

Islamic Studies

A CORE TEXT FOR **O** LEVEL



GRADE 11

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DARUSSALAM
GLOBAL LEADER IN ISLAMIC BOOKS

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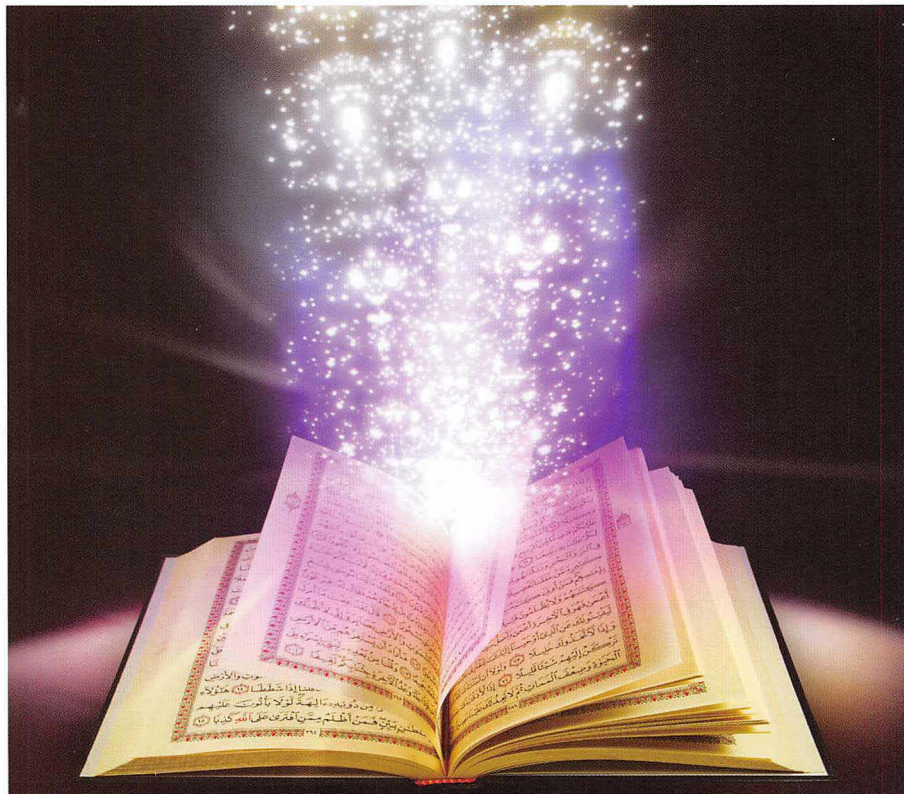
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What is the Qur'an?



1.1. Definition of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the Arabic Speech of Allah which He revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ (47:2) through Angel Jibreel عليه السلام in its precise meaning and exact wording. It is the literal, uncreated Word of Allah. The word 'Qur'an' is frequently mentioned in the Glorious Book itself (See for instance 2:185, 10:37, 10:61 and 17:106).

The Qur'an clearly states to whom, when, in what language, how and why it was revealed: It was revealed in the month of *Ramadaan* (2:185) on the Night of Power or Decree '*Laylat-ul-Qadr*' (97:1): 'We revealed it on a blessed Night.' (44:3)

It was revealed in the Arabic language: **'Surely, We have made it in the Arabic language so that you may be able to understand it.'** (43:3).

It was revealed in portions, each of which was written and committed to memory as soon as it was revealed, and its revelation was spread over twenty-three years of the Prophet's life, during which time he was occupied solely with the spread of its message:

"It is a Qur'an which We have divided [into parts from time to time] so that you may recite it to the people at intervals; and We have revealed it by stages." (17:106)

1.2. The Qur'an is the Highest Form of Revelation

Although the Gracious Qur'an was revealed piecemeal, the entire revelation is one whole. It is the Word of Allah revealed through the Holy Spirit, that is, Angel Jibreel ﷺ. Revelation takes place in three forms: **'It is not fitting for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, from behind a veil or by sending a messenger that reveals – by His permission – whatever Allah wills.'** (42:51)

The first of these modes is called *wahy*, which is used here in its literal sense of *al-ishaarah as-saree'ah*, that is to say, a quick suggestion into the mind of man.

The Qur'an is unique. It is inimitable and is protected by Allah from all forms of corruption. The word Qur'an is a verbal noun which means 'the reading' or 'recitation'.

1.3. The Qur'an is Protected by Allah from Corruption

Previous revelations had been corrupted intentionally, but the Qur'an's final message to man is exactly the same in its present form as it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ more than 1400 years ago.

Islam teaches us that Allah created the entire universe, the angels, the *jinn* and then mankind in the persons of Adam and his wife. The history of humanity began with the disobedience of the first couple and their expulsion from Paradise, but Allah did not abandon them; rather, He promised to guide them by sending them prophets.

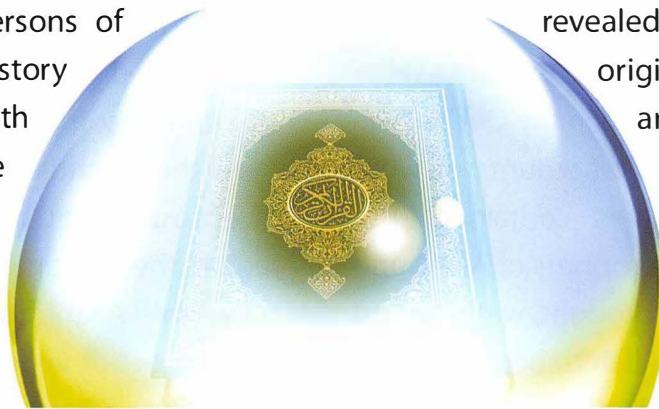
Adam ﷺ was the first Prophet. Some of the prophets brought people Sacred Books from Allah: the best known were the Torah (*at-Tawraat*), which was given to Prophet Moosaa ﷺ; the Psalms (*az-Zaboor*), which was given to Prophet Daawood ﷺ; and the Gospel (*al-Injeel*) which was given to Prophet 'Eesaa ﷺ. Many additions and deletions had crept into these books, but the Qur'an has remained

intact because Allah the Almighty has taken it upon Himself to protect it, as the Qur'an says, **'We have sent down the Reminder, and We will guard it [from corruption].'** (*Soorat al-Hijr*, 15:9)

Harun Yahya writes,

The Divine Scriptures that were revealed before Islam lost their original forms over time; they are either incomplete or not fully accurate. In the case of the Qur'an, however, Allah placed the revelations into our Prophet's memory.

In addition, after he received each revelation, the Prophet ﷺ told his numerous companions to write them down, thereby ensuring the Qur'an's preservation in its original textual form. Caliph Abu Bakr (632-634) had the Qur'an compiled into a single copy, and Caliph 'Uthmaan (644-656) had copies of it sent to important Islamic cities. The following verses explain how our Prophet ﷺ tried to remember the revelations, and how Allah helped him do so:



Do not move your tongue trying to hasten it. Its collection and recitation are Our affair. So when We recite it, follow its recitation. Then its explanation is Our concern. (Soorat al-Qiyaamah, 75:16-19)

As the verses maintain, our Prophet ﷺ remembered the Qur'an in a unique way, for Allah implanted its verses in his mind. As his Companions wrote it all down while he was still alive, in compliance with His promise, each of its letters has remained unaltered since the beginning of its revelation over 1,400 years ago. Therefore, Allah's revelation has survived intact to our day.

The Qur'an's lack of any internal contradiction and discrepancy also shows that it is from Allah and is immune to change. The Qur'an is internally consistent and in full agreement with historical developments and scientific discoveries. This attribute is so certain and explicit that our Lord stated:

Will they not ponder the Qur'an? If it had been from other than Allah, they would have found many inconsistencies in it. (Soorat an-Nisaa', 4: 82)¹

¹ Harun Yahya, *Allah Promised to Protect the Qur'an*, available at: http://www.nnseek.com/e/aus.religion.islam/allah_promised_to_protect_the_qur_an_24845933t.html

All the teachings contained in the former scriptures that were meant to be of lasting value and importance are included in the Qur'an. The Qur'an gives some specific accounts of what the pre-Qur'anic scriptures contained. The basic message of all the prophets of Allah, and hence all scriptures they brought, was one and the same message from Allah to people:

Indeed, We have sent forth among every community a messenger with the commandment "Worship Allah Alone and shun all false deities and objects of worship!" (16:36)

Thus, the Qur'an not only preserves the essential teachings of the previous revelations but also sets out once and for all the eternal truth in its entirety. Indeed, it is a book that contains the essence of the revelations made to the prophets, preserving them so perfectly

that the reader has no need to have recourse to other sacred scriptures, which have undergone all forms of corruption.

All the essential points, in every respect, are given to us in the Qur'an. The Muslims, therefore, regard the Qur'an as the Most Sacred object on earth – Allah's Supreme Gift to mankind. It is an object of veneration and the foundation of human understanding of the universe and man's place in it:

If all men and jinn were to collaborate, they could not produce its like. (17:88)

The Prophet ﷺ was authorized to challenge his critics and opponents to produce something comparable (10:38). The challenge was taken up by more than one stylist in Arabic literature – with a predictable result. The style of the Qur'an is Allah's style – this is basically what forms the miraculous character of the Qur'an.

