillun* could signify one of two things: One that the pagans of Makkah consider it lawful to do the Holy Prophet ﷺ any harm, even to kill him, in this City of Makkah which is so sacred that the doing of harm to a living creature in its precincts, not to say of killing it or hunting it, is strictly forbidden even according to their own belief system . Secondly, this may be a prophecy that the city of Makkah is going to be made lawful for the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the sense that fighting in it will be allowed for him for a specified time, and He will alight in this City of Makkah, as it happened on the occasion of the Conquest of Makkah. On this occasion, all the injunctions and ordinances of the *haram* were suspended for one day, and it was made lawful to kill the disbelievers. Mazharī cites three possible meanings, and says that all three of them are equally possible.

وَوَالِدٍ وَمَا وَلَدَ (and by the father and that which he begot,...90:3) The word *walid* refers to Holy Prophet 'Ādam ﷺ, the father of mankind, and the phrase *مَا وَلَدَ* 'that which he begot' refers to his children from the inception of the world to the end of the world. Thus this phrase swears an oath by Holy Prophet 'Ādam ﷺ and all his children. The subject of the oath follows next, thus:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ (Indeed We have created man [to live] in hard struggle...90:4) The word *kabad* means 'labour, 'toil' or 'difficulty'. The verse purports to say that man's life is a series of hard and toilsome works. Ibn 'Abbās ؓ says: 'Man was conceived and held in his mother's womb. The mother bore the pangs of birth. The hardship of sucking the mother's milk and the difficulty of weaning. This is followed by seeking livelihood and other necessities of life with hardship. Then he endures hardships and long-suffering of old age, death, grave, resurrection, accountability of deeds before Allah, reward and punishment.' These difficulties and hardships are not confined to man. Other animals too share them. Man has particularly been mentioned in this connection because of his intelligence. The more the power of a creature's intelligence, the higher the degree of his legal obligation. Lastly, the greatest difficulty and hardship would be borne at resurrection and life-after-death, when we will be required to give an account of the deeds we might have done throughout our life. Other species of animals will not be required to do this.

Some scholars say that no creation suffers as much difficulties or hardships as human beings, despite the fact that his body is smaller and weaker than most other animals. Man's brainpower, however, is most powerful. Therefore, he has been specifically mentioned. Swearing an oath by Makkah, 'Ādam عليه السلام and his children, Allah has made it plain that man has been created in difficulties and to endure hardships. This is a proof that man did not come into existence on his own but his Creator is an All-Powerful Being who has, in His wisdom, created every species of creation with specific predisposition and capacity of actions. If man had any part in his own creation, he would never have allowed such difficulties and hardships for himself. [Qurṭubī]

Absolute Comfort, without Hardship, Is not Possible in the World: Man Must be Prepared to Endure Hardships

The oath and its subject makes plain to man that his desire to live peacefully and comfortably in this world, without enduring any hardship, is a silly idea and false notion, which is not possible to happen. Therefore, it is necessary for difficulty, hardship, distress and affliction to befall every person. Since they are bound to befall, a wise person should be in readiness to work hard for something that may help him for an eternal life. The only factor that will help him for this is faith and obedience to the Truth.

Then, after describing a few of the ignorant disbeliever's qualities, the following verse says about an unbeliever: *أَيَحْسَبُ أَنْ لَمْ يَرَهُ أَحَدٌ* (Does he think that no one has seen him?...90:7) that is, his evil deeds. He should realise that his Creator watches every action of his.

﴿لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ﴾ ﴿٨﴾ ﴿وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ﴾ ﴿٩﴾ ﴿وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ﴾ ﴿١٠﴾

(Did We not make for him two eyes, and a tongue and two lips, and showed him the two ways?...90:8-10)

The word *najdain* is the dual form of *najd* which means an elevated or conspicuous road. The word *najdain* signifies the two high and conspicuous ways of good and evil, or of success and destruction. The preceding verse pointed out the ignorance and heedlessness of man. He thinks that Allah has no power over him, and that there is no one watching over his actions. The current verse mentions a few of the organs and abilities that Allah has endowed him with. If he reflects carefully on these endowments, he will appreciate His infinite wisdom and power within himself. He has a pair of eyes. The optic nerves and tissues are

rather delicate. They send nervous impulses to the brain when stimulated by light rays from external objects. The structure of the eye itself is most delicate. Each eye consists of a hollow, spherical capsule [eyeball], made up of several layers and structures. It is set into a socket in the skull, and is protected by eyelids and eyelashes, and eyebrows. It works like an automatic machine. When a harmful object is seen coming from the front, the eyelids close on their own. The eyelashes block the dust from getting into the eyes. The eyebrows help keep things away from falling into the eyes directly from top. The facial bones, especially the orbit [eye socket and the cheek bones], protect the eye, if one were to fall on one's face or something were to fall on the face.

The second gift that man is endowed with is the 'tongue'. This organ - the articulator - is the most amazing and important creation. It is the long piece of flesh fixed to the bottom of the mouth that can represent thoughts of the heart, the automatic and mysterious machine. The heart works in an amazing way. A thought occurs in the heart, the brain interprets it, and prepares appropriate topic and words. The words are uttered by the tongue. Such a complex task is performed so swiftly that the listener does not even realise how many systems have worked before the distinguishable sounds, letters and words were uttered. Nature has equipped man with two lips that play an important role in articulating the different sounds, letters and words. Nature has made the tongue such a swift-working articulator that within half a minute it may utter a word which may take him out from Hell and admit him into Paradise, as the word of faith, or may endear him to his enemy in the world, as by seeking forgiveness of his shortcomings. The same tongue within the same short span of time may take him to Hell, as by uttering the word of disbelief, or may make him his biggest enemy who was previously his closest friend, as by using obscene language against him. The tongue has many benefits as well as many ways of destruction. It is a double-edged sword that can operate against an enemy, and it can also cut one's own throat. Therefore, Allah has kept it covered within the case of two lips. Probably, this is the reason why the pair of lips is mentioned. The Creator Who has endowed man with tongue has equipped him with a pair of lips in order to protect it. Therefore, he should be careful in its use. He should not unsheathe it unnecessarily. Allah has equipped him with a pair of eyes, a pair of lips and a tongue, and has equipped him with the ability to distinguish good from evil and right from wrong, thus:

فَالْهَمَّهَا فُجُورُهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

then inspired it with its [instinct of] evil and piety [91:8]

Thus in the first instance man receives guidance from his own conscience. This is supported by the guidance of the Holy Prophets عليهم السلام and celestial books that clarify it.

In sum, an ignoramus and heedless person, who denies the power of the Omnipotent, should look into his own being, he would be able to observe His attribute of perfect power and consummate wisdom. He should observe with his two eyes and confess with his tongue. He has been shown the two ways of good and evil; and of right and wrong so that he may choose between the two. Obviously, he should choose the good way. In his make-up, there exists the ability to take either way. All these bounties have not motivated man to attempt the steep course. Then the heedless man is warned that he should reflect on the clear proofs and arguments pertaining to Allah's Omnipotence, pertaining to the Day of Judgement, life after death and Reckoning, and believe in these articles of faith. This faith requires that man should be a source of benefit and comfort to others; he should abstain from hurting them; he should believe in Allah; he should amend his own conduct and think of reforming others also, so that, on the Day of Judgement, he may be among the people of the right hand, the inmates of Paradise, enjoying a happy recompense for what he has done in this life. The unfortunate ones who persistently denied the Truth shall be encircled by the Hell-fire. This theme has been taken up from this point onward to the end of the Sūrah. Failing to do a few of the good deeds have been [selectively] described in a unique style.

فَلَا اقْتَحَمَ الْعَقَبَةَ ﴿١١﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ ﴿١٢﴾ ط

(Yet he did not make his way through the steep course. And what may let you know what the steep course is? ...90:11-12]

The word '*aqabah*' means 'hill, high place or a steep road'. It also refers to a 'low area of land between two hills or mountains, that is, a valley'. '*Aqabah*' helps a man in saving himself when pursued by an enemy by ascending the summit of the mountain, or in escaping by descending into the valley. Here the word '*aqabah*' refers to obedience and devotion. Just as it saves man from an enemy, righteous deeds save man from the punishment of the Hereafter. The righteous deeds are as follows:

فَكَرَّهَا ﴿١٣﴾ ([It is] freeing of the neck of a slave...90:13). This is a great

devotional act [and carries a great reward because] it moulds a man's life.

أَوْ إِطْعَمٌ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْغَبَةٍ (or giving food in a day of hunger...90:14).

Although it is an act of great reward to feed any hungry person, it carries even a greater reward to feed certain people, as follows:

يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ ﴿٥﴾ أَوْ مَسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ ﴿٦﴾ ﴿١٦﴾

(to an orphan near of kin, or to a needy person lying in dust....90:15-16)

If an orphaned family member is given food to eat, its reward is two fold, for satisfying the hunger of a hungry person and for maintaining family ties and fulfilling his rights.

فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْغَبَةٍ (in a day of hunger...90:14). It means that feeding him in a day when he is hungry will attract more reward. If an orphan is not a close relative or family member, but he is so poor as to be wallowing in dust, spending on him will yield a greater reward. The poorer the person is, the greater will be the reward for the spender.

Obligations of a Believer

ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ (then he did not join those who believe and advise each other to be patient and advise each other to be merciful...90:17). The verse points out that the doing only of good actions mentioned in the foregoing verse is not enough for raising the all round stature of the Muslim community. Good ideals and right principles, combined with continuous and sustained adherence to the path of moral rectitude and teaching of virtues to others, are equally essential for the attainment of the high aim. Thus the verse after 'faith' draws the attention of a believer to his socio-moral obligation to the effect that he ought to teach his other Muslim brothers to be patient and to be merciful. The word *ṣabr* signifies 'to withhold oneself from evil deeds and to act upon good deeds'. The word *marḥamah* signifies 'to show mercy to one another or to empathise with others and abstain from hurting them.' This embraces almost all the injunctions of the entire religion.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Balad
Ends here

Sūrah Ash-Shams

(The Sun)

This Sūrah is Makki, and it has 15 verses

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 15

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا ﴿١﴾ وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَّهَا ﴿٢﴾ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّهَا ﴿٣﴾
وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا ﴿٤﴾ وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا ﴿٥﴾ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا ﴿٦﴾
وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا ﴿٧﴾ فَالْهَمَّهَا فَجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا ﴿٨﴾ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ
زَكَّاهَا ﴿٩﴾ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا ﴿١٠﴾ كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا ﴿١١﴾ إِذِ
أَنْبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا ﴿١٢﴾ فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا ﴿١٣﴾
فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا ۖ فَادْمَدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذَنْبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا ﴿١٤﴾ وَلَا يَخَافُ
عَقْبَاهَا ﴿١٥﴾

I swear by the sun and his broad light, [1] and by the moon when she follows him, [2] and by the day when it shows its brightness, [3] and by the night when it envelops him, [4] and by the sky, and the One who built it, [5] and by the earth, and the One who spread it, [6] and by the soul, and the One who made it well, [7] then inspired it with its (instincts of) evil and piety, [8] success is really attained by him who purifies it, [9] and failure is really suffered by him who pollutes it. [10] (The People of) Thamud denied the truth because of their transgression, [11] when rose up the one who was most wretched of them. [12] So, the Messenger of Allah said to them, "Be careful of Allah's she-camel and her right to drink."