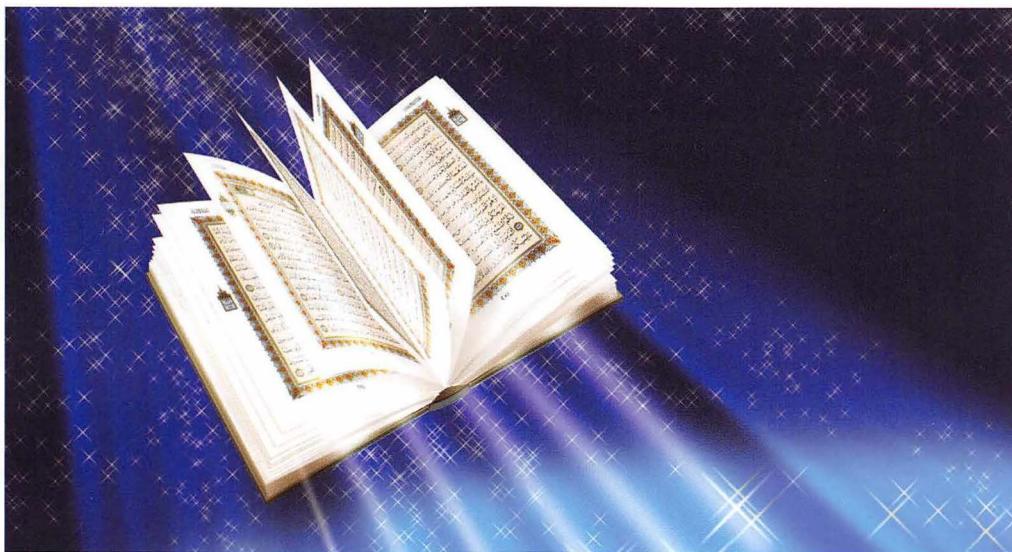
1.4. The Names of the Qur'an

Almighty Allah refers to the Qur'an by a number of names. These include "the Qur'an" (17:88), the Book "*al-Kitaab*" (2:2), the Criterion "*al-Furqaan*" (25:1), the Reminder "*ad-Dhikr*" (15:9) and the Revelation sent down "*at-Tanzeel*" (26:192).

Other references to the Qur'an are by such terms as *an-Noor* (the Light), *Hudaa* (Guidance), *Rahmah* (Mercy), *Majeed* (Glorious), *Mubaarak* (Blessed) and *Nadheer* (Warner), among other names.

1.5. The Qur'an: the Final Revelation

Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was the Last Messenger from Allah to mankind; he brought the final revelation – the Qur'an – from Allah to man. Therefore, the Qur'an is the last of the Holy Scriptures.



1.6. The Beginning of Revelation

The revelation of the Qur'an began in *Laylat-ul-Qadr* (the Night of Power) of *Ramaḍaan* (the twenty-seventh night or one of the odd nights of its third part) after Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ had passed the fortieth year of his life, during his seclusion in the cave of *Hiraa'*, on a mountain near Makkah, in the year 610 CE.

The first revelation he received constitutes the first five verses of *Soorat al-'Alaq* (the Clinging Clot):

Read in the Name of your Lord, who created; created man from a clinging clot.

Read! And your Lord is the Most Gracious One; He Who has taught by the pen; He has taught man that which he knew not. (96:1-5)

The remainder part of this *soorah*, which consists of 19 verses, was revealed on some other occasion.

1.7. The Second Revelation

The second portion of the Glorious Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ was the beginning of *Soorat Al-Muddath-thir* (74:1-5). The rest of the *soorah* was revealed later. This *soorah* consists of 56 verses.

1.8. The Last Revelation

Many Muslim Scholars are agreed that the last revelation was verse 281 of *Soorat al-Baqarah*:

And fear the day when you shall be brought to Allah. Then each soul shall be paid in full what it has earned and none shall be dealt with unjustly.

The Prophet ﷺ passed away nine nights after the last revelation. Some scholars, however, hold that the following verse was the last verse to be revealed.

This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. (*Soorat al-Maa'idah*, 5:3)

This opinion, however, is not sound according to many scholars who argue that this verse was actually revealed during the Farewell Pilgrimage.

Review

- Define the word 'Qur'an'.
- What are the different names of the Qur'an?
- Can you explain how the Qur'an is inimitable?
- What are the three forms of revelation? How can the Qur'an be the highest form of revelation?
- The Qur'an is the essence of all former revelations. Discuss.
- How and why has the Qur'an remained unchanged?
- How can you prove that the Qur'an is the final revelation of Allah?
- How did the revelation of the Qur'an begin? What do you know about the final and last revelations?
- What do you think is meant by "Farewell Pilgrimage"?



1.9. Reasons why the Qur'an was Revealed in Stages

- The Gracious Qur'an was sent down in stages over a period of 23 years, and not as a complete book in one single act of revelation. There are several reasons for this, and the following are the most significant:
- To strengthen the heart of Allah's Messenger ﷺ from time to time and whenever the need for guidance arose.
- Out of consideration for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, since revelation was a very difficult experience for him.
- To gradually implement the commands of Allah.
- To make understanding, translation into action and memorization of the revelation easier for the believers.
- It is established that the Qur'an had been memorized in its entirety by the companions of the Prophet ﷺ during his lifetime. This tradition continued after the Prophet's death and later among all generations of Muslims that have followed, until today.

1.10 How was the Qur'an Collected?

Although the Qur'an was revealed in portions, it did not remain long on that fragmentary condition. As its very name suggests, it was a book from the first; it could not be complete until its last verse was revealed; it was never without some form of arrangement. In fact, every single verse, part of a verse or *soorah* that was revealed had its own definite place in the Gracious Book. The arrangement of the Qur'an was thus a part of divine scheme. It has been established that the Qur'an had been written down in its entirety in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ but had not been brought together in one single place. However, the ordering of the Qur'an and the arrangement of the various *soorahs* was fixed by the Prophet ﷺ himself and safeguarded through oral transmission.

Whenever a *soorah* or verses of a *soorah* were revealed to the Prophet ﷺ, he would call one of his scribes¹ and say to him, 'Write such-

¹ A scribe is a person who made copies of written documents before printing was invented.

and-such a verse in the *soorah* where such-and-such verses occur.' (Abu Daawood)

In fact, if we keep in mind the use that was made of the Qur'an, we cannot for an instant entertain the idea that the Glorious Qur'an existed without arrangement of its verses and *soorahs* in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ. It was not only recited in the daily prayers but also committed to memory and regularly recited to keep it fresh in the mind. Therefore, if the arrangement of the verses and *soorahs* had not existed, it would have been impossible to recite it in the daily prayers, congregational or otherwise, or to commit it to memory. If the prayer leader (*imaam*) happens to make the slightest change in the place of a verse during the congregational prayer, he will immediately be corrected by those behind him!

The Glorious Qur'an thus existed in a complete and ordered form in the memories of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ during his lifetime, but no complete written copy of it existed at the time, nor could such a copy be made while the Prophet ﷺ was still alive

and still receiving revelations. However, the entire Qur'an was safely preserved in the memories of his companions who were called *Qurraa'*, or reciters.

It so happened, however, that many of the reciters fell in the famous Battle of Yamaamah during in the caliphate of Abu Bakr aṣ-Ṣiddeeq ؓ, and it was then that 'Umar ibn Al-Khattaab ؓ pointed out to Abu Bakr the necessity of compiling a standard written copy so that no portion of the Qur'an would be lost even if all the reciters died. This copy was compiled from the manuscripts written under the direction of the Prophet ﷺ himself, and the arrangement followed was that of the oral recitation as followed in the time of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Thus a standard written copy was prepared and entrusted to the care of Hafsah ؓ, wife of the Prophet ﷺ and daughter of 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab. Later on, 'Uthmaan ibn 'Affaan, the fourth rightly-guided caliph ordered copies to be made from this standard copy. These copies were then sent to different parts of the Islamic state.

1.11 Divisions of the Glorious Qur'an

The Qur'an is divided into 114 *soorahs*. The term *soorah* (pl. *suwar*, generally written as *soorahs* here) literally means an enclosure or fencing, such as the walls around a city. It is also used to denote an elevated plain. When applied to the Qur'an, it signifies a specific group of verses, arranged in a specific manner. In technical language, *soorah* is the chapter-wise division of the Qur'anic text – a chapter or part set apart from the preceding and following text.

The Qur'an consists of 114 *soorahs* of unequal length, the shortest consisting of three and the longest of 286 verses, or *aayaat*.

The Arabic word *aayah* (pl. *aayaat*) means sign. It is the shortest division of the Qur'anic text, that is to say a phrase or sentence. The Revelation is Guidance from Allah to mankind. It is, therefore, not at all surprising to discover that its small divisions are called Signs (Signs of Guidance). The expression verse is not accurate since the Qur'an is not poetry.

All *soorahs*, with the exception of *Soorah 9*, begin with the words '*Bismillaahir-Rahmaanir-Raheem*'. All 114 *soorahs* in the Qur'an have their names, which serve as a sort of heading.

Both the arrangement of the *soorahs* and the order of the *aayaat* within each *soorah* were determined by the Prophet ﷺ under the guidance of Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) عليه السلام.