[13] But they rejected him and killed her, so their Lord sent eradicating torment upon them, and made it equal for all. [14] And He has no fear of its consequence. [15]

Commentary

Allah swears by the objects and phenomena mentioned in verses [1-7], which gives these creations an added significance and draws man's attention to them. Man ought to reflect on these phenomena and try to appreciate their value and the purpose of their creation. The first oath is taken by:

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا (I swear by the sun and his broad light,...91:1). The phrase 'and his broad light' is, though conjoined to 'by the sun' by means of the conjunctive particle 'and', the context indicates that 'broad light' is in adjectival position qualifying *shams* 'the sun', that is to say, 'I swear by the sun when it is in the time of forenoon. The word *duha* is that part of the day when the sun rises [early in the morning] and goes up slightly higher [on the sky], and its light spreads on the earth. Man observes it to be near to himself and observes it fully on account of lack of heat.

The second oath is taken by:

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَّهَا (and by the moon when she follows him,...91:2). This signifies one of two things: [1] The moon following the sun is seen clearly during the middle of the lunar months when the full moon rises to dominate the sky with its radiance after sunset. [2] The phrase 'when she follows him' could signify just as the sun is seen in full in broad light, so does the moon, following the sun, becomes full. The third oath is taken by:

وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّتْهَا (and by the day when it shows its brightness...91:3). The attached pronoun *hā* 'its' may possibly refer to the earth or the world, although neither of the nouns precedes it. Such usage in Arabic is commonplace, especially if the phenomenon, such as the earth or the world, with which man is generally familiar. In such a case Arabs commonly refer to the phenomenon simply by using a pronoun without making prior reference to it. The addressee understands the meaning by implication. The Qur'ān has many examples of, and bears ample testimony to, this grammatical phenomenon. The verse thus signifies 'by the day and by the world or the earth which the day has brightened up'. In other words, 'by the day when it is fully bright'. Another possibility, which is more pertinent to the context, is that the pronoun 'its' refers to the 'sun' in which case it signifies 'by the day when it brightens up the

sun'. This relation of attribution, in this case, would be a metaphorical relationship. Although the sun is usually understood to be the cause of the day to come out, here the day is said to brighten up the sun. Thus the verse would signify 'when the sun is seen brightened up because the day is out'.

The fourth oath is taken thus:

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا (and by the night when it envelops him,...91:4). In other words, when it [the night] sets in, the brightness of the sun is concealed [and only darkness prevails].

The fifth oath is:

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا (and by the sky, and the One who built it...91:5). Most clearly the context suggests that the *mā* may be taken as infinitival particle [*masdariyyah*], signifying 'by the sky and its make ' as elsewhere in the Qur'an غَفَرَلِي رَبِّي ...how my Lord has forgiven me [36:27]⁽¹⁾

The sixth oath is:

وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا (and by the earth, and the One who spread it...91:6). The *mā* in this phrase too stands for *maṣdariyyah* or infinitival particle, signifying 'by the earth and its expanse'. The word *ṭahwun* means 'to spread'. Thus in the two verses above attention has been focused on the great Designer and Architect of the sky and earth [that is, the universe], and on the perfection and complete freedom from flaw or defect in the design and creation of the universe. Sayyidnā Qatādah رضي الله عنه and others reported this interpretation. Kashshāf, Baiḍāwī and Qurṭubī preferred this interpretation. Some of the commentators have taken *mā* in the sense of man 'the One Who' and refer it to 'Allah', signifying 'by the sky and its Maker and by the earth and One who spreads it. Thus far, all the oaths were taken by the created objects and phenomena. In between is taken oath by Allah. And Allah knows best! The seventh oath is taken thus:

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا (and by the soul, and the One who made it well,...91:7) If, in this phrase, the particle *mā* is taken to function as infinitival particle, it signifies 'by the human soul and its perfection'. If *mā* is taken in the sense of *man* (مَنْ), it signifies 'by the soul and the One who proportioned it'. The

1. It should be kept in mind that the translation of the text is not based on this construction. It is based on taking '*mā*' as *mousulah* in the sense of 'the one' as adopted by Maulānā Thanawī, and explained by the author in the following verse.

word *taswiyah* means, to proportion, balance, perfect. The meaning of this word has been explained in the previous Sūrah.

فَاللَّهُمَّاهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا (then inspired it with its [instincts of] evil and piety...91:8) The word *ilhām* denotes 'to cast into the heart'. The word *fujūr* denotes 'open transgression'. The meaning of *taqwā* is well-known. This sentence is linked with the seventh oath وَمَا سَوَّيْنَاهَا 'and by the soul, and the One who made it well, [91:7]', signifying that Allah has equipped man with human soul which has the capacity to distinguish between good and bad, and right and wrong. In other words, in his make-up Allah has built in him a special ability to choose freely the righteous path or the sinful path. Whichever way he takes out of his own free will, he will be rewarded or punished. This interpretation is deducible from a traceable Ḥadīth which is transmitted by Muslim on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Imrān Ibn Ḥuṣayn ؓ. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was sitting in the company of his followers. They asked him a question regarding Divine Destination. In response, the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse. This verse will allay the doubt about Divine Destination only if the words 'then inspired it with its (instincts of) evil and piety, [91:8]' are taken in the sense that human soul has been inspired with conscience to distinguish between right and wrong, and has also been granted the ability to do good as well as the ability to commit sin. Man is not a creature of pure force or coercion. He has free will to choose his path of good or evil. He, in fact, has the option to do good or refrain from sin. The choice is his, for which he is rewarded or punished.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Ibn 'Abbās ؓ report that whenever the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the verses [91:7-8] under comment would stop and recite the following supplication aloud:

اللَّهُمَّ اِنِّ نَفْسِي تَقْوَاهَا اَنْتَ وَلِيُّهَا وَمَوْلَاهَا وَاَنْتَ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ زَكَّاهَا

'O Allah! Give my soul its good. You are its Guardian and Master, and the best to purify it.'

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّاهَا وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّاهَا (success is really attained by him who purifies it, and failure is really suffered by him who pollutes it....91:10). This is the subject of the seven oaths. The primitive meaning of *tazkiyah* is 'inner cleanliness', signifying 'he who obeyed Allah and purified his inner and outer selves.' Verse [10] signifies 'he who caused his soul to sink in the swamp of sins will be deprived'. The word *dassa* is derived from the basic word *dass*' which denotes 'to bury in the ground' as for instance it

occurs elsewhere in the Qur'an, thus:

أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ

'...or put it away into the dust? [16:59]

Some of the commentators have analysed that the pronouns of *zakka* 'He purified' and *dassa* 'He caused to pollute' as referring to 'Allah', signifying that 'he is successful indeed whose soul Allah has purified and he has failed whose soul Allah pollutes'. This verse has divided the entire mankind into two groups: [1] successful; and [2] unsuccessful. An example of the second group has been cited to show how it rejected the message of Allah and consequently how Allah destroyed them. Such a group will receive severe punishment in the Hereafter. Sometimes, however, an instalment of punishment is meted out to them in this world as in the case of Thamūd. Their story is recounted fully in Sūrah A'rāf [S.7:73-79; S.11:61-68; S. 26:141-159; S.27:45-53; S..41:17-18; S.54:23-32; and S. 69:4-5]. Here a brief reference is made to that story and their punishment.

فَدَمَدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا (... so their Lord sent eradicating torment upon them, and made it equal for all. And He has no fear of its consequence....91:14-15). The word *damdama* refers to such tormenting scourge as is unleashed on a person or a nation again and again, until it destroys or crushes them completely. *Fa-sawwāhā* signifies that the scourge overtook the entire nation, men, women, children, and young and old.

In conclusion, the verse says: وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا 'Allah has no fear of its consequence'. It means that Divine torment that destroys a nation completely cannot be compared to the torment inflicted by the greatest king of this world, because a tyrant king who destroys his people on a large scale, fears for his life, lest the survivors or the supporters of the people destroyed should revenge on him and rebel against him. Whoever destroys others is himself in danger of avenge. Those who attack others must necessarily bear the brunt of counter-attack except Allah. When a people incur Divine punishment and are thus destroyed, Allah has no fear from any one.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Ash-Shams
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Lail

(The Night)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 21 verses

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 21

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَى ﴿١﴾ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّى ﴿٢﴾ وَمَا خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ
وَالْأُنثَى ﴿٣﴾ إِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتَّى ﴿٤﴾ فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَى وَاتَّقَى ﴿٥﴾
وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَى ﴿٦﴾ فَسَنِيسِرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَى ﴿٧﴾ وَأَمَّا مَنْ بَخِلَ
وَاسْتَغْنَى ﴿٨﴾ وَكَذَّبَ بِالْحُسْنَى ﴿٩﴾ فَسَنِيسِرُهُ لِلْعُسْرَى ﴿١٠﴾
وَمَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُ مَالُهُ إِذَا تَرَدَّى ﴿١١﴾ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَى ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِنَّ لَنَا
لَلْآخِرَةَ وَالْأُولَى ﴿١٣﴾ فَأَنْذَرْتُكُمْ نَارًا تَلَظَّى ﴿١٤﴾ لَا لَصْلِبَهَا إِلَّا
الْأَشْقَى ﴿١٥﴾ الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّى ﴿١٦﴾ وَسَيُجَنَّبُهَا الْأَتْقَى ﴿١٧﴾
الَّذِي يُؤْتِي مَالَهُ يَتَزَكَّى ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَى ﴿١٩﴾
إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَى ﴿٢٠﴾ وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَى ﴿٢١﴾

I swear by the night when it covers (the sun), [1] and by the day when it is unveiled, [2] and by the One who created the male and the female, [3] your efforts are diverse: [4] As for the one who gives (in charity) and fears Allah, [5] and believes in the best (religion), [6] We will facilitate for him the way to extreme ease (i.e. the comforts of Paradise). [7] But the one who is miser and deems himself self-sufficient, [8] and rejects the best

(religion), [9] for him We will facilitate the way to extreme distress. [10] And his wealth will not help him when he will fall down (into Hell). [11] Of course, it is undertaken by Us to guide, [12] and in Our control is the Hereafter and the worldly life. [13] So I have warned you of a blazing fire. [14] None will enter it but the wretched one [15] who rejected (the truth) and turned away (from it). [16] And saved from it will be the most God-fearing one, [17] who gives his wealth (in charity) to become purified, [18] while no one has conferred any favour on him for which he would give a return, [19] but (he gave his wealth in charity) only to seek the Countenance of his Lord, the Most High. [20] And surely he will soon be happy. [21]

Commentary

إِنَّ سَعْيَكُمْ لَشَتَّى (your efforts are diverse....92:4). This statement is like the statement in Sūrah Inshiqāq, verse [6]:

إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا

'O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord.
[84:6]

which has already been explained in that Sūrah. The sense is that man, by his nature, is used to making efforts for one objective or another. But the nature and the results of these efforts are different. Some people work hard for an objective that brings eternal happiness to them, and others work hard for an objective that makes them suffer eternal perdition. It is reported in a Tradition that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Each morning when a man gets up, he goes to conduct his business and keeps himself busy. His business is either successful and emancipates himself from Hell, or unsuccessful and his efforts become the cause of his destruction." Therefore, a wise person should first apply his mind to think whether his efforts will pay dividends, and he should never undertake those efforts that bring about temporary comfort and pleasure, but eternal perdition and grief.

The Two Diverse Types of Human Efforts Divide Humankind into Two Groups

The Qur'ān further shows that, broadly speaking, the humankind may be divided into two opposing groups in terms of their opposing efforts. Each of the two groups are characterised by three qualities. The

first group is a successful one, and its three characteristics are: [1] they give in charity in the cause of Allah; [2] fear Allah and avoid violating the injunctions of Allah in every aspect of life; and [3] believe in the 'best word'. The 'best words' refer to the credo of 'there is no god but Allah' [as Ibn 'Abbās, Ḍaḥḥāk  have explained]. Testifying to the *kalimah* signifies 'to profess the True Faith'. Faith or belief is the essence of all actions, and comes first in order of rank, but on this occasion, it is mentioned last, probably because the main theme in this context is that of physical exertion, efforts and actions. 'Īmān or faith, on the other hand, pertains to the heart. It signifies the acceptance and confirmation of Allah and His Messenger with one's heart. Confession of this must be made by means of reciting *kalimah shahādah* 'testimony of faith'. Obviously, none of these things involve physical exertion or effort, nor are they generally counted as actions.

The second group is [the unsuccessful one] and its three characteristics are: [1] they are misers to such an extent that they even fail to pay the *zakāh* and other obligatory alms; [2] they deem themselves self-sufficient rather than obeying Allah; and [3] they reject the 'best word' [that is, the *kalimah* of 'Īmān]. Referring to the first group, the verse says:

فَسَنِّيِسِرُهُ لِيُسْرَى (We will facilitate for him the way to extreme ease [i.e. the comforts of Paradise]....92:7). The word *yusrā* literally denotes 'ease and comfort' or a thing in which there is no difficulty, but here it refers to "Paradise". Likewise, referring to the second group it says:

فَسَنِّيِسِرُهُ لِيُعْسِرَى (for him We will facilitate the way to extreme distress...92:10). The opposite of *yusrā* is 'usrā which literally denotes 'extreme distress, referring to "Hell". The two statements signify that those who exert their efforts in the first three acts, that is, spending in the cause of Allah, fearing Allah and testifying to the *kalimah*, Allah will pave their way to extreme ease, that is, to deeds that will lead them to the comforts of Paradise. On the other hand, those who exert their efforts in the latter three acts, Allah will pave their way to extreme distress, that is, make easy for them to perform deeds that will lead them to Hell. By right, here it should have been said that the deeds of Paradise or Hell are made easy for them, because 'easy' or 'difficult' qualify deeds, and not persons or people. But the Qur'ān says that the people or the people themselves

will be made easy to do the deeds. This probably implies that the first group will be predisposed to behave in a particular way that behaving otherwise will make them feel uneasy. The second group will be predisposed to behave in a way that will make them feel comfortable to do deeds of Hell, and they will feel uneasy doing deeds of Paradise. Each of these two groups will have their own nature and predisposition, and will find it easier to behave in that particular way. A Ḥadīth confirms that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

اعملوا فكل ميسر لما خلق له، أما من كان من اهل السعادة فييسر لعمل السعادة
وأما من كان من اهل الشقاوة فييسر لعمل اهل الشقاوة

"Perform deeds, for everyone will have the deeds of what he was created for [Paradise or Hell] made easy for him. Those people who are the people of happiness, they will have the deeds of the people of happiness made easy for them. And those who are the people of misery, they will have the deeds of the people of misery made easy for them."

But both these things are the results of the use of the God-given choice and free will. Therefore, man is rewarded or punished.

Thereafter the unfortunate inmates of Hell are warned, thus:

وَمَا يَنْصُرُهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِذْ أَتَىٰ (And his wealth will not help him when he will fall down...92:11). The word *taraddā* literally denotes 'to fall into a pit and perish'. The expression 'When he fall' signifies that when Divine decree regarding his destruction comes into operation, nothing - not even his wealth - will save him, whether in grave after his death, or on the Day of Judgement, when he will be falling into the abyss of Hell.

لَا يَدْخُلُهَا إِلَّا الْأَشْقَى. الَّذِي كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ (None will enter it but the wretched one who rejected [the truth] and turned away....92:16). This describes the fire of Hell. It is quite clear that only a *kāfir* will reject Allah and His Messenger. Apparently, it seems that a sinful believer who does not reject the truth will not enter Hell, whereas the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth are replete with clear texts that a sinful believer will enter Hell, unless he had repented, or someone interceded for him, or was forgiven out of pure Grace. He will abide in Hell until he has received punishment for the sins he has committed. After paying for his sins, he will be taken out of Hell, and through the blessings of his faith, he will be admitted into Paradise.

Apparently, the wordings of the verse are contrary to this interpretation. Therefore, it is necessary that the interpretation of the verse under comment be brought in line with other Qur'ānic verses and authentic Aḥādīth. Its plain and simple interpretation would be that this verse refers to entering the Hell for good, which is peculiar to the unbelievers. They will be tortured eternally in the Hell-fire. The sinful believers, on the other hand, will receive punishment for their sins and will eventually - at some time or the other - be taken out of Hell. Other scholars of Tafsīr have given some other interpretations too, which can also be appropriate. Tafsīr Maḥzarī has come up with another explanation according to which 'the wretched one' and 'the most God-fearing one' should not be taken in its general sense. Both words refer particularly to people who lived during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. From amongst them, no Muslim, who lived at that time, will enter Hell through the blessings of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ company, even though he might have committed some sins incidentally.

All of The Blessed Companions will be Saved from the Ordeal of Hell

The reason for this is that the Companions rarely ever committed sins. Furthermore, even if they did commit sins, they must have repented by dint of the fear of the Hereafter - as their living conditions indicate . If any of them committed a sin, his good deeds are so many that they can wipe out the sin as the Qur'ān says:

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

'...Surely good deeds erase bad deeds__[11:114]'

Adopting the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is an act that can outweigh all other good deeds. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said regarding the righteous members of the community:

هم قوم لا يشقى جلسهم ولا يخاف انيسهم

'The one who sits with them is never deprived, and the one who feels happy in their company is never unsuccessful.' [Ṣaḥīḥain]

Obviously, a person who sits in the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and is his intimate associate cannot be wretched. Therefore, there are express texts available in the authentic Traditions that all the noble

Companions are safe from the punishment of Hell. The Qur'an itself bears testimony that -

وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَى

'...and to each Allah has promised good [4:95]'

Husnā in this statement refers to 'Paradise'. In another verse, the Qur'an says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ

Surely, those for whom the good (news) from Us has come earlier shall be kept far away from it. [21:101]

Husnā in this statement also refers to 'Paradise'. The pronoun 'it' in the phrase 'from it' refers to 'Hell', signifying that they will be far away from Hell. A Tradition says that 'Hell-Fire will not touch him who has seen me'. [Tirmidhī transmitted it from Jābir رضي الله عنه].

(And saved from it will be the most God-fearing one who gives his wealth [in charity] to become purified,...92:17-18). This verse describes the reward of the most God-fearing person, as opposed to the punishment of the most wretched in the preceding verse. The word *atqā* is the superlative form and signifies a man of *taqwā*, that is, the most God-fearing person, who spends his wealth in obedience of his Lord in order to purify himself from sins, will be kept far away from the fire of Hell.

The wordings of the verse give good news, in general, to anyone who spends in Allah's cause in a state of faith, but the occasion of revelation indicates that *atqa* refers to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Aṣ-Ṣiddiq رضي الله عنه in particular. Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports from Sayyidnā 'Urwah رضي الله عنه that seven Muslims had been enslaved by the Makkan disbelievers. When they became Muslims, they were persecuted in a variety of ways. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه spent a great amount of his money, and purchased them and set them free. Verses [17-21] were revealed on this occasion. [Maḏharī]

وَمَا لِأَحَدٍ عِنْدَهُ مِنْ نِعْمَةٍ تُجْزَىٰ (while no one has conferred any favour on him for which he would give a return,...92:19) Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه did this great favour by spending abundant wealth. The emancipated slaves had not done him any favour in the past, so that one could say that he was

returning their favour. He took this step for one purpose only as the verse says:

إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَى (but [he gave his wealth in charity] only to seek the Countenance of his Lord, the Most High...92:20). Mustadrak of Hakim records that it was a usual practice of Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه that he used to purchase Muslim slaves from the disbelievers and set them free whenever he found them in their bondage. Generally, these people were weak and helpless. Abū Qaḥāfah, the father of Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه, said to him: "Since you are emancipating slaves, why do you not set free strong and brave people, so that they may assist you in fighting the enemies and protect you." He replied: "My purpose of emancipating them is not to expect any benefit in return. My only purpose is to seek the pleasure of Allah." [Mazharī]

وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَى (And surely he will soon be happy...92:21). Whoever spends in Allah's way with pure and good intentions of pleasing Allah, and not for any personal worldly gains, will acquire the pleasure of Allah in the Hereafter by achieving the wonderful and eternal blessings of Paradise. It is confirmed that these verses were revealed about Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه. Therefore, this last verse of the Sūrah is a great and splendid news and honour for him given in this very world by Allah.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Lail
Ends here

Sūrah Aḍ-Ḍuḥā (The Forenoon)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 11 verses

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 11

۱ وَالضُّحَى ﴿١﴾ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَى ﴿٢﴾ مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ وَمَا قَلَى ﴿٣﴾
وَلَلْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَى ﴿٤﴾ وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَى ﴿٥﴾
أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَى ﴿٦﴾ وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَى ﴿٧﴾
وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَى ﴿٨﴾ فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ ﴿٩﴾ وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ
فَلَا تَنْهَرْ ﴿١٠﴾ وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ ﴿١١﴾

I swear by the forenoon, [1] and by the night when it becomes peaceful, [2] your Lord (O Holy Prophet,) has neither forsaken you, nor has become displeased. [3] And the Hereafter is much better for you than the present life. [4] And of course, your Lord will give you so much that you will be pleased. [5] Did He not find you an orphan, and give you shelter? [6] And He found you unaware of the way (the Shari‘ah), then He guided you. [7] and He found you in need, then made you need-free. [8] Therefore, as for orphan, do not oppress him, [9] and as for the beggar, do not scold him. [10] And about the bounty of your Lord, do talk. [11]

Commentary

Occasion of Revelation

Bukhārī, Muslim and Tirmidhī have narrated from Sayyidnā Jundub

ﷺ that once a finger of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was wounded and started bleeding, he said:

ان انت الا اصبع دميت.....وفى سبيل الله مالقيت

'You are merely a finger that is bleeding; [what does it matter] if you are hurt: it all happened in Allah's cause.'

Sayyidnā Jundub ؓ narrated this incident and said that revelation of the Qur'ān to the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to a halt, and that Jibrā'il ؑ stopped coming to him for a while. The unbelievers taunted, saying: "Muḥammad's Lord has forsaken him, and is displeased with him." Sūrah Ad-Duḥā was revealed on this occasion. According to the narration in Bukhari by Sayyidnā Jundub ؓ, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was unable to wake up for a few nights for *tahajjud* prayer owing to illness. In this narration, there is no mention of 'delay in revelation'. In Timidhī's narration, there is mention about the 'delay in revelation' but no mention about his inability to wake up for *tahajjud* prayer. These reports are not conflicting. The narrator might have narrated one incident at one time, and reported another incident at another time. The lady who taunted the Holy Prophet ﷺ was Umm Jamīl, the wife of Abū Lahab, as other reports indicate. 'Delay in revelation' took place twice. Once in the very early stage of the call. This is known as *fatrah al-wahy* 'temporary break in the revelation'. This was the longest period. Another narration states that when the pagans or the Jews asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the soul, he promised them that he would give them a reply the next day. However, he forgot to add *insha 'Allah* (if Allah wills). As a result, revelation ceased for a few days. The pagans began to taunt the Holy Messenger ﷺ, saying that Allah had abandoned him, and is displeased with him. It was on this occasion that the Sūrah was revealed.

وَلَلْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَى (And the Hereafter is much better for you than the present life....93:4). The word '*akhirah*' may be taken in its popular sense of the 'Hereafter' and its opposite '*ūlā*' may be taken in the sense of the present 'world'. With these words, Allah tells the Holy Prophet ﷺ not to be disturbed by the taunts of the pagans, because they will see in this world that their assumptions and accusations were absolutely false. In the Hereafter, he will be blessed with Divine favours to his heart's content -

much more than what he will receive in this fleeting world. The word 'ākhīrah may also be taken in its primitive sense i.e. 'the later state or condition' as opposed to 'ūlā 'the former state or condition'. The verse, in this case, would mean that every succeeding moment of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ life is better than the preceding one. It includes progress in knowledge and wisdom, as well as in degrees of his nearness to Allah, and it also includes progress in economic and political fields.

وَأَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَى (And of course, your Lord will give you so much that you will be pleased...93:5). Allah does not specify here what he will give him. The statement is open and general. The Holy Prophet ﷺ will be granted everything he desires so much that he will be pleased. Among his desired thing is the progress of Islam; the general spread of Islam in the world; fulfilment of every need of the Ummah; triumph of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself over his enemies and raising the word of Allah in the land of the enemy. When this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذَا لَا أَرْضِي وَوَاحِدٌ مِّنْ أُمَّتِي فِي النَّارِ

'If that is the case, then I will not be pleased as long as one [single member] of my Ummah [remains] in Fire.' [Qurtubī].

In a narration by Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Allah will accept my intercession for my Ummah [community]. Allah will ask: رَضِيْتَ يَا مُحَمَّد 'O Muḥammad, are you pleased?'" He will reply: يَا رَبِّ رَضِيْتُ "My Lord, I am pleased." Muslim records from Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn-ul-'Āṣ to the effect that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited a verse concerning the Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام:

فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

'...So, one who follows me is surely mine, and the one who disobeys me, then You are Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [14:36]'

Then he recited a verse which contains the words of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام

إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَبَادُكَ

'If You punish them, then, they are Your slaves [5:118]'

Then he raised his hands, he wept and prayed:

اللَّهُمَّ اُمَّتِي اُمَّتِي

'O Allah, my *ummah*, my *ummah*!'

Allah sent Jibra'īl عليه السلام to inquire as to why he was weeping [while Allah knows the reason]. Jibra'īl Amīn عليه السلام came and inquired why he was weeping. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied: "I seek my *ummah*'s forgiveness." Allah sent Jibra'īl عليه السلام back to inform him that He has pardoned them, and that Allah would please him and would not displease him regarding his *ummah*.

In response to the unbelievers' taunts, it was briefly mentioned that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has already been blessed with many Divine favours. The Sūrah elaborates on three of them in particular.

Favour [1]

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ يَتِيمًا فَآوَى (Did He not find you an orphan, and give you shelter?...93:6). The Holy Prophet ﷺ was an orphan. His father died before he was born, leaving no wealth or property to look after him. The words 'and gave you shelter' signify that the Holy Prophet ﷺ received such deep love and affection from his grand-father, 'Abd-ul-Muṭṭalib, and after him from his uncle, Abū Ṭālib, who took care of him more than their own children.

Favour [2]

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَى (And He found you unaware of the way [the Shari'ah], then He guided you....93:7). The word *ḍāll* has two meanings: [1] stray; and [2] unaware. Here it stands for the second meaning. The verse signifies that before Muḥammad ﷺ was commissioned as the Prophet, he was unaware of Divine Shari'ah. He was granted the status of the Prophet ﷺ and thus was guided.

Favour [3]

وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَى (and He found you in need, then made you need-free....93:8). The word *'ā'il* is derived from *'ailah* which means 'to be in need'. The verse signifies that Allah found him impoverished and enriched him. This happened in the beginning through a business partnership with Sayyidah Khadijah al-Kubrā رضى الله عنها, then once she became his wife and 'Mother of the Faithful', her entire wealth was

devoted to his service.

After elaborating on the three favours of Allah, three injunctions follow:

Injunction [1]

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَقْهَرْ (Therefore, as for orphan, do not oppress him,...93:9). The word *qahr* means 'to treat people who are less powerful in an unfair and cruel way'. In the present context, the verse means: 'Since you were a poor orphan, and Allah sheltered you, do not oppress the orphan.' [In words, 'do not seize their wealth by force and squander it. Do not scorn them, humiliate them or despise them. Rather, you should be kind and gentle to them.'] As a result, the Holy Prophet ﷺ emphasised that the orphan be treated kindly and gently, and has forbidden any hurting attitude towards them. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that the best house of a Muslim is the one in which there is an orphan who is treated kindly, and with love and affection. The worst house is the one in which there is an orphan who is treated badly. [This is transmitted by Bukhārī in Al-Adab-ul- Mufrad, and by Ibn Mājah and Baghawī, as quoted by Mazḥarī].

Injunction [2]

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ (and as for the beggar, do not scold him....93:10). The verb *tanhar* is derived from *nahr* which means 'to scold'. The word *sā'il* means 'one who asks'. It includes a person who asks people's wealth, that is, a beggar, and it also includes the one who asks a question of knowledge, that is, an academic investigator. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden to berate either of them. The best course of action is to give the beggar something. If one is unable to give a beggar anything, one should at least apologise to him politely [so as not to give him any further grief]. Likewise, anyone who is searching knowledge and asks questions, it is forbidden to respond to him harshly and unkindly. The teacher should reply kindly and politely. However, if the investigator is unreasonable in his approach, it is permissible to scold him to the degree that is necessary.

Injunction [3]

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ (And about the bounty of your Lord, do talk....93:11). The verb *ḥaddith* is derived from *taḥdīth* which means 'to talk' meaning,

'just as you were poor and needy, and Allah made you wealthy, then talk about Allah's favours upon you'. Talking about Divine favours to people is one way of thanking Allah. If a person has done something good to another, he should be thanked. Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Whoever is not thankful to people on their favours is not thankful to Allah." [This is transmitted by Aḥmad. The chain of authorities are reliable - vide Maḏharī].

The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said: "Whoever has done good to you, you ought to return the good. If you are unable to return the pecuniary good, then praise him in public, because he who praises people in public fulfils his moral obligation." [Al-Baghawī transmitted it from Jābir Ibn 'Abdullah, vide Maḏharī].

Ruling

It is obligatory to offer gratitude to Allah on every favour He has bestowed. (But the way of offering gratitude may be different.) If Allah has granted a person wealth, a part of that wealth may be spent with the sincerity in Allah's way. If Allah has given a person strong body, his bodily strength may be utilised in fulfilling Divine obligations. If Allah has granted a person Divine knowledge, he should impart it to others. [Maḏharī].

Ruling

It is *sunnah* to recite *takbīr* at the beginning of every Sūrah from Sūrah Ḍuḥā to the end of the Qur'ān. The wordings of the *takbīr*, according to Shaikh Ṣāliḥ al-Miṣrī, are as follows:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

'There is no god except Allah and Allah is the greatest'
[Maḏharī].

According to Ibn Kathīr, the *takbīr* may be recited at the end of every Sūrah and, according to Baghawī, it may be recited once at the beginning of every Sūrah. [Maḏharī]. Either way the requirement of *sunnah* will be fulfilled. And Allah knows best!

Note

In most Sūrahs from Sūrah Ḍuḥā to the end of Qur'ān, Allah's special

favours upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his special virtues and characteristics are mentioned. In a few of the Sūrahs, the Day of Judgement and its conditions are mentioned. The earlier part of the Qur'an asserts the greatness and authenticity of the Qur'an, while the later part asserts the greatness of the personality to whom the Qur'an was revealed.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Aḍ-Ḍuḥā
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Inshirāḥ

(Peace of Heart)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 8 verses

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ ﴿١﴾ وَوَضَعْنَا عَنكَ وِزْرَكَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِي أَنْقَضَ
ظَهْرَكَ ﴿٣﴾ وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ ﴿٤﴾ فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٥﴾ إِنَّ مَعَ
الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ﴿٦﴾ فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ ﴿٧﴾ وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ ﴿٨﴾

Did We not cause your bosom to be wide open for your benefit? [1] And We removed from you your burden [2] that had (almost) broken your back, [3] and We raised high for you your name. [4] So undoubtedly, along with hardship there is ease. [5] Undoubtedly, along with hardship there is ease. [6] So when you are free (from collective services), exert yourself (in worship), [7] and towards your Lord turn with eagerness. [8]

Commentary

It was mentioned at the end of the preceding Sūrah that twenty-two Sūrahs from Sūrah Ad-Ḍuḥā to the end of the Qur'ān are mainly concerned with Divine favours conferred upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ and with his greatness. Only a few Sūrahs are concerned with the conditions of the Hereafter or some other subject. Sūrah Al-Inshirāḥ is concerned with special favours that Allah conferred upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Its style is the same as that of the preceding Sūrah - the interrogative style. In the preceding Sūrah, the style was 'Did He not find you...?' [Here the style is]:

أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ (Did We not cause your bosom to be wide open for your benefit?...94:1). The word *sharḥ* literally denotes 'to open, to cause the bosom to be widely opened'. [In the present context] it is to cause the bosom to be wide open to comprehend the Divine mysteries. The verse signifies that Allah illuminated his bosom with wisdom, Divine light and peace and made it spacious, vast and wide as is said in another verse:

فَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ، يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ، لِلْإِسْلَامِ

'So, he whom Allah wills to give guidance, He opens his heart for Islam [6:125]'

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ bosom was expanded to receive the knowledge and wisdom and the gracious morals and ethical qualities, which the greatest philosophers could not match. As a result of this expansion of heart, *tawajjuh ilal-makhlūq* (attentiveness to the creation) did not disturb his attentiveness to and concentration on Allah. Some of the authentic Traditions report that the angels, with Allah's permission, physically opened the blessed chest of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Some of the commentators interpret this 'expansion of the chest' to refer to the same miracle, as mentioned in Ibn Kathīr and others. And Allah knows best!

وَوَضَعْنَا عَنْكَ وِزْرَكَ الَّذِي أَنْقَضَ ظَهْرَكَ (And We removed from you your burden that had [almost] broken your back...94:2-3). The word *wizr* literally denotes 'burden' and the phrase *naqq-uz-zahr* means 'to break one's back as for instance when a heavy load is put on one's back, it bends'. This verse signifies that Allah had relieved him of his burden that was breaking his back. What was that burden or heavy load? One answer to this question is that now and then the Holy Prophet ﷺ did certain permissible deeds, thinking that they were of benefit and in the interest [of spiritual development]. Later on he discovered that they were not in keeping with wisdom, or they were undesirable. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was conscious of his high status and close proximity to Allah. He regarded even such things as serious infractions. This was naturally a very heavy load that made him grieved. But Allah relieved him of his burden in that a blanket pardon was granted to him and it was declared that he would not be held accountable for such things.