Other Divisions of the Qur'anic Text

The Qur'an is divided into 30 portions of approximately equal length for easy recitation during the thirty days of a month. Each of these portions is called a *juz'* (pl. *ajzaa'*). *Juz'* literally means 'part' or 'portion'. Some copies of the Qur'an have the *soorahs* divided into *ruku'* (sections or paragraphs). The *ruku'* is usually accompanied by three numbers. The top number denotes the number of the *ruku'* with respect to that particular *soorah*, the middle number indicates the number of verses in that *ruku'* and the bottom number indicates the number of the *ruku'* with respect to the *juz'* in

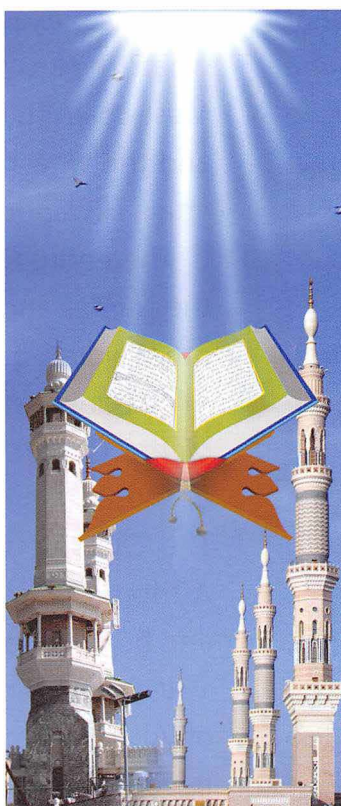
which it occurs.

Copies of the Qur'an printed in Arab countries in particular have each *juz'* subdivided into four *ahzaab* (singular, *hizb*) indicated by the word *hizb*, printed in Arabic. Each *hizb* is subdivided into four quarters called *rub'*.

The Qur'anic text is also divided into seven parts of approximately equal lengths, each of which is called *manzil*, so that if a person wishes to complete the recitation of the Qur'an in one week, he may do so by reciting one *manzil* a day.

1.12. Makkan and Madinan Soorahs

An important division of the Gracious Qur'an relates to the Makkan and Madinan *soorahs*. After having received the first revelation, the Prophet ﷺ spent thirteen years in Makkah and then was forced to emigrate to Madeenah, where he spent the last ten years of his life. Hence, the *soorahs* of the Qur'an have also been classified, according to their origin, into Makkan and Madinan *soorahs*.



A *soorah* is said to be of Makkan origin when its beginning was revealed in the Makkan period even if it contains verses from Madeenah. Likewise, a *soorah* is said to be of Madinan origin when its beginning was revealed in the Madinan phase even if it has verses from the Makkan period in its text.

Out of the total of 114 *soorahs* into which the Glorious Qur'an is divided, 85 *soorahs* are, according to scholars, of Makkan origin. The Madinan *soorahs* are longer than the makkan ones and, therefore, comprise a much larger part of the Qur'an.

1.13. Coherence in the Qur'an: *Nadhm*

Coherence (*nadhm*) denotes clear logical connection of ideas, arguments and sentences, among other things, so that together they make a whole. Every *soorah* in the Qur'an is a perfect unit with a central theme around which it revolves. The central theme is the unifying 'thread' in the *soorah*.

It is true that every *soorah* is a unit, but there also exists a logical link between all the *soorahs* as they follow one another. Between different *soorahs* there is also a logical unity and coherence.

With the exception of a few, all *soorahs* are found in the Qur'an in pairs that complement each other.

The concept of the pairing of the *soorahs* is original to Amin Ahsan Islahi (1904-1997). According to Islahi, the Qur'anic *soorahs* in their arrangement are, as a rule, paired. That is, just as, on one level, each *soorah* is an integrated whole and it is distinct from all the others, so on another level, all *soorahs* exist in the form of pairs, each of which is composed of two closely matched *soorahs* and distinct from other pairs. For a detailed and interesting discussion of this approach which is based and evolved around the concept of order and coherence in the contents of the Qur'an, you may refer to *Coherence in the Qur'an* by Mustansir Mir, American Trust Publications, Indianapolis, USA, and also to *Pondering over the Qur'an* by Muhammad Saleem Kayani, al-Kitab Publications, London, UK.



1.14. What is the Qur'an about?

The Qur'an is the word of Allah and a book of guidance. A question may arise here: Guidance to what? The answer is simply guidance to Allah, to His Most Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes, His Will and the way in which one may conduct oneself to attain His Good Pleasure.

The entire Qur'an, so to say, is the exposition of the Names and Attributes of Allah the Almighty. In other words, guiding the creation to understanding Allah's Oneness (*tawhīd*) is the overriding objective of the Qur'an. Thus, one of the major objectives of the Qur'an is to teach the creation about Allah. The Qur'anic teachings about Allah's Names and Attributes are extremely essential for the strength and health of one's faith.

If one has knowledge and correct understanding of Allah's Names and Attributes, then one would never turn to anyone else or direct any form of

worship to anyone other than to Allah. It is worth mentioning here that all that is in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet ﷺ is also the exposition of the Qur'an. This guidance to Allah, knowledge of His Names of Attributes and His Will and guidance to right conduct, cannot be obtained by any means other than the Qur'an and its complementary, the *Sunnah*: the sayings and the excellent practices of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

The Qur'an guides to the straight path that leads to Allah's pleasure and Paradise. It gives truth-seekers the proper concept of the truth as well as the willpower and the moral courage to produce a living model of that concept in real life. It helps them overcome the obstacles they might encounter from within or without. Thus the Qur'an is a book that is squarely aimed at man. Indeed, it is 'guidance for mankind' (2:185), as Almighty Allah says about it.

It is in fact guidance for all the needs and benefits of the life of this world and that of the hereafter. It is first and foremost a Book of Guidance.

Allah also describes the Qur'an as light '*noor*' (42:52). Light shows us the path in front of us. In fact, it is through light that we can avoid the harmful things in our way and follow the safe path. However, this light is different from the light one senses in the physical world. It is a spiritual light whereby we recognize and understand what is of real benefit to us in this world and in the world to come. This light leads to the Straight Path and to Allah's Grace and

Mercy. Nevertheless, this light is only beneficial for those who follow it.

The Qur'an speaks about the past, the present and the future. It also speaks about the unseen. The verses of the Qur'an may be classified into three categories:

those related to the stories of the prophets and earlier communities, those related to commands and prohibitions, and those related to Allah and His Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes.

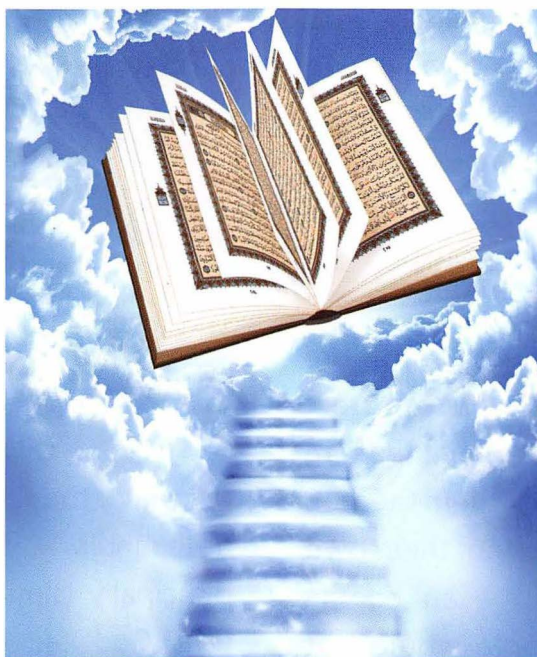
The Qur'an is Allah's speech. It is directly related to His noble attributes of greatness, mercy, forgiveness and knowledge. When we live our life according to the teachings of the

Qur'an, we actually live it in a way that is pleasing to Allah – our Creator. Life in the shade of the Qur'an is, in reality, a life that brings one closer to Almighty Allah. Thus, there can be no doubt then that one of the major objectives of the Qur'an is to teach people about Allah – their Creator.

The Qur'an guides us in every aspect of our lives. It is undoubtedly one of

the greatest blessings that Allah has given us. Among the most significant aspects to which the Qur'an guides mankind is good character and proper conduct. Speaking about the purpose for which he has been sent, Allah's Messenger ﷺ once said, 'I have only been sent to perfect good morals.' (al-Haakim, graded *saheeh* by Sheikh al-Albaanee)

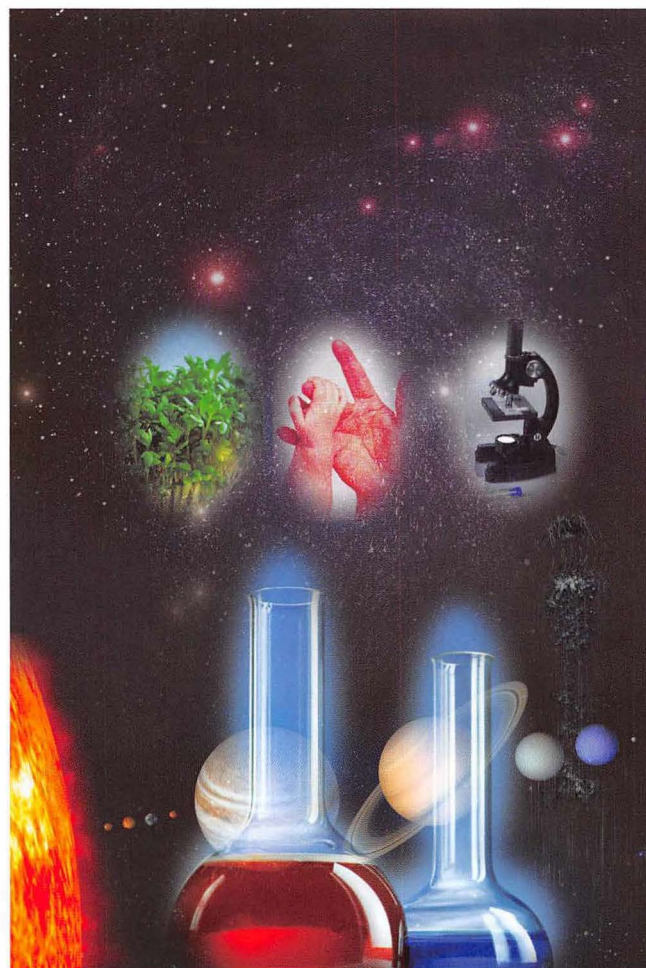
When 'Aai'shah ؓ was asked about the character of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, she replied, 'His character was the Qur'an.' (Muslim)



Thus, the Qur'an is not simply a book that makes people grow morally and spiritually. It is not just about imparting human knowledge of what is right and correct. It also instils in people's hearts and minds the feeling of heedfulness, fear, love and accountability to Allah that will make them do what is proper and correct. The Qur'an, therefore, vividly describes what will happen on the Day of Judgment to both those who are righteous and heedful of Allah and those who are evil.