Some commentators say that *wizr* (burden) refers to the effect of revelation. It weighed heavily on him in the initial stages of the

Prophet-hood. He was saddled with a nerve-racking and back-breaking task of raising [a morally degenerated people], through propagation of *Tauḥīd* and elimination of *kufr* and *shirk*, [from the depths of moral turpitude to the peaks of spiritual excellence, and then through them to cleanse and purify the whole of mankind of the dross of iniquity, ignorance and superstition]. The task enjoined:

فَاسْتَقِيمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ

'So, stand firm - as you have been commanded [11:112]'

The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to feel the heavy weight of this task and responsibility. Some narration report that a few strands of his beard had turned grey as a result of this command. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that the following verse has made me old:

فَاسْتَقِيمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ

'So, stand firm - as you have been commanded [11:112]'

Verses [2-3] give the cheerful news that Allah will remove from him the load which was weighing down his back. The following verses show how the back-breaking load will be removed, and every difficulty will be followed by ease and relief. By means of expansion of bosom, Allah gave the Holy Prophet ﷺ so much of courage that no instance of hardship seemed hardship, and no burden of any magnitude seemed a burden. And Allah knows best!

وَرَفَعْنَا لَكَ ذِكْرَكَ (and We raised high for you your name....94:4). The meaning of raising the name of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is that his blessed name is remembered together with the name of Allah in all the symbols of Islam, like the *kalimah*, the *adhān*, the *iqāmah*, and in sermons from the minarets and pulpits [throughout the world]:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
أَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

(I bear witness that there is no God worthy of worship except Allah; I bear witness that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah.)

No sensible person utters the Holy Prophet's ﷺ name without respect and honour even though he may not be a Muslim.

Note Carefully

Here three verses mention three favours that are bestowed on the Holy Prophet ﷺ: [1] opening of the bosom widely; [2] removal of the burden; and [3] raising of the name high. Each of the sentence is composed of a verb, an object and between them is a prepositional phrase thus:

شرح صدر

'for your benefit? [1]'

وضع وزر

'from you your burden [2]'

رفع ذكر

'for you your name. [4]'

This indicates the essential characteristic and special greatness of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in that all this is done for the sake of him.

(So undoubtedly, along with hardship there is ease. Undoubtedly, along with hardship there is ease....94:6). Grammatically, if the Arabic definite article *al-* is prefixed to an Arabic noun and is repeated with the same definite article *al-*, they refer to the same antecedent. However, if the same noun is repeated without the definite article, they refer to different antecedents. The word *al-'usr* '[the] hardship' in verse [6] is the repetition of *al-'usr* '[the] hardship' occurring in verse [5]. It does not refer to a new hardship. In contrast to this, the word *yusr* 'ease' in both verses occur without the definite article. This indicates that the second *yusr* 'ease' in verse [6] is a different antecedent to the *yusr* 'ease' occurring in verse [5]. Thus it may be concluded that there is only one '*usr* 'hardship' and two *yusr* 'twofold ease'. 'Twofold ease' does not mean twice as much. In fact, it means 'manifold ease'. The verse signifies that only one kind of hardship will face him, but in the wake of it many kinds of ease are assured.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى reports that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ emerged from his home in a very happy mood and, giving cheerful news to his Companions on the basis of the current verse, said: "One hardship cannot overcome twofold ease". Thus history and

biographical books written by Muslims and non-Muslims - all bear ample testimony to fact that the most difficult task, even the seemingly impossible task, became easy for him. The above narration further indicates that the Arabic definite article *al-* signifies that it is an article used to indicate previous knowledge [that is, *al- lil 'ahd*] and refers to the hardship of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions. Allah kept to His promise to them in such a way that the world saw it visibly how in the wake of every hardship the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions experienced the manifold ease that made their task easy. If a person does not achieve 'ease' after 'hardship', it does not contradict this verse. In fact, even now Allah's universal principle applies. One needs to exercise fortitude against hardship, rely on Allah with purity of heart, devote oneself totally to Him, hold onto high hopes for His grace, and one should not despair of His mercy if there is delay in success - He certainly will grant relief after every instance of hardship. [Fawā'id-e-'Usmāniah]. Ḥadīth narratives support this.

The Command for Teachers and Preachers to Remember Allah During Spare Hours

فَإِذَا فَرَغْتَ فَانصَبْ. وَإِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَارْغَبْ (So when you are free [from collective services], exert yourself [in worship], and towards your Lord turn with eagerness....94:8). The Holy Prophet ﷺ is commanded in these verses that when he has finished his day's work of teaching and training his followers and other temporal affairs, he should turn to Allah as ever with all his heart, that is, prayers, remembrance of Allah, supplication and seeking Allah's pardon. This is the interpretation assigned to this verse by most commentators. Some scholars have interpreted it differently, but the foregoing interpretation appears to be the closest. The sum total of this interpretation is as follows: The Holy Prophet ﷺ exerted himself greatly to spread the word of Allah and reform human beings. Exerting himself to human reform was his greatest form of 'worship' but it was 'indirect worship' through planning and executing the plan of human reform. The verse purports to say that the indirect worship is not sufficient. So, when he is free from collective services to humanity, he should devote time to turn to Him by carrying out 'direct worship' by turning to Allah in prayer for the success of his efforts, because this 'direct worship' is what man is created for. Probably, that is why the 'indirect worship' has been

mentioned as something that may be finished and one may be free from, because that is based on need, and a believer can free himself from it, but the 'direct worship' of Allah is such that he cannot free himself from it. He has to spend his entire life and expend all his energy in it.

Note

This indicates that scholars [who are involved in education, propagation and human reform] should not be unmindful of 'direct worship'. Some time should be devoted specifically, in privacy, to attentiveness to, and remembrance of Allah as the biography of the righteous predecessors bear testimony to the fact that without it neither education nor preaching can be effective. It would be devoid of light and blessings.

Note

The word *fanṣab* derived from *naṣab* means 'to be tired'. The verse signifies that one should tire oneself when carrying out acts of worship. One should not carry out acts of worship only when one finds it convenient. Binding oneself to a *waḥīfah* (a usual course of optional worships) is itself quite exerting and tiring, no matter how little.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Inshirāḥ
Ends here

Sūrah At-Tīn

(The Fig)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 8 verses

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

وَالْتَيْنِ وَالزَّيْتُونَ ﴿١﴾ وَطُورِ سَيْنِينَ ﴿٢﴾ وَهَذَا الْبَلَدِ الْأَمِينِ ﴿٣﴾ لَقَدْ
خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾ ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ ﴿٥﴾
إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٦﴾ فَمَا
يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدَ بِالذِّينِ ﴿٧﴾ أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمَ الْحَكِمِينَ ﴿٨﴾

I swear by the Fig and the Olive, [1] and by Tur, the mount of Sinai, [2] and by this peaceful city, [3] We have created man in the best composition, [4] then We turned him into the lowest of the low, [5] except those who believed and did righteous deeds, because for them there is a reward never ending. [6] So, what can make you, after all this, to deny the Requital? [7] Is Allah not the Greatest Ruler of all the rulers? [8]

Commentary

وَالْتَيْنِ وَالزَّيْتُونَ (I swear by the Fig and the Olive...95:1). This verse takes an oath by four objects. Two of them are trees, the fig tree and the olive tree. [The third object] is Tur, the mount of Sinai, and the fourth object is the City of Makkah. The two trees have been specified because they possess abundant blessings and advantages in the same way as Tūr and the City of Makkah possess abundant blessings. Some authorities say that the 'fig' and the 'olive' symbolise, in this context, the lands in which these

trees predominate: that is, the countries bordering on the eastern part of the Mediterranean, especially Palestine and Syria. Most of the Prophets lived and preached in these lands, including Holy Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The latter Prophet ﷺ was made to migrate from here to Makkah. The oaths, in this way, comprehend all the holy places where Allah-inspired men were born and raised as Prophets ﷺ. Syria was the land and home of all the Prophets. Mount Sinai stresses specifically the messengership of Mūsā عليه السلام where Allah spoke to him. 'Peaceful City' refers to Makkah, the birth-place and residence of the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

The subject of the four oaths is: لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ (We have created man in the best composition...95:4). The word *taqwīm* literally denotes 'to set a thing aright or lay the foundation straight or even; or to form something into an appropriate shape in a moderate regulation'. The verse signifies that man has been endowed with the best natural powers and qualities which other creatures have not been endowed with. Physically too he is cast in the best composition - having no parallel in other creatures.

Man is the Most Beautiful of Allah's Creation

Allah has created man the most beautiful of all His creation. Ibn 'Arabī asserts that there is no creature of Allah more beautiful than man, because Allah, besides granting him life, he gave him knowledge, power, speech, hearing, sight, planning and wisdom. All these, in fact, are the qualities of Allah. It is mentioned in a ḥadīth of Bukhārī and Muslim:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ

'Allah has created Adam in His image'

It could only mean that man has been characterised by some of the qualities of Allah, because Allah is beyond any [physical] shape or image. [Qurtubī].

A Wonderful Story of Human Beauty

Qurtubī, on this occasion, cites a story of 'Īsā Ibn Mūsā Hāshimī. He was a high ranking officer in the royal court of Caliph Abū Ja'far Maṣṣūr. The officer loved his wife very much. Once he was sitting with his wife in a moonlit night and suddenly cried out:

انت طالق ثلاثاً ان لم تكونى احسن من القمر

'You are divorced thrice if you are not more beautiful than the moon.'

As soon as the wife heard this, she went into seclusion and veiled herself, on the grounds that the husband has pronounced three express divorce on her. It was said in joke. However, the law of express divorce is that it becomes effective whether uttered jokingly or seriously. 'Īsā Ibn Mūsā spent the night restlessly and in grief. The next morning, he paid a visit to Caliph Abū Ja'far Maṣṣūr and recounted to him the whole story. Caliph Abū Ja'far Maṣṣūr invited all the jurists of the city and put the case before them. All the jurists unanimously agreed that the divorce has become effective, because no human being can possibly be more beautiful than the moon. There was, however, one scholar, a student of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, who remained silent. Maṣṣūr asked him: "Why are you so quiet?" He recited '*Bismillah* to the end' and then recited Sūrah Tīn and explained: "Ruler of the Faithful, Allah says that He has created man in the best composition or in the finest mould. Nothing can be more beautiful than man." Having heard this, all the scholars and jurists were perplexed. None of them opposed him. Maṣṣūr ordered that the divorce is not effective.

This indicates that man is the most beautiful creation of Allah outwardly and inwardly, in terms of elegance and attractiveness and in terms of bodily structure. Every limb of the human body is able to move in many different ways. He is able to hold, move and lift various things by moving his hands and arms. The thumb alone is a masterpiece of creation without which man will not be able to hold things. The functioning of the ears, the eyes, the mouth, the teeth, the nose, the chest and the stomach are all wonders in their own right. Gathered together on his head, they form a beautiful and coherent assortment, each one complementing the other. The flexibility of the tongue, the arrangement of the teeth and the mastery of the vocal cords allow him to roar like a lion and sing as beautifully as a nightingale. All this makes human body look like a sophisticated factory where automatic machines are able to accomplish the delicate work. This is the reason why philosophers call man 'microcosm' [a miniature universe as opposed to 'macrocosm' {a large universe}]. The microcosm epitomises the macrocosm. [Qurtubī]

The Ṣūfīs have supported this concept. Some scholars have analysed in detail - from head to toe - to show how man is the epitome of the large universe.

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ (then We turned him into the lowest of the low...95:5). In the preceding sentence, it was stated that man is created in the best composition and is the most beautiful being. In the prime of his life, man is brimming with strength and vigour and all his faculties are functioning at their best. As opposed to that, this sentence states that when man ages, he physically grows weaker and his health deteriorates all the time. He even begins to lose his physical beauty. He no longer has a good-looking and attractive face. He begins to look uglier. He becomes useless and a burden to others. Other animals, on the contrary, are useful to the end of their lives. Man utilises them for milk, for mounting, for luggage-loading and for myriad of other things. When they are slaughtered or dead, man still utilises their hide, hair, bones and every other part or fibre of theirs usefully. Man, on the other hand, becomes useless when he falls ill or grows old. From the worldly point of view he is unable to do anything. Even when he dies, no part of his body is of any benefit to any man or animal. In short, the phrase 'the lowest of the low' refers to bodily condition. His body bends over and legs can barely carry him. The man who was once supporting others now needs others to support him. [Ḍaḥḥāk and others vide Qurṭubī].

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ (except those who believed and did righteous deeds, because for them there is a reward never ending...95:6). The foregoing interpretation of the preceding verse should not be misunderstood. The exceptive sentence does not mean that the believers will not attain to decrepit old age. It would not be correct to exclude the believers from this, because some of them are also overcome by the senility of old age. The sense, however, is that they do not suffer a big harm due to their physical or mental deterioration in old age. Only those will suffer from it who spent their entire energy on improving their physical condition that has now ended. They shall have no portion of it in the Hereafter. The righteous believers will have an unfailing reward. This verse makes it clear that even after reaching old age, a believer never becomes useless. Even in decrepitude he can accumulate rewards -

comfort and high positions - for the Hereafter that are eternal. During the period of senility when he is unable to do righteous deeds, the good deeds will be recorded in his Record Book which he used to do in good health. Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that when a Muslim falls ill Allah instructs the recording angels to record the good deeds he used to perform in good health. [Al-Baghawī transmitted it in Sharḥ-us-Suunah from Abū Mūsā, and Bukhārī has reported the same rewards for a traveller and a person suffering from a disease.] Here instead of mentioning the rewards and blessings of Paradise for the righteous believers, the verse reads: لَّهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرٌ مَّمْنُونٌ (for them there is a reward never ending.) This could signify that their reward starts in this mortal world [and continues in the Hereafter eternally]. Allah gathers around them in their decrepit old age such sincere companions who benefit from them spiritually until the last moment of their life. They serve them in every possible way. The righteous servants of Allah in decrepitude are productive while generally the senile and people in bad health are thought to be unproductive.

Some commentators say that the statement - رَدَدْنَاهُ أَسْفَلَ سَافِلِينَ (We turned him into the lowest of the low) does not refer to human beings in general. It refers specifically to unbelievers who destroyed the God-given best composition, human perfection, honour and intellect by pursuing physical pleasures. As a result of their ingratitude, they will be turned into the lowest of the low. In this interpretation, the exception - إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا (except those who believed and did righteous deeds, because for them there is a reward never ending) will carry its basic interpretation, in that they will not be turned into the lowest of the low. For those who believed and did righteous deeds, there is a reward that is unending. [Thus in al-Maḥḥarī].

فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدُ بِالذِّينِ (So, what can make you, after all this, to deny the Requital?...95:7). In the preceding verses man is made to realise that Allah created him, He bestowed on him special favours and the revolution that He brought about in his old age. Man will move from stage to stage, finally reaching the grave and the Hereafter. But he rejects the Hereafter, as a result he is warned. He has seen the scenes of Divine omnipotence and revolutions - how dare he denies and rejects the Hereafter! Is Allah not the Greatest Ruler of all the rulers? [8]

Ruling

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that while reciting Sūrah At-Tīn, when one reaches the end of it:

أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَحْكَمَ الْأَحْكَمِينَ

'Is Allah not the Greatest Ruler of all the rulers? [8]'

one should recite:

بَلَىٰ وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

'Yes, indeed, Allah is the Ruler of the rulers, and I bear witness to it.'

The jurists have ruled that it is *mustahab* (preferable/desirable) to recite the words.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah At-Tīn
Ends here

Sūrah Al-'Alaq (The Clot)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 19 verses and 1 section.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 19

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾ اِقْرَأْ
 وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ
 ﴿٥﴾ كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَيْطَغَى ﴿٦﴾ أَنْ رَأَاهُ اسْتَغْنَى ﴿٧﴾ إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ
 الرُّجْعَى ﴿٨﴾ أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَى ﴿٩﴾ عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّى ﴿١٠﴾ أَرَأَيْتَ
 إِنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ الْهُدَىٰ ﴿١١﴾ أَوْ أَمَرَ بِالتَّقْوَىٰ ﴿١٢﴾ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَذَّبَ
 وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿١٣﴾ أَلَمْ يَعْلَمْ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَىٰ ﴿١٤﴾ كَلَّا لَئِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهِ لَنَسْفَعًا
 بِالنَّاصِيَةِ ﴿١٥﴾ نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ ﴿١٦﴾ فَلْيَدْعُ نَادِيَهُ ﴿١٧﴾ سَنَدْعُ
 الزَّبَانِيَةَ ﴿١٨﴾ كَلَّا لَا تَطِعُهُ وَاسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ ﴿١٩﴾

Read with the name of your Lord who created (every thing), [1] He created man from a clot of blood. [2] Read, and your Lord is the most gracious, [3] who imparted knowledge by means of the pen. [4] He taught man what he did not know. [5] The fact is that man crosses the limits, [6] because he deems himself to be free of need. [7] Surely to your Lord is to return. [8] Have you seen him who forbids [9] a slave of Allah when he prays? [10] Tell me, if he is on the right path, [11] or bids to piety,

(would the former still forbid him?) [12] Tell me, if he rejects (the true faith) and turns away, [13] does he not know that Allah is watching (him)? [14] No! If he does not desist, We will certainly drag (him) by forelock, [15] a lying, sinful forelock. [16] So let him call the men of his council, [17] We will call the soldiers of the Hell. [18] No! Never obey him, and bow down in sajdah, and come closer. [19]

Beginning of The Qur’ānic Revelation

It is universally agreed that the first five verses of Sūrah Al-‘Alaq or Iqra’ mark the very beginning of Qur’ānic revelation. [Baghawī]. Bukhārī, Muslim, other authentic sources and overwhelming consensus of scholars, ancient and modern, all concur on this point. However, some scholars state that Sūrah Al-Muddaththir was the first Sūrah to be revealed, and yet others say that Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah [The Opening] was revealed first. It is possible to reconcile between these different views as follows: After the revelation of Sūrah Al-‘Alaq or Iqra’, there was a temporary break in the revelation during which the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to be very sad, but after some time, the Angel Jibra’īl appeared to him once again, and he faced the same situation as he faced when the first verses of Sūrah Iqra’ were revealed to him. On this occasion, the opening verses of Sūrah Al-Muddaththir were conveyed to him by the angel. From this point of view, it may be said that the first Sūrah to be revealed after the temporary break was Sūrah Al-Muddaththir. Some of the Companions held the view that Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah was the first Sūrah to be revealed. They probably meant to say that this was the first Sūrah to be revealed in a complete form. Undoubtedly, some verses (of Sūrahs Al-‘Alaq or Iqra’, Al-Muzzammil and Al-Muddaththir) were revealed earlier, but the rest of the verses of those Sūrahs were revealed at later dates. Al-Fātiḥah is the first Sūrah that was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in its entirety, all seven verses at once. [Maḏharī]

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ First Experience of Revelation

In a lengthy narration, as recorded in the Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim, the Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضى الله عنها says that revelation to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was started by true dreams. Whatever he saw in a dream would happen in reality as clearly as the light of dawn. Then solitude became dear to him, and he used to seclude

himself for worship in the cave Ḥirā', (a cave in the mount known today as 'Jabal-un-Nūr, which is clearly visible in front of Jannat-ul-Ma'lā, the famous graveyard of Makkah) and therein he devoted himself to Divine worship for several nights before he came back to his family and took provisions for his retirement; then he would return to the Mother of the Faithful, Sayyidah Khadijah رضي الله عنها and take more provisions for a similar period. (The period of his stay in the cave is mentioned differently by different reports, but the report of *ṣaḥīḥain* maintains that it was a month, the whole month of Ramaḍān. Authentic traditions are silent about the mode of worship he adopted during this period. Some scholars have opined that he used to worship according to the Shari'ah of Nūḥ, Ibrāhīm and 'Īsā عليهم السلام, but neither any authentic report supports it, nor is it likely, because he was an *'ummiyy* (unlettered). It is, therefore, more likely that his worship was concentration and reflection on Allah Almighty and His omnipotence until the Truth, that is, the revelation came to him while he was in the cave of Ḥirā'; so the angel came to him and said, اِقْرَأْ 'Read'. The Holy Prophet replied, ما انا بقارى 'I am not the one who can read'. (The Holy Prophet ﷺ was under the impression that he was directing him to read a written document. Since the Holy Prophet ﷺ could not read or write, he replied accordingly.) Then the angel embraced him and pressed him so hard that he felt extreme pain, then he released him and said, اِقْرَأْ 'Read'. The Holy Prophet replied, 'I am not the one who can read'. Then he embraced him and pressed him a second time so hard that he felt extreme pain, then he released him again and said, اِقْرَأْ 'Read'. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, ما انا بقارى 'I am not the one who can read'. Then he embraced the Holy Prophet ﷺ and pressed him a third time, then he released him and said,

اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾ اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ
 ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٥﴾

'Read with the Name of your Lord Who created [everything], He created man from a clot of blood. Read, and your Lord is the most gracious, who imparted knowledge by means of the Pen. He taught man what he did not know.'

The Messenger of Allah returned with this message [of five verses] while his heart trembled and he came to Sayyidah Khadijah رضي الله عنها, saying زملوني زملوني 'wrap me up, wrap me up', and she wrapped him up, until the awe left him. (It should be noted that the fear felt by the Holy

Prophet ﷺ was due to the great responsibility delegated to him, and due to the unusual event of seeing an angel in his original form.)

Then he said to Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها while he related to her what had happened: "I feared for myself." Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها said: 'Nay, by Allah, Allah will never expose you to disgrace, because you unite the ties of kinship, and bear the burden of the weak, and earn for the destitute, and offer hospitality to the guests, and help (people) in real distress.'