Thus, once we realize this Qur'anic objective and sincerely strive hard to achieve it through reading and studying the Qur'an, Allah will certainly grant us knowledge and fill our hearts with heedfulness (*taqwaa*). In this way, we will become useful in our society as well as in the world at large. Our conduct and actions will change for the better, and we will call people to the way of Allah – the way of peace in the world.

Certainly, one of the objectives of the Qur'an is to show the believers how to protect themselves from all the forces of evil that are trying to distance them from their Creator. Allah cautions them concerning their own lower self (*an-nafs*, or soul) – an enemy concerning which most people would not be aware were not for the revelation of Allah and His guidance in this regard. Perhaps the clearest example of this class of teachings in the Qur'an deals with the devil, or Satan. The Qur'an vividly describes the ways and means of the devil. One such way is his appearing as a sincere advisor and well-wisher, as was the case in which he approached Adam and Eve although Allah had warned them about him, as He warns the believers about in the Gracious Qur'an. (7: 20-22)



1.15. Scientific Miracles in the Qur'an

In fact, the Qur'an is not a book of science or technology. It is a book of guidance which principally aims at guiding people to the true God — Allah, helps them establish righteousness and create a virtuous society.

The Qur'an is the Word of Allah. Its matchless style and profound wisdom constitute some of its definite proofs. Furthermore, its miraculous attributes further prove that it is a revelation from Allah. One of these attributes is the fact that a number of scientific facts that have been discovered in recent years with the help of modern technology were stated in the Qur'an over 1400 years ago. These facts could not have been known at the time of the Qur'an's

revelation. This conclusively provides further evidence that the Qur'an is the Word of Allah and categorically points to Islam's genuineness. In fact, many Western scientists have embraced Islam once they found out about some of these scientific facts in the Qur'an.



The Prophet ﷺ was not familiar with such scientific facts which were discovered only in recent decades. In fact, he was illiterate, which proves beyond doubt that only God must have revealed them to him. These scientific miracles relate to a number of matters including the following:

- Embryology and human creation
- Sensation of pain in the skin
- Recent scientific discoveries concerning the intestines
- The significance of the sense of hearing as compared with that of sight
- The origin of creation
- The miraculous nature of fingerprints
- The miraculous healing honey provides
- The detrimental effects of carrion, blood and pork
- Health benefits of ablution, prayer and fasting
- The Qur'an, a healing and mercy

Dr. Sharif Kaf al-Ghazal discusses these and many other scientific miracles in his brilliantly written book *Medical Miracles of the Qur'an*, which has been published by the Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK.

Review

- The Qur'an was revealed in stages. What, do you think, is Allah's wisdom in revealing it in this way?
- The Qur'an had some form of arrangement in the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ. Explain.
- Why did 'Umar ؓ feel the need to compile a standard written copy?
- There is no English equivalent for the terms '*Sunnah*' and '*aayah*'. Discuss.
- Discuss, preferably with the help of a diagram, the various divisions in the Qur'an. Also note the wisdom behind these divisions.
- Explain the term '*nadhm*'.
- Discuss in detail the purpose of the Qur'an.
- Mention something about Allah's wisdom in including medical and other scientific miracles in the Qur'an although it is primarily a book of guidance.



For Further Reading

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2

Readings from the Glorious Qur'an

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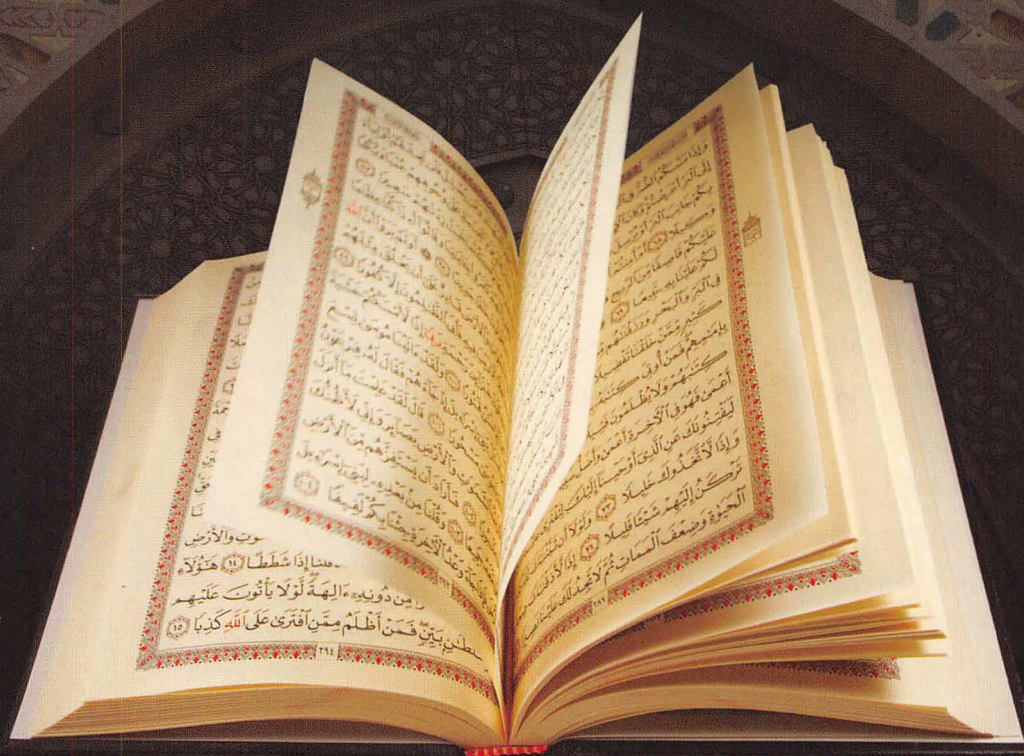
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Readings from the Glorious Qur'an¹ 2

Section 1

Attributes of Allah

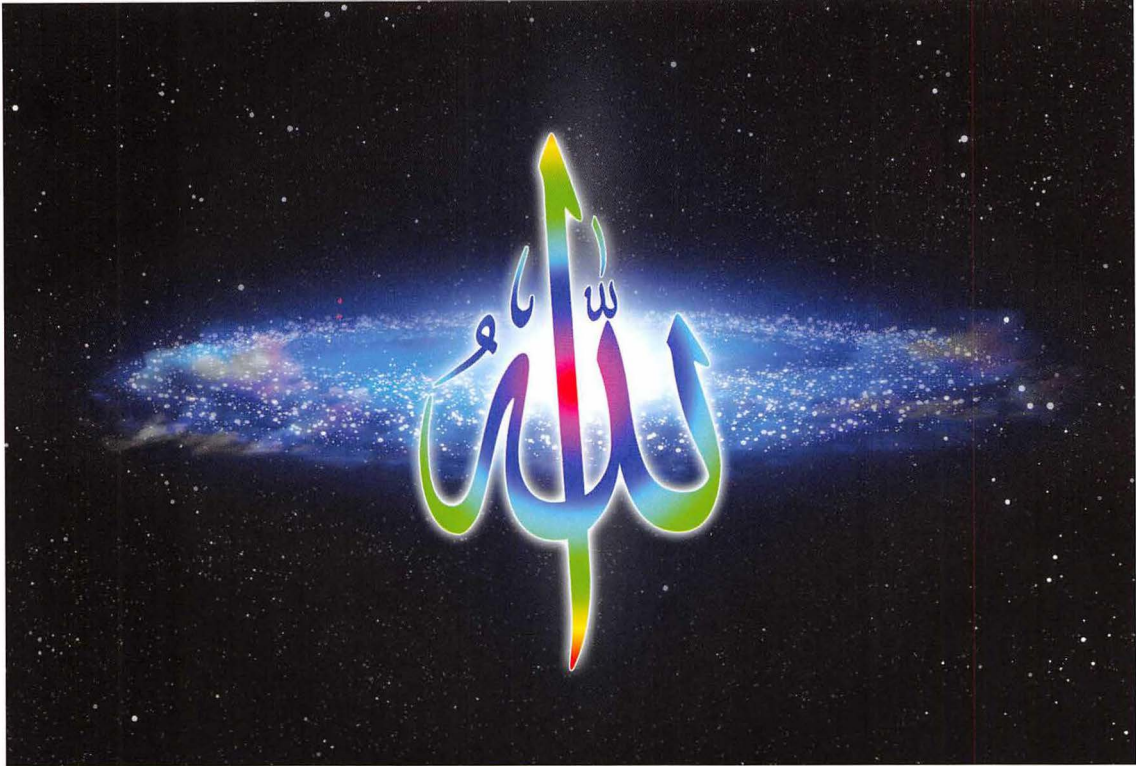
2.1. Aayat-ul Kursee (Soorat al-Baqarah, 2:255)

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٢٥٥﴾ البقرة: ٢٥٥

Translation of the Meanings of this Verse

Allah, there is no god except Him, the Ever-Living, the Ever-Lasting Sustainer. Neither slumber, nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Who is he that can intercede with Him except with His permission? He knows what happens to them (i.e. creatures) [in this world] and what will happen to them [in the hereafter]; and they will never encompass anything of His knowledge except that which He wills. His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

¹ We have named this unit Readings from the Glorious Qur'an because we believe it would not be appropriate to call it 'Selections from the Glorious Qur'an', as the expression 'selections' gives the impression that what has not been chosen is in some way or the other not adequate, while the Qur'an is wholly beautiful, complete and sublime.



Explanatory Notes

This verse is known as the Throne Verse, and there are a number of *ahaadeeth* (sing. *hadeeth*) which prove that it is the most excellent verse in the Qur'an. Ubayy ibn Ka'b ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ asked him about the greatest *aayah* in the Book of Allah and he replied, 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' When the Prophet ﷺ repeated the question several times, Ubayy ؓ said, 'It is *Aayat-ul-Kursee*.' The Prophet ﷺ exclaimed, 'Congratulations! You possess true knowledge. By Him in whose Hand my soul is, this verse has a tongue and two lips with which it praises the King (i.e. Allah) at the foot of the Throne.' (Ahmad: quoted in *Tafseer Ibn Katheer*, English Translation, vol. 2, p. 21)

The Word *Al-Qayyoom*

Al-Qayyoom is an intensive form which means the One Who exists by Himself and supports, sustains and provides means of subsistence for all His creations. *Al-Hayy* or the Ever-Living' is one of the Most Beautiful Names of Allah. Allah, the Ever-Living, is the source of all life. His Life is not derived from anywhere else, while everyone else's life is from Him and is dependent upon Him. It is He Who made others live, and they are alive only as long as He wants them to live. Allah was and will always be living. His Life, His being *al-Hayy*, is of very different High Order – not comparable with the life of His creatures. What is true of *al-Hayy* is true of other similar Beautiful Names of Allah.

The Phrase *Sinatun wa Laa Nawm*

Sinatun means a doze or nap, while *nawm* means sleep. The negation of these two negates both the initial and full-fledged state of sleep. This means that Allah is absolutely free of any trace or effect of negligence or heedlessness.

The General Structure of *Aayah 2: 255*

It is not difficult to see how various themes are organized within this *aayah*.

The first sentence states the basic theme, which is elaborated in the following statements. Allah, the Only God, is the source of all life. It is He Who controls the whole universe – everything depends upon Him and every event follows from Him.

He is not unmindful of His creation, even for a single moment. He never sleeps or slumbers.

He is the Master of all beings. Each and everyone belong to Him.

In reality, no one would even dare to speak as an intercessor for anyone on the Day of Judgment unless He Himself permits it. He knows everything; therefore, He does not need any recommendation of any sort, which is usually required in human affairs. He alone is the Ruler. Everything else is responsible to Him. If any person fails to do

his or her duty, and thereby deserves His punishment, no intercession can help that person.

He knows everything, and no one else knows anything without His giving him the knowledge of it.

He rules the whole universe, and everything is under His control at all times.

It is He Who takes constant care of the whole universe and this is not a burden upon Him at all.

To Him belongs all supremacy and all majesty.

In the end, we quote a *hadeeth* about the Prophet's intercession. Allah's Messenger ﷺ is reported as having said, '[on the Day of Judgment] I will stand under the Throne and fall in prostration, and Allah will allow me to remain in that position as much as He wills. I will thereafter be told, "Raise your head, speak and you will be heard, intercede and your intercession will be accepted."' The Prophet ﷺ then said, 'He will allow me a proportion whom I will enter into Paradise.' (Muslim)

Review

- What is the wisdom of using the term 'readings' as compared to 'selections' as a title to this chapter?
- What do the attributes *al-Hayy* and *al-Qayyoom* mean?
- What is the meaning of the term *Aayat-ul-Kursee*? Mention the excellence of the *aayah* according to a *hadeeth*?



2.2. A Clear Concept of the Creator: Soorat al-An'aam, 6:101-103

بِدِيعِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ تَكُن لَّهُ صَاحِبَةٌ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾
 ذَٰلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾
 لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْبَصَرُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْبَصَرَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٠٣﴾ الأنعام: ١٠١ - ١٠٣

Translation of the Meanings of these Verses

- 101.** [He is] the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How could He have a son when He does not have a female companion? Rather, He created everything and has full knowledge of all things.
- 102.** Such is Allah, Your Lord; there is no god other than Him, the Creator of everything. So worship Him alone, and he is Disposer of all things.
- 103.** No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision. He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things.

Explanatory Notes

Verse 101

The word *Badee'*, as applied to Almighty Allah, means the one who produces something without an earlier example; hence, the word *bid'ah* which means a new practice that is introduced in religion.

He is the Originator of the heavens and

the earth. In fact, the One who originates the whole universe out of nothing is in no need of a son. Offspring are needed by mortals. They are needed by the weak who want help. Moreover, anyone who desires offspring must have a mate or a female consort from his own species. How, then, can Allah have a son when He has never had a mate, and when He is One and unique and nothing and no one is comparable to Him? How can any offspring be born without a mate?

Verse 102

Allah is the Creator of all

Allah is the Creator of everything. As He is the Creator of all, He also provides sustenance to all using resources in which He has no partners. Whatever all creatures eat and whatever they enjoy in this life is part of what is the sole property of Allah. He is the Lord of the universe. He controls everything. His is the authority to which everything submits, and He operates the system by which He takes care of His creation. So He is the only one who deserves to be worshipped in the full sense of the word, which denotes total obedience and submission. He controls not only human beings but also everything else, since He is the sole Creator of everything.

Verse 103

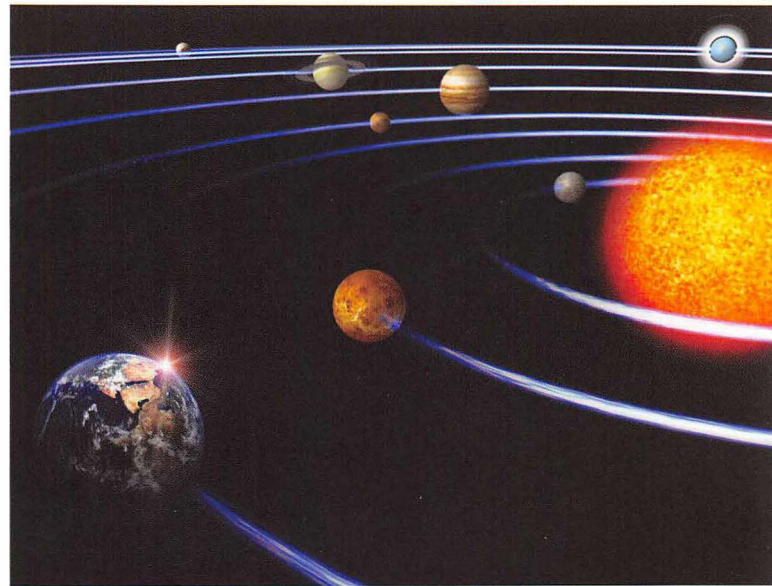
Visions cannot sight Him in this world. In the hereafter, the true believers will see Him, but they will not be able to encompass Him fully. Allah has spoken of His vision being granted to the believers in several other parts of the Qur'an. (For instance, 75:22-3; 83:15)

Allah's Messenger ﷺ once said, 'Indeed, Allah does not sleep and it does not befit His Majesty that He should sleep. He lowers the scale and raises it. The deeds of the day are ascended to Him before the night, and the deeds of the night before the day. His Veil is Light, and if He removes it the Light of His Face will burn every created thing that His Sight reaches.' (Muslim)

The term *Lateef* denotes something that is extremely subtle in quality and, therefore, intangible and unfathomable. It implies that He is unique and absolute.

Review

- What does the term *Badee'* and *Lateef* mean?
- Why is it insane to say or assume that Allah has a son?



2.3. Allah's Signs which the Eyes Cannot Miss Seeing: Soorat Fussilat, 41: 37-39

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ لَا سَجْدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ فَإِنْ أَسْتَكْبَرُوا فَالَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ يُسَبِّحُونَ لَهُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْأَمُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خُشْعَةً إِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ إِنَّ الَّذِي أَحْيَاهَا لَمُجِي الْمَوْتِ إِنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

Translation of the Meanings of these Verses

37. And of His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate yourselves to the sun or to the moon, but

prostrate yourselves to Allah who created them if it is Him whom you worship.

38. But if they are too proud, then those who are near your Lord glorify Him night and day, and they never feel tired.

39. And of His signs is that you see the land still and lifeless. Then, when We send down upon it water, it stirs and swells with life. Indeed, the One who gives it life can most surely give life to the dead. Indeed, He is Powerful over all things.

Explanatory Notes



Verse 37

Here Allah reminds His creation of His power and states that He is the One who has no equal and that He is able to do all things. 'And of His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon.' This means He created the night with its darkness and the day with its light, and they alternate without stopping. He created the sun with its bright light and the moon with its reflected light. He allotted them their stages and gave them separate orbits in the heavens

so that by the variations in their movements people may know the stages of night and day, of weeks, months, years and time periods related to acts of worship.

It is unfortunate that as one of the most prominent and powerful objects in the physical world, the sun has attracted the attention and obtained the homage of many races and nations who have personified and worshipped it as a god.