Then Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها took him to her cousin, Waraqah Ibn Naufal. He was a man who had adopted Christianity (which was a true religion at that time) during the days of Ignorance, and he used to write the Hebrew script, and translate it into Arabic. He was a very old man who had turned blind. Sayyidah Khadījah رضى الله عنها said to him, O Uncle's son! Listen to your brother's son. Waraqah asked him, My brother's son! What have you seen? So the Messenger of Allah related to him what he had seen. Waraqah said to him, This is the very same confidant [angel Jibra'īl عليه السلام] whom Allah sent to Holy Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام; would that I were a young man at this time - would that I were alive when your people would expel you! The Messenger of Allah asked in surprise, "Will they expel me?" He replied. Yes; never has a man appeared with the like of that which you have brought, but he has been held in enmity; and if your time finds me alive, I shall help you with the fullest support. After that, not much time had passed before Waraqah died, and the revelation broke off temporarily. [Bukhārī and Muslim]

The temporary break of revelation, according to Suhailī, lasted for about a year and half. Other reports say that it lasted to about three years. [Maẓharī]

Verse [1] اِقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ (Read with the Name of your Lord, Who created [everything]) In the prepositional phrase *bismi rabbika* [with the name of your Lord], the addition of the word *ismi* is significant in two ways [1] that whenever the Qur'ān is being recited, the reader should begin by reciting the formula بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ "With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful". When Jibra'īl عليه السلام suddenly appeared to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said 'iqra' (read) , he tendered

apology that he is unable to read or recite, because he is unlettered. The phrase *b-ismi rabbika* points to the fact that under present circumstances you, O Holy Prophet ﷺ, may be 'ummiyy' or unlettered, but Allah has the power to grant you the highest level of knowledge, the most elegant style of oration and eloquence, so that you would surpass and subdue the most educated or literate people, as it became manifest later on. [Mazharī]. [2] Allah has many Beautiful Names, but the blessed name *rabb* is particularly chosen in the verse here probably because it supports and emphasizes the theme that Allah cherishes and sustains the Holy Prophet ﷺ through all the different stages of his development, until he is fully consummated. He can make him read and recite, despite being unlettered. In the relative clause *al-ladhī khalaqa* [Who created], particularly contains the Divine attribute of *takhlīq* [creating] presumably because the first Divine favor is *wujūd* or 'existence' as a result of His drawing out beings from the realm of non-existence into the realm of existence. Many other favors of His follow. The verb *khalaqa* [created] is transitive and it requires an object that is absent here. This indicates the verb is used absolutely, and it signifies that the Creator has created the entire universe and every existent thing it contains.

Verse [2] خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ (Created man from a clot of blood.) The previous verse referred to the creation of macrocosm, the large or entire universe in general. In this verse, the phrase is *khalaqa'l-insān* which refers to the creation of microcosm 'the best, noblest or most honourable creation', Man. If analysed carefully, we notice that man is the epitome of macrocosm or the large universe. He is a small scale representation, analogue, or miniature of the large and complex universe. Another reason why man has been particularly mentioned is that the purpose of Prophet-hood, messenger-hood and revelation of the Qur'ān is the implementation of Divine ordinances, injunctions and laws and acting upon them: This is the essential peculiarity of mankind. The word '*alaq*', being the plural of '*alaqatun*', means 'congealed blood'. The creation of man has passed and passes through various phases. His primordial creation is from the four major elements, that is, earth, water, fire and air. His procreation is from an insignificant and humble state, the sperm which then transforms into congealed blood. This is the primary state of

the embryo which happens after the conception. Then it takes the shape of a lump of flesh and then the skeletal structure is created. ‘*Alaqah* is the middle phase in the whole process of creation. The specific mention of ‘*alaqah* covers the initial stage and the final stage of the process of creation.

Verse [3] **اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ** (Read, and your Lord is the most gracious.) The command *iqra’* [Read] has been repeated in this verse for two reasons: The first command in verse [1] was for the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself to read or recite. The second command in this verse is to proclaim, convey, communicate and teach or preach. It is not inconceivable that the command *iqra’* is repeated by deliberate design for emphasis. The Divine attribute *al-Akram* 'the Most Gracious' signifies that Allah did not create the world or man for any ulterior motive, for selfish motivation or for His own benefit. He has done it out of His infinite grace, generosity and magnanimity. He endowed upon the universe the great favour of existence without asking for it.

Verse [4] **الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ** (Who imparted knowledge by means of the Pen.) The preceding verse spoke of the creation of man. The current verse speaks of man's education or literacy, because knowledge, as part of education and literacy, distinguishes man from all other animals and creatures, and occupies the position of the crown of creation. There are two means, methods or media through which knowledge is imparted: [1] oral or spoken method or by word of mouth; and [2] Pen or written method. The command *iqra’* [read] at the beginning of Sūrah refers to the oral or spoken method. However, the current verse, which speaks more explicitly about imparting knowledge, speaks of the written method of recording and transmitting knowledge from generation to generation.

Pen and Writing: The First and Most Important Means of Transmitting Knowledge

An authentic narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لَمَّا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ كَتَبَ فِي كِتَابِهِ فَهُوَ عِنْدَهُ فَوْقَ الْعَرْشِ، اِنْ رَحِمْتِي غَلَبَتْ غَضَبِي

"When Allah created the creation, He inscribed a document which is with Him above the Throne: Indeed My mercy has preceded My anger."

In another narration, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said:

أول ما خلق الله القلم، فقال له: اكتب، فكتب ما يكون إلى يوم القيامة فهو عنده في
الذكر فوق عرشه

"The first thing Allah created was the pen. He told it to write, so it wrote what was to take place till Doomsday. This is with Allah on His Throne." [Qurṭubī]

Three Types of Pen

Scholars have said that there are three types of pen in the world: [1] a Pen that Allah created with His own hand and instructed it to write the decree of the universe; [2] the pen of the angels who record the events that are to occur and their magnitude, they also use it to record the deeds of human beings; and [3] the pen of human beings, which they use to reduce their speech to writing. Writing, in fact, is a kind of speech [or a manifestation of it]. Humans are biologically programmed by Allah for speech, and it is thus natural, inborn and innate faculty. [Qurṭubī] The leading authority on Tafsīr, Mujāhid, cites from Abū ‘Amr that Allah created four things in the entire universe with His own Creative hand, and the rest of the creation came into being by His cosmic command of *kun* [be] and they became. The four things are: [1] the pen; [2] The Divine Throne; [3] the Garden of Eden; and [4] Holy Prophet ‘Ādam ﷺ.

Who was First Trained in the Writing Skill and Art ?

Scholars have differed on this question. Some say the art and skill of writing was first imparted to the father of mankind, i.e. the prophet ‘Ādam ﷺ and he was the first one to write. [Ka‘b Aḥbār]. Others say that this art was first taught to the Holy Prophet Idrīs ﷺ and he was thus the very first scribe. [Daḥḥāk]. Some others have observed that the art and skill of writing is the Divine knowledge given as a gift to anyone whom Allah wills.

Writing Skill and Art: A Great Divine Gift

Sayyidnā Qatādah ﷺ has stated that Pen is a great Divine gift. If Allah had not granted man the art and skill of writing with pen, it would not have been possible for him to preserve or protect the religion in its pristine form, nor would it have been possible for him to conduct his worldly affairs in the proper manner. Sayyidnā ‘Alī ﷺ has stated that it

is a great generosity that Allah has granted His servants knowledge of things they did not know. He drew them out from the darkness of ignorance and brought them into the light of knowledge. He urged them to acquire the art and skill of writing as it accrues great benefits. Only Allah is able to keep count of the benefits of writing. All sciences and philosophies are codified by means of pen. The history of the former and latter nations are compiled by means of pen. Their chronicles and monographs are preserved in writing. The Divinely revealed Books are committed to writing, and shall be preserved till the world lasts. 'The pen' is thus able to make great contribution towards the propagation and dissemination of spiritual sciences and Divine secrets revealed by the Qur'ān and of physical sciences to which the study of the Qur'ān imparted a great stimulus. Without the pen, all worldly and religious works will come to a standstill.

Writing Skill and Art: Attitude of Scholars in All Ages

Scholars of the former and the latter times have always realised the stupendous role pen plays in the preservation and transmission of knowledge, as a result they made a great use of it and left behind a huge legacy of books and writings. It is regretful to notice that in this age students and scholars have ignored the importance of this skill and art. As a result, scarcely a few people in a few million people have mastered the art, or developed the skill, of writing. To Allah do we direct our complaint!

Writing Skill and Art: The Reason Why the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not Taught

It is really very significant that mention should have been made of 'Pen' in a Book which was revealed to a person, the Final Messenger ﷺ, who himself did not know how to read and write. The reason for this is the profound Divine wisdom underlying it. Allah had willed that the dignity and status of the Final Messenger should be far above the thinking of the general populace. Allah placed the Holy Prophet ﷺ in an environment which was not favourable for any spontaneous accomplishments, nor was it conducive to any achievements by natural exposure. His birth-place was the rugged and rocky mountainous terrain. The desert of Arabia had fewer plants apart from the date-palms, little water apart from the *zam zam* well and the weather was always dry, far away from civilisation, and completely cut off from the cradle of knowledge and wisdom. The communications system or network was

inaccessible; as a result, the people of Arabia had no contact with Syria, Iraq, Egypt and other civilised areas of the world. Hence, all the Arabs were referred to as 'unlettered' who generally had no respect for knowledge, wisdom and writing. Very rarely people had the opportunity to learn knowledge or to acquire the art and skill of writing. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was born in such bare region, among such illiterate tribes and in such harsh environment. He was never given the opportunity to become literate. It was inconceivable that a person born in such a surrounding will be gifted with knowledge, wisdom and high morals. He was, however, suddenly granted the cloak of Prophet-hood, together with incessant flow of knowledge and wisdom. The greatest of poets and orators of Arabia were subdued by the eloquence of the unlettered Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was his open and overt miracle. Every open-minded person should be able to see with his eye of certainty that his attainments were not the result of acquisition by his own efforts or human exertion, but they were the result of the invisible generosity of Allah Who endowed him with the Prophetic gift. This is the Divine wisdom underlying the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not trained in the skill and the art of writing. [Adapted from Qurṭubī]

Verse [5] عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (Taught Man what he did not know." The preceding verse was concerned with a particular means of teaching, namely, 'pen', the written method.

Many other Means of Teaching

The present verse purports to say that the real teacher is Allah, and He has innumerable ways and means, besides pen, to impart knowledge. Therefore, the verse says that Allah taught man things with which he was unacquainted previously. The verse does not mention 'pen' or any other means of teaching. The reason for that is man is taught from the very inception of his life. First, he is gifted with intellect, the greatest means of receiving knowledge. Man, by the right use of intellect, is able to understand many things. Further, his entire environment is the manifestation of the perfect power of Allah and studded with the evidence of Divine power by witnessing which he is able to recognise his Creator. Revelation and inspiration are other means of knowledge. The knowledge of many essential things are learnt intuitively. Intuition is the God-given ability to know or understand things through feelings, rather than by considering facts or evidence. As a result, there is no need for tongue or pen. When a baby is born, it is not conscious of how its environment

operates. However, it instinctively reaches out for the mother's breast, when it feels hungry and feeds itself. Who teaches it and who can teach it? Allah has taught it the 'skill' of crying since its birth. The cry of the baby is the means of satisfying all its needs. When it cries, it becomes a cause of concern for the parents to find out what is wrong. The baby's cry satisfies its hunger, thirst, heat and cold. Who teaches the new-born baby how to cry? All this is instinctive knowledge with which Allah has programmed every living organism, especially man. After the instinctive knowledge, man's knowledge continues to increase by word of mouth, and then by the supra-rational organ of intuition, called the heart. Apparently, there was no need to say مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (... what he did not know) because normally knowledge is imparted of things that are not known. It is explicitly stated here, probably because man may not assume that the God-given knowledge and skills are the results of his own efforts and exertion. The concluding phrase مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ "what he did not know" has been added in order to make man realise that there was a time when he knew nothing, thus in [16:78] we came across أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَاتَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا (And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs when you knew nothing...). This shows that knowledge is not an ingrained personal excellence of man. It is the gift of the Creator and the Master. [Maḥzarī]. Some scholars interpret the word 'man' to be referring to the Holy Prophet 'Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام because he was the first man to whom knowledge was imparted, thus in [2:31] وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا (And He taught 'Ādam the names, all of them...). And others say the reference is to the Final Messenger ﷺ whose knowledge embraces the knowledge of all the previous Prophets.