The Gracious Qur'an categorically rejects this. Allah is the sole cause and source of all that exists and whatever exists is but a wondrous sign of His creative power. Hence, it is blasphemy to ascribe real power to anything created, whether it is a concrete phenomenon or an abstract force of nature, or even an idea.



It is not Permissible to Prostrate before Anyone except Allah

'Do not prostrate yourselves to the sun or to the moon.'

This view makes it clear that prostration or *sujdood* is the right of the Creator of the universe. It is strictly forbidden (*haraam*) to prostrate before the sun, the moon or any other person or thing, for that matter.

Prostration of worship for any other than Allah has never been lawful for any community in any law of any prophet.

It is interesting to note that the prayer times in Islam have all been separated from the hours when the sun was or is worshipped. The *Fajr* prayer is offered before sunrise, *Dhuhr* only after it has begun to decline, 'Asr when it begins to lose its shine, *Maghrib* when it has set, and 'Ishaa' only when its light has completely vanished.

Verse 38

'But if they are too proud' means to worship Allah Alone, and if they insist on associating others with Him in worship, then there are angels who are with your Lord. They constantly glorify Him night and day and are never tired.

Sujood at-Tilaawah

There are fourteen (or fifteen) *aayaat* in the Qur'an which require us to perform a prostration when we read or hear these verses. In them it is mentioned that Allah's servants and creation bow before their Lord. *Aayah* 38 is one of them.

Verse 39

The verse now moves on to portray other scenes of creation and living creatures on earth and in the world of plants. The state of being still and lifeless, which is expressed in the Arabic text with the word *khaashi'atan* is a state between life and death. This is how the earth is when it is starved of water, the basic ingredient for life

and the living. Thus, when rain water is poured over it, 'it stirs and swells'. This is a remarkable movement which the Qur'an recorded many centuries before human science.

When the soil is very dry and then rain falls over it, it makes a movement like shaking or stirring. It is then full of life, bringing forth blooming vegetation that radiates pleasure. Is there anything more pleasing to the eye than seeing life in bloom in an area that has long remained barren? Here, the Qur'an cites these as one of Allah's numerous signs. The Qur'an reminds us: 'Indeed, the One who gives it life can most surely give life to the dead. Indeed, He is Powerful over all things.'

Although the allusion to the reviving earth often occurs in the Qur'an as a parable of man's ultimate resurrection after death, in the present context, it implies a call to the believer never to abandon the hope that 'those who deny the truth' may one day grasp the truth of the Qur'anic message.

Review

- What does Allah expect from us instead of worshipping the sun and why?
- How does prayer timing aid us in avoiding sun worship?
- Define the Arabic word *khaashi'atan*. How will you relate it to the earth?
- What does Allah want us to know from the parable of reviving the earth?

2.4. To Him Belongs Whatever is in the Heavens and Whatever is in the Earth: Soorat Ash-Shoora, 4-5

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٤﴾ تَكَادُ السَّمَوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِنَّ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ
يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَلَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥﴾ الشورى: ٤ - ٥

Translation of the Meanings of these Verses

4. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and He is the Most High, the Most Great.

5. The heavens almost break from above them, and the angels glorify the praises of their Lord and ask forgiveness for all who are on earth. Unquestionably, it is Allah who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

Explanatory Notes

Verse 4

‘To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth’ means everything is subject to His dominion and control. He is the Most High, the Most Great. Some people, deceived by the fact that they find things in their hands subjected to them, benefiting from them, and which they can use as they wish, are led to believe that they own those things. Of course, they do not. Allah is the real Owner. It is He who creates and destroys, who gives life and causes death. He has the power to let people own whatever He wills or take away from their possession whatever He wishes in order to place them in the hands of whomever He wills. True ownership remains His at all times, and He dispenses with everything in a manner that suits His Grand Plan.

Verse 5

‘From above them’ means owing to the greatness and majesty of the Lord of the worlds. According to another opinion, it may refer to the earth, meaning the heavens above the strata of the earth and all its inhabitants. It should be borne in mind that according to the Qur’an, the heavens and the earth, that is, the physical universe in its entirety, are not only conscious of their Creator but also unfailingly function in accordance with His Will.

This verse reflects the total submission of the natural order to almighty Allah. It may also refer to the massive physical presence of the angels throughout the universe. Allah’s Messenger ﷺ is reported as having said, ‘Indeed, I see what you do not see, and I hear what you do not hear. The heavens groan – and rightfully so!

There is no space in the heavens the measure of a hand-span or the measure of four fingers, but that there is an angel there, placing his forehead in it prostrating to Allah. By Allah! If you knew what I know, you would laugh little and you would weep much, and you would not enjoy your wives in bed, and you would come out beseeching Allah.' (at-Tirmidhee, *hadeeth* no. 2312, and it is classified as *hasan*)

The scope of the sources of knowledge, hidden and apparent, such as the ears, the eyes, the intellect, among other tools, given by Allah to us, extends as far as the seen world. The unseen world is beyond its capacity or domain. The way to acquire authentic and dependable knowledge about the unseen is to get it from what the prophets and the messengers of Allah inform us on the basis of what Allah causes them to see, hear and observe.

According to another opinion, the heavens might nearly be rent asunder because of ascribing a son to Allah, Most High. The following verse supports this:

The heavens are almost about to be rent asunder, and the earth cloven and the mountains to collapse, razed, that they attribute to the All-Merciful a son! (*Soorat Maryam*, 19:90-91)

Commenting on these verse, Sayyid Quṭb writes,

The very sound of these verses and their rhythm add to the air of anger at this false claim. In fact, the whole universe rejects this claim most vehemently. It shudders and quivers with abhorrence as it hears this falsehood against God Almighty. It is a reaction similar to that of a person who feels that his very integrity is attacked, or that the honesty of someone he loves is assailed. In their beat, the words here show the movement of a violent attack.

Everything that is settled and stable is thus shaken. The whole universe is in anger at this false allegation against God, the Creator. The statement is shocking to everything in nature.' (Sayyid Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, vol. 11, p. 376, Eng. Tr. 'Adil Ṣalāhi)

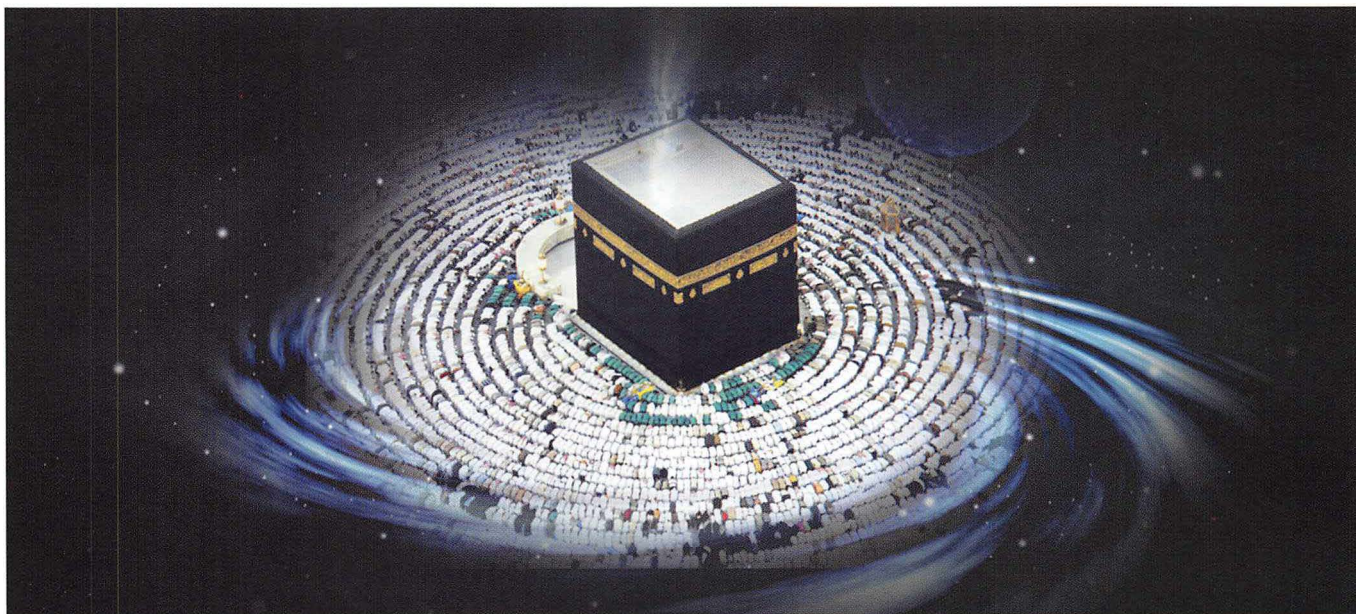


In fact the idea that Allah might have a 'son' – either in the real or in the metaphorical sense of this term – would presuppose a degree of innate likeness between 'the father' and 'the son': but Allah is in every respect unique, so that 'there is nothing like Him (*Soorat ash-Shoora*, 42: 11) and 'there is none comparable to Him'. (*Soorat al-Ikhlaas*, 112: 4)

The idea of God having a son goes against the teachings of Islam and is described in the Qur'an as blasphemous, and it is for this reason that the Qur'an criticises the Christians for erroneously believing that 'Eesaa ﷺ is the son of God.

Review

- Explain the verse 'To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth.'
- 'The heavens almost break from above them'. What does this verse refer to?



2.5. The One, the Everlasting Refuge: *Soorat Al-Ikhlaas*, 112: 1-4

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ① اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ② لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا ③
 يُؤَلَّدُ ④ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ④ الإخلاص: ١ - ٤

Translation of the Meanings of this *Soorah*

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

1. Say: He is Allah, the One,
2. Allah, the Everlasting Refuge.
3. He does not beget, Nor is He begotten,
4. And there is none comparable to Him.

Explanatory Notes

Allah Most High is the sole subject of this *soorah*. Some scholars have pointed out that this is the only *soorah* in the Qur'an in which two attributes of Allah – *al-Aḥad* and *aṣ-Ṣamad* have come together and could be the reason, according to al-Qurtubee, why it has been said to be equal to one-third of the Qur'an.

Hadeeth on the Virtues of this *Soorah*

'Ai'shah رضي الله عنها said, 'The Prophet ﷺ appointed a man as the commander of a military campaign and he used to lead his companions in prayer and recite a *soorah* of the Qur'an and would then follow it up with 'Say: He is Allah, the One', that is *Soorat al-Ikhlaas*. When they returned from the campaign, they asked him

why he had done so and he replied, "Because [Soorat al-Ikhlaas] provides a description of ar-Rahmah, and I love to recite it." The Prophet ﷺ said, "Inform him that Allah the Most High loves him." (al-Bukhaaree)

Allah's Messenger ﷺ also said, 'By Him in whose Hand my soul is, it is truly equivalent to one third of the Qur'an.' (al-Bukhaaree)

The Word *al-Ahad*

The word *al-Ahad*, which is different from the word *Wahid*, has added the signification of absolute and continuous unity and the absence of equals.

The Term *as-Samad*

According to some scholars, the word *as-Samad* is applied to one who has no stomach and therefore does not eat or drink; in other words, he is not dependent on anything. Yet, some other scholars explain the term as meaning one whose attributes have reached the highest point of their development, so that they cannot be bettered. 'Eternal – One without a beginning and without an end' is another interpretation provided by the pious predecessors (*salaf*).

Literally, *as-Samad* would also imply one who stands in need of no one, while everyone stands in need of him; in other words, one before whom people put forward their needs.

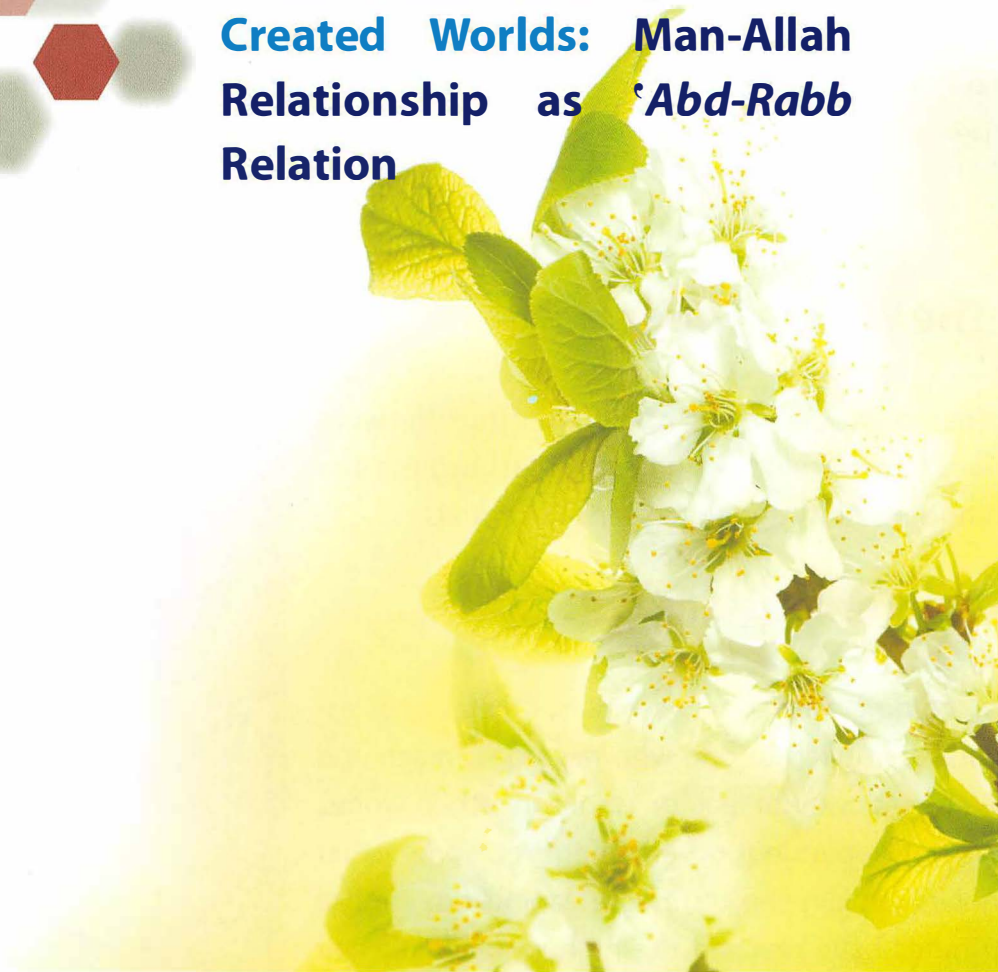


Review

- What is the subject of Soorat al-Ikhlaas?
- Why is it considered as one third of the Qur'an?
- Define the terms *al-Ahad* and *as-Samad*.

Section 2

Allah's Relationship with the Created Worlds: Man-Allah Relationship as 'Abd-Rabb Relation



2.6. Soorat Al-Faatiḥah

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْمَالِكِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣﴾ مَلِكِ يَوْمِ
الدِّينِ ﴿٤﴾ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ ﴿٥﴾ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٦﴾ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ
عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٧﴾ الفاتحة: ١ - ٧

Translation of the Meanings of this Soorah

1. In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
2. All praise is for Allah, Lord of the Worlds,
3. The Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful,
4. Master of the Day of Judgment.
5. You Alone we worship and You Alone we ask for help.
6. Guide us to the Straight Path,
7. The Path of those whom You have bestowed favours, not of those who have earned [Your] anger, nor of those who have gone astray.

Explanatory Notes

Al-Faatiḥah has seven verses (*aayaat* or signs). But which is the first verse of *al-Faatiḥah*? Every *soorah* of the Qur'an, with the exception of *Soorat at-Tawbah*, the ninth *soorah*, starts with the *basmalah*, namely, *bismillaahir-Raḥmaanir-Raḥeem*. Still, this *aayah* is not treated as part of the following *soorah*, with the exception of the first *soorah* of the Qur'an, where the *basmalah* is treated by some scholars as being part of it. All agree that this *soorah* has seven *aayaat* (plural of *aayah*), but according to those who do not regard the *basmalah* as part of this *soorah*, the first *aayah* of this *soorah* is what is numbered 2 in the above, and then in order to complete the number of the *aayaat* as seven, the seventh *aayah* is broken into *aayah* 6 and *aayah* 7. (See if you can find any such difference in the numbering of *aayaat* in different copies of the Noble Qur'an)

There is, however, another place where the *basmalah* is according to everyone, part of a Qur'anic *soorah*, that is *Soorah* number 27, or *Soorat an-Naml*, where it is part of *Aayah* 30.

We would also draw our students' attention to 16:98, according to which seeking Allah's refuge from Satan is required before we read or recite the Qur'an. That is why whenever a Muslim wants to recite the Qur'an, he must first say: *A'oodhu billaahi minash-Shaytaan-ir-Rajeem* (I seek refuge with Allah from Satan, the one who has been deprived of Allah's mercy), then say the *basmalah* if what he recites is the beginning of a *soorah*, otherwise seeking Allah's refuge from Satan would be sufficient.

The Word *ar-Raḥmaan*

The expression *Bismillaahir-Raḥmaanir-Raḥeem* is composed of four Arabic words, the first two of which mean 'In the Name of Allah', the other two words add two of Allah's attributes derived from the same root '*rahima*', which signifies grace and mercy. While the second of these two attributes, *ar-Raḥeem*, is commonly used as a superlative form of granting mercy, the first *ar-Raḥmaan* is used only to refer to Allah. In fact, it was never used in Arabic before Islam.

The structure of the word *ar-Raḥmaan* suggests emphasis upon the aspect of intensity. Thus the Good Name '*ar-Raḥmaan*' signifies His over-flowing love and mercy for all of His creatures, even if someone turns away from Him thanklessly. He does not immediately withdraw His mercy from such a person. He gives sustenance to the believers as well as to disbelievers. His sun shines for all of them. His rain falls benefits everyone.

Commenting on these words, 'Adil Salahi writes,

'The term *ar-Raḥmaan* bears connotations of power, might and dominion alongside those of grace and mercy. Therefore, an accurate translation of the term should bring out these additional connotations...Therefore, we can say that *ar-Raḥmaan* connotes 'the exercise of mercy on the basis of free choice by one who is able to inflict severe punishment without fear of any consequence.'

He also says,

"By contrast *ar-Raḥeem* stresses the availability of Allah's Mercy in all situations and to all creatures. People only need to appeal for it and it is certain to be granted. Indeed, it is given at all times without such appeals...After a long reflection and consideration of all these aspects, I have now settled on a new form of translating these two attributes of God: In the Name of God (Allah), the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful." (Sayyid Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, vol. 14, Eng. Tr. 'Adil Salahi)



The Word Hamd

The Arabic word *ḥamd* signifies a servant's praise for Allah by way of thanks. In fact, the Arabic word *ḥamd* means both 'praise' and 'thanks'. Hence, it would be apt to say: All praises and thanks are for Allah.'