As stated earlier, these five verses of this Sūrah represent the very beginning of the revelation of the Qur'an. Verses [6-19] of the Sūrah are of much later date. We assert this on the following grounds: These verses were revealed in connection with an incident in which Abū Jahl prevented the Holy Prophet ﷺ from offering *ṣalāh*. In the initial stages of revelation and Prophet-hood, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had no enemies in Makkah. All used to call him by the title of 'al-Amīn' [the honest or upright]. They respected and loved him. Abū Jahl's enmity and opposition obviously started when the Holy Prophet ﷺ proclaimed his propagation openly, called the people towards Islam publicly, and performed the *ṣalāh* in the Sacred Mosque. *Ṣalāh* was prescribed on the Night of Ascent, (Mi'rāj). Therefore, prevention from *ṣalāh*, referred to in these verses, may not be imagined before that time.

Verses [6-7] كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِكَبَّاتٍ. أَنْ رَأَاهُ اسْتَغْنَى. (The fact is that man crosses the limits, because he deems himself to be free of need.) Although the verse immediately refers to a particular person, namely, Abū Jahl who insulted the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the statement is general which draws man's attention to one of his weaknesses. So long as man is in need of others, he walks straight; but when he thinks that he does not need anyone, he tends towards transgression, and develops the tendency to wrong-doing, tyranny and oppression. This is generally the behavior of the affluent people, government officials, and people with abundant children and friends or servants. They become purse-proud and intoxicated with the leadership power they exercise on their groups. Abū Jahl was a typical example of this. He was one of the well-to-do and prosperous people of Makkah. All the members of his tribe and inhabitants of the city respected and obeyed him. He became arrogant and insulted the leader of all the Prophets ﷺ - the noblest of creation. The next verse warns such arrogant people about the evil consequences of their behavior.

Verse [8] إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرَّجْعِي (Surely to your Lord is the Return.) The word *ruj'a*, like *bushrā*, is the verbal noun of infinitive - meaning all will be returning to their Lord. The apparent meaning is 'returning to the Lord after death and giving account of good and bad deeds and seeing with their own eyes the evil consequences of arrogance.' The profounder meaning of the verse is that though man has been endowed with great natural powers and has been created in the best make, he errs grievously if he thinks that he can ignore Allah's help and guidance. He constantly stands in need of Divine assistance, because his capacities and capabilities - either as an individual or in his collective capacity - are at best limited. The proud and arrogant man is thus not self-sufficient. If he thinks deeply, he will find that he needs Allah for every movement and pause. If He has apparently not made any member of the human species in need of another, he is at least in need of Allah for all his needs. Thinking that human beings are not in need of one another is also a fallacy. Allah has made man a social being, and as such he cannot satisfy all his needs by himself. Allah has made the social system or network such that all human beings need one another to satisfy their needs some time or the other. Let us consider an example: A fresh morsel of food that goes into our mouth and we swallow it unreflecting, is the result of thousands of human beings and animals who worked hard for a long period of time. It is not

possible for anyone to engage so many thousands of human beings in his service. The same applies to clothes and other needs which require the services of thousands of millions of humans and animals to prepare the needful things. None of them is his servant. Even if he hires them at a rate of wages to work for him, it would not be possible for him to pay them their wages or salary. This secret or mystery dawns upon man when he realizes that the system of preparing all his needs is set into motion by the consummate wisdom of the Creator of the universe. He inspired someone to become a farmer, He cast into another's mind to become a woodcutter or a carpenter, He kindled in someone else's mind to become a blacksmith, He stimulated others to be content with labouring or working for somebody else, He ignited in others the burning desire to be involved in commerce or business, trade or industry. In this way, Allah has set up a *bazaar* of human needs which no government, nor its legal system or an individual could ever set up. A careful thinking along this line must lead us to the natural corollary that إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَىٰ (Surely to your Lord is the Return.", that is, we witness that ultimately all things are under Divine power and wisdom.

Verses [9-10] أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَىٰ . عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّىٰ (Have you seen him who forbids a slave of Allah when he prays?) From here to the end of the Sūrah, the verses allude to an incident. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ was enjoined to perform the *ṣalāh*, he started performing it at first privately, later in public in the Sacred Mosque. Abū Jahl stopped him from performing *ṣalāh* and threatened him that if he were to perform *ṣalāh* and prostrate, he would [God forbid!] trample his neck. Verse [14] أَلَمْ يَعْلَم بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرَىٰ (Does he not know that Allah is watching?) is in response to the threat made by Abū Jahl, and the verse does not mention whom He is watching. It is of general application - He is watching the pious personality who is performing the *ṣalāh*, as well as the wretched, miserable person who is obstructing the performance of the *ṣalāh*. Here the statement merely asserts that Allah is watching everything and everyone. It does not specify what will happen at Resurrection, because the horrible, terrible and dreadful scenes of that are unimaginable.

Verse [15 - concluding part] لَنَسْفَعًا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ (...We will certainly drag [him] by forelock.) The *nasfa'an* is derived from the infinitive *safuun* which means 'to seize and drag' and the word *nāṣiyah* means 'forelock', that is, the front part of a person's hair that falls forward over the

forehead. When a person's forelock is seized , he becomes helpless in the hands of the seizer.

Verse [19] *كَلَّا لَا تَطِعَهُ وَأَسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ* (No! never obey him, and bow down in *sajdah* {Prostration}, and come closer.) The Holy Prophet ﷺ is advised to ignore and disobey Abū Jahl when he stops him from praying. He is asked to be steadfast in prayer and prostration.

Acceptability of Supplication in the Posture of Prostration

It is recorded in Abū Dāwūd on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *اقرب ما يكون العبد من ربه وهو ساجد فاكثروا الدعاء* (The closest that a servant can be to his Lord is when he is in prostration. Therefore, make abundant supplications [while prostrating]) Another authentic Tradition states: *فإنه قمن ان يستجاب لكم* (...because it is fitting and proper that supplications be accepted in the state of prostration.)

Ruling

It is valid to supplicate in the supererogatory (*nafl*) *ṣalāh* while prostrating. In certain narrations, special words of the supplications are recorded from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is better to recite those transmitted prayers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. There is no proof or evidence of such supplications in the prostration of obligatory *ṣalāh*, because the obligatory *ṣalāh* needs to be short.

Ruling

A prostration is compulsory for one who recites this verse and listens to it. A narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه states that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to prostrate when he recited this verse. Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-‘Alaq
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Qadr

(The *Qadr*)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 5 verses

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 5

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ ﴿١﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ ﴿٢﴾ لَيْلَةُ
الْقَدْرِ لَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ ﴿٣﴾ تَنَزَّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ
رَبِّهِمْ مِّنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ ﴿٤﴾ سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطَلَعِ الْفَجْرِ ﴿٥﴾

We have sent it (the Qur'an) down in the Night of *Qadr*.
[1] And what may let you know what the Night of *Qadr* is? [2] The Night of *Qadr* is much better than one thousand months. [3] The angels and the Spirit descend in it, with the leave of your Lord, along with every command. [4] Peace it is till the rising of dawn. [5]

Occasion of Revelation

Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported from Mujāhid (as *mursal ḥadīth*) that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was told about a *mujāhid* [warrior in the cause of religion] from amongst the Children of Israel who carried weapons of war on his shoulders for a thousand months during which time he never laid down his arms. The Companions were amazed when they heard this. On that occasion, this Sūrah was revealed which describes that worship in the Night of *Qadr* granted to this *Ummah* exceeds by more than a thousand months of *jihād* persistently fought by that warrior. According to another narration of Mujāhid cited in Ibn Jarīr, a worshipper from among the Children of Israel used to worship Allah the whole night, and

as soon as the dawn broke, he would arm himself and fight the whole day. This continued consecutively for a thousand months. This Surah was thus revealed. This shows the superiority of the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and that the Night of *Qadr* is a special characteristic of this *ummah*. [Maḏharī].

Meaning of The Night of *Qadr*

One meaning of the word *Qadr* is 'greatness, honour or dignity'. Zuhri and other scholars have assigned this meaning to it. The night is called the Night of *Qadr* because it is a night of greatness, honour, majesty and dignity. Abū Bakr Warrāq has stated that this night is so called because a person becomes a man of honour and dignity on account of repentance, seeking pardon and righteous acts during this night, whilst prior to this he might have lacked honour and dignity on account of unrighteous life he might have led.

Another meaning of the word *Qadr* is 'predestination'. From this point of view, the night is so called because the destiny of individuals and nations that was decided in pre-eternity is assigned to the relevant angels who are appointed for cosmic planning. Every man's age, death, sustenance, rain and other things are measured out to the angels to be implemented for a complete year from one month of Ramaḏān to another. If an individual is destined to perform Ḥajj in the forthcoming year, it will be prescribed. According to Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, there are four angels in charge of cosmic planning: [1] Isrāfīl; [2] Mīkā'īl; [3] 'Izrā'īl; and [4] Jibra'īl عليهم السلام.

It is clearly stated in [44:3-5]

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ ﴿٣﴾ فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾ أَمْرًا مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ﴿٥﴾

We have sent it down in a blessed night, (because) We had to warn (people). [3] In that (night), every wise thing is decided [4] through a command from Us. We were to send the Messenger [5]. (44:3-5)

'*Laylatun Mubārakah*' or the 'blessed', according to overwhelming scholars of the Qur'an, refers to the Night of *Qadr*. The angels record and

descend with whatever Allah has destined or decreed for the coming year. Some scholars hold that the 'blessed night' in 44: 3 refers to the fifteenth night of *Sha'bān*, that is, '*Laylatul Barā'ah*' or the 'Night of Immunity'. This view may be reconciled with the former one by holding that the initial Divine decrees are decided on the Night of Immunity, and the details are recorded and handed over to the relevant angels on the Night of *Qadr*. This is supported by a narration of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه which Baghawī has recorded on the authority of Abū-Ḍuḥā which states that Allah decrees all cosmic matters on the Night of Immunity, but they are only handed over to the relevant angels on the Night of *Qadr*. [Maḏharī].

Date of the Night of *Qadr*

It is explicitly stated in the Qur'ān that the Night occurs in the blessed or auspicious month of Ramaḏān, but its exact date has not been disclosed. As a result, it is disputed and debated among scholars. There are about forty opinions recorded. Maḏharī states that the most authentic opinion is that the Night of *Qadr* occurs in the last ten nights of *Ramaḏān*, but no specific date has been fixed. It could be any of the last ten odd nights which may alternate from year to year. According to authentic Traditions, it could be one of the following nights: 21, 23, 25, 27 and 29. Thus all the apparently conflicting Traditions relating to the odd nights are reconciled. All the Traditions pertaining to the date of the Night are authentic, and there is no need for any convoluted interpretation. Most eminent jurists - like Abā Qilābah, Imām Mālik, Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, Sufyān Thawrī, Iṣḥāq Ibn Rahwaih, Abū Thawr, Muzanī, Ibn Khuzaymah and others - agree that the Night occurs in the last ten odd nights, alternating. Imām Shāfi'ī has two opinions. In one he sides with the majority, and in another he holds that the night is fixed and does not alternate. [Ibn Kathīr].

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah's رضي الله عنها narration is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī, according to which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: "تحرّوا ليلة القدر في العشر الأواخر من رمضان" "Look for the Night of *Qadr* in the last ten nights of Ramaḏān." Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه narrates, as recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "فاطلبوها في الوتر منها" "Search for it in the last ten odd nights of Ramaḏān." [Maḏharī].