The Word *Rabb*: Man-Allah Relationship

Rabb has often been translated as Lord. It is a good translation in so far as it combines 'love and concern' with 'authority'. Some translators have used 'Sustainer', 'Cherisher' or similar words for *Rabb*. They try to be true to the root meaning. Of course, our *Rabb* is One who takes care of our nourishment and development. It should, however, be borne in mind that *Rabb* is a Qur'anic term, and as such it has a uniquely comprehensive meaning. Therefore, it is not possible to find an equivalent in languages other than Arabic.

Al-'Aalameen: What are the Worlds?

The word *al-'aalameen* is the kind of plural, which is used for beings like men, jinn and angels. So in thanking the *Rabb* of all the

worlds, we are thanking the *Rabb* of all human beings, or even the *Rabb* of all persons, that is to say, of all humans, jinn and angels. When you look into the past of humanity as well as its possible future, there are many such human worlds, and Allah is the *Rabb* of all such human worlds. According to some scholars *al-'aalameen* refers to everything in existence besides Allah. All praises and thanks are due to Allah, to whom belongs the creation in its entirety, the heavens and the earth and whatever is in them, and whatever is between them – that which is known and unknown.

Master of the Day of Judgment: The Word *ad-Deen*

The word *ad-deen* as used in the Qur'an has several meanings. It is used in the sense of:

- Religion and divine law (3:83)
- The law of the land (12:76)
- Obedience (16:52; 61:9)
- Recompense or reward (51:5-6)

The term *ad-deen* in the sense of reward and punishment causes both its positive and negative aspects – **(a)** a reward for good, and **(b)** a punishment for evil and wrongdoing.



The message contained in these words: *maaliki yawm-id-deen* is clear – a day of reckoning is inevitable: it will definitely come to pass. A day when all human beings will return to their Forgiving, Merciful and Just Lord to receive their share of His reward or punishment. Those who followed the divine law will be rewarded, but those who refused to submit to Him and did not seek His forgiveness will be punished. On that day all powers will belong to Allah alone; no one that day will challenge His will or authority.

‘Ibaadah is what a ‘Abd Does for His Rabb

The Arabic word *‘ibaadah* is often translated as worship. *‘Ibaadah* is what a *‘abd* does for his *Rabb*. Allah-man relation is unique. It is altogether different from any man-man or man-thing relation. We call it the *Rabb-‘Abd* relation. Man is *‘abd* or servant of Allah, and Allah is *Rabb* or the Lord of man. But there are *‘ibaad* (plural of *‘abd*) of Allah other than human beings. Angels and jinn are also *‘ibaad* or servants of Allah. Thus all people are *‘ibaad* or servants of Allah. “We are servants of Allah and Allah Alone” is the most basic principle of Islam.

The expression *‘ibaadah* (worship) denotes the submissiveness and humility that a person ought to show towards his Creator. A sense of obedience is also implied in the word *‘ibaadah*.

Worship and Asking for His Help: Its Meaning and Significance

Supplication (*du‘aa’*) is a part of worship, or *‘ibaadah*. The fact that we are the servants of Allah implies that we must worship Him alone, follow His commands and pray or supplicate to Him alone.

Guide us to the Straight Path

Guiding is more than showing. Thus we are not asking for light only; we are also asking for strength. Life is a continuous journey. We need Allah’s guidance all the time. Every day we face a new situation in life. Life is a journey towards Allah, which we have to travel stage by stage. We actually need light, strength and support from Him in every step we take on this journey. By making *du‘aa’* (supplication) for guidance, we are, in fact, asking Him to be with us throughout the journey of our life.

As-Siraat al-Mustaqeem – the Straight Path

This refers to the Straight Path Allah has shown to human beings through His prophets and messengers to achieve success in this world and eternal bliss in the hereafter. This path is the shortest path and the easiest to follow.

Verse 7

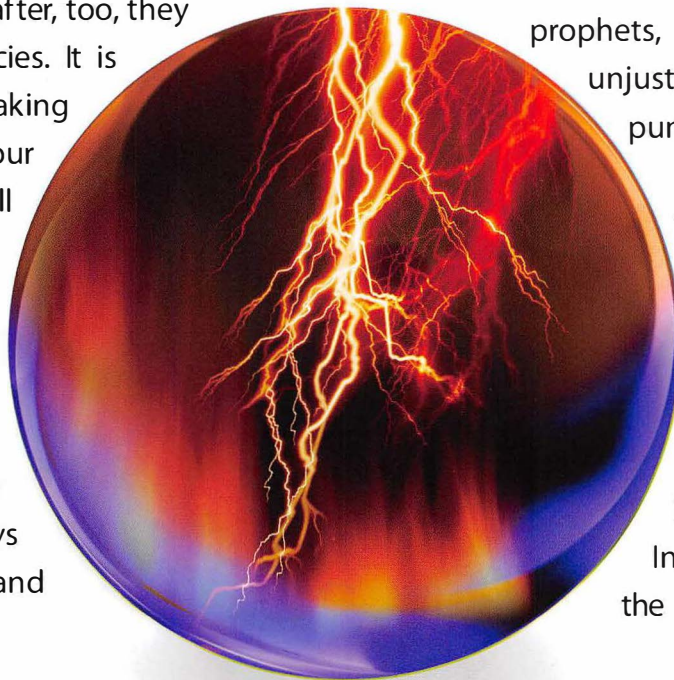
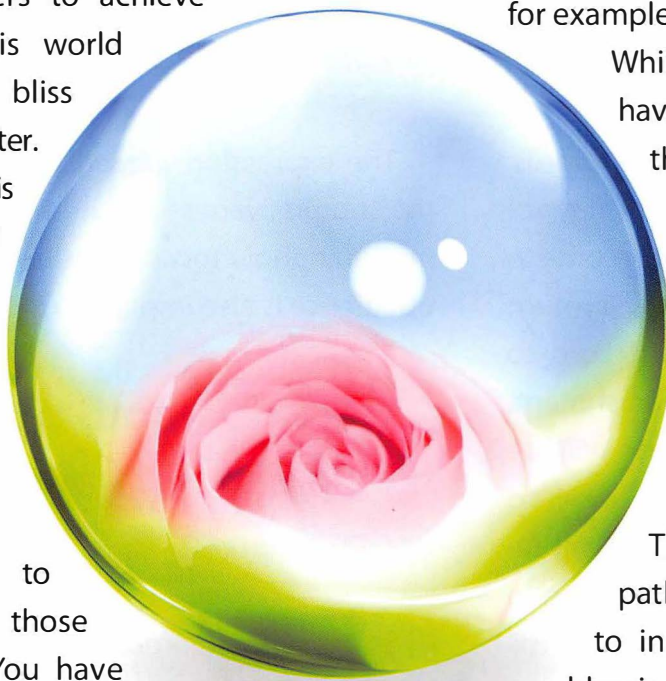
Guide us to the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favours: these are the people who walked on the Straight path, worshipping Allah alone, seeking His help in every step. Allah guided them at every stage of their journey and helped them to acquire a better understanding of religion and in living a pious life; in the hereafter, too, they will receive Allah's special mercies. It is important to note that by making this supplication, we express our belonging to the circle of all the faithful servants of Allah. But here we also observe that some members of the human family went off the right path. They barred themselves from the special mercy of Allah since they did not mend their ways in spite of His clear guidance and

warnings. Therefore, we express our separation from them. Of course, the real punishment will follow in the hereafter. But some people were punished by Allah in this very life. The Qur'an again and again tells us the stories of such people so that we learn lessons from them. See for example 7:59-167; 10:71-92; 11:25-102.

While making *du'aa'* that we do not have the same fate, it is also required that we try to understand why these people deserved Allah's wrath and then seriously try not to follow in their footsteps.

Three groups of people are mentioned in this verse: **(1)** Those blessed by Allah, **(2)** Those who incurred His wrath, and **(3)** Those who strayed from the right path. Reference is to groups and not to individual persons who had divine blessings, divine wrath or who were misguided. We, with all the righteous people of the past and present, dissociate ourselves from the group of wrongdoers. The Qur'an discusses the rise and fall of some civilizations and explains how victory and support of Allah came to the followers of the prophets, and how the unjust were ultimately punished.

It is important to note that before the punishment of Allah comes, Allah warns and reminds His servants first. In fact, Allah gives the unjust people a



fixed period of time to mend their ways. The wrath of Allah does not descend before its appointed time.

Therefore, if some people were not punished in this life, it is not a sign of their being correct. Some people may act as rebels and still prosper in this life because the time of their being punished has not yet come. (Irfaan Ahmad Khan, *Reflections on the Qur'an*, the Islamic Foundation)

It should be borne in mind that this *soorah* is in the form of a supplication. Its style is not didactic. It does not teach us how to supplicate. Rather, the supplication itself is made to flow off

our tongue as a spontaneous hymn springing from the very core of our being. The words of the hymn are revealed by Allah, the Creator of human beings. So there can hardly be a more authentic expression of human nature. *Soorat al-Faatihah* is the greatest *soorah* of the Qur'an. There is no other *soorah* like it in the rest of the Gracious Book or in the previous revealed scriptures. It is a light that was granted to Allah's Messenger ﷺ, which He had not granted to any prophet or messenger before him. It holds a central position in daily prayers, and hence the daily life of a Muslim.

Review

- Explain the two attributes of *ar-Rahmaan* and *ar-Raheem*. How are these two related?
- How does the term *rabb* signify Allah-man relationship?
- Explain the term *ad-deen* as used in the Qur'an.
- What is the 'Straight Path'? What is the significance of the word 'guide' in Verse 6?
- This *soorah* is in the form of a supplication. Discuss.