

Qur'anic Reflections

*Insights into the objectives
of the Qur'anic verses*

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Part 2/3

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Surat Yunus (Jonah)

Surat Yunus is a Makkan surah. It was revealed after Surat Al-Isra' and is located in the Qur'an after Surat At-Tawbah. This Surah consists of 109 ayahs.

The objective of the Surah

The objective of this surah is the manifestation of the belief in the Divine decree. Omar Ibnul-Khattab (*RA*) narrated that "One day we were sitting in the company of Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) when there appeared before us a man dressed in pure white clothes, his hair extraordinarily black. There were no signs of travel on him. None amongst us recognized him. At last he sat with the Prophet (*SAWS*) He knelt before him placed his palms on his thighs and said: Muhammad, inform me about al-Islam. The Messenger of Allah (*SAWS*) said: Al-Islam implies that you testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, and you establish prayer, pay *Zakat*, observe the fast of Ramadan, and perform pilgrimage to the (House) if you are solvent enough (to bear the expense of) the journey. He (the inquirer) said: You have told the truth. He (Omar Ibnul-Khattab) said: It amazed us that he would put the question and then he would himself verify the truth. He (the inquirer) said: Inform me about Iman (faith). He (the Holy Prophet) replied: That you affirm your faith in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Apostles, in the Day of Judgment, and you affirm your faith in the Divine Decree about good and evil"¹. Thus, the surah deals with this last pillar of the pillars of faith.

Inquiries and doubtfulness:

Surat Yunus deals with a dilemma that many people face today and can be illustrated through the following queries:

- Is man impelled through life, or is he granted free will?
- Why does Allah (*SWT*) guide one man to the right path and not the other?
- Why does Allah (*SWT*) protect and saves a fellow and not the other?
- How is it that our Creator, who is well aware of what we do, makes us live through circumstances of His making and then judges us according to them on the Day of Judgment?
- If Allah (*SWT*) has already predestined some people to live a life of deviation, why then are we encouraged to worship? To the same effect, some people always quite comfortably reply, "When Allah wants us to, we will" when asked why they do not pray.
- If Allah (*SWT*) has already predestined us to be dwellers of either *Jannah* (Paradise) or hellfire, why then do we have to work, since whatever we do will not change our prospective status!

This surah teaches the reader of the Qur'an how to refute the claims of such perplexed, hesitant people and to reassure his/her own self. For example, some people are so influenced by doubts that they imagine that Allah (*SWT*) is being unjust when He predestines one person or another to be a dweller of hell (we seek Allah's refuge from being dwellers of hell).

¹ Authentic Hadith, Muslim.

Before we attempt to refute such suspicions and uncertainties, we should first provide an answer to the following question, “How do you describe one who forces another to do something and then punishes him for doing it?” Such a person is definitely unjust and mischievous. Allah (*SWT*), of course, is far from being that. This surah, then, comes to refute all those falsehoods in an unprecedented way.

The Wise does not budge

When we take into consideration the Attributes of Allah (*SWT*), it becomes quite clear that the question we asked above is most inappropriate, since the Wise cannot be unjust or ever intend frivolity.

The deeds of Allah (*SWT*), evident all around us in administrating the universe, testify his wisdom and compassion for his subjects, as they are strictly not the deeds of an unjust monarch who forces helpless people to commit deeds against their will. Indeed, His deeds overflow with wisdom, Majesty, and insightful arrangement.

The surah reinforces this notion gracefully, as it stresses on the importance of meditation upon this universe and the wisdom of its creator, thus shedding light on His supreme knowledge and wise arrangement. This surah will also make it lucidly clear that everything in the universe is a direct outcome of this wisdom. Frivolity, therefore, can never be an attribute of Allah (*SWT*), so always put your trust in Him.

The wise Book

The notions referred to above are made clear from the very beginning of the surah. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, “**...Those are the ayat (Verses) of the Wise Book**” (TMQ, 10:1). The Qur'an has many attributes, as we know, but “the Wise” here is used for a particular reason, just so we would realize the immense wisdom and masterly planning that stands behind Allah’s destiny and words.

In the second ayah, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as “**Was it a wonder to mankind that We revealed to a man from (among) them, (saying), “Warn mankind and give good tidings to the ones who have believed that they have a sure footing (Literally: a sincere footing) in the Providence of their Lord”?** **The disbelievers have said, “Surely this is indeed an evident sorcerer.”** (TMQ, 10:2). The ayah addresses those who marvel at the fact that the message of Allah (*SWT*) was revealed to Muhammad (*SAWS*) of all people. Allah (*SWT*) reveals His message to whomever He wills, and there is always a great insight behind every choice that Allah (*SWT*) makes. He chooses the deliverers of His message out of wisdom; “**Allah knows best where He makes His Message**” (TMQ 6:124).

“Conducting the Command” (TMQ, 10:2).

The ayahs move on to the dominance of Allah (*SWT*) over the universe in order to make us perceive His attributes in a way that disproves all false claims. In this respect, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, “**Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days; thereafter He leveled Himself upon the Throne, (How He did do is beyond human understandings) conducting the Command. In no way is there any intercessor (ever) excepting ever after His**

permission. That is Allah, your Lord; so worship Him. Will you then not be mindful?" (TMQ, 10:2).

"...Conducting the Command" recurs all through the surah emphasizing Allah's wisdom and great organization. Again, frivolity is never consistent with Allah's immense wisdom. It is illogical, therefore, that He would unjustly force people to sin in order to meet his own plans; his predestination of them to be of the dwellers of hell.

Truth is its title

In the next ayah in which Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"To Him will be your return altogether, the promise of Allah, truly (binding)..." (TMQ, 10:4)**, "truly" or truth, is the opposite of coincidence and futility. That is why it is repeated in this surah, whose subject-matter is belief in fate and destiny, 23 times; the highest number of occurrences in the Qur'an. The word occurs 23 times in a Surah of 109 ayahs. In Surat Al-'Imran, the 200-ayah-long surah, the same word occurs 13 times only. A huge difference indeed! The repetitions are in proportion to Surat Yunus' main focus; submission to Allah's fate and destiny. Anybody who is suspicious of this should speculate upon Allah's creation and impeccable administration of the universe.

The previous ayah goes on to clearly state that punishment is a direct result of blasphemy, in what Allah (SWT) says and can be translated as, **"To Him will be your return altogether, the promise of Allah, truly (binding). Surely He begins the creation; thereafter He brings it back again to recompense the ones who have believed and done deeds of righteousness with equity. And the ones who have disbelieved will have a drink of scalding water and a painful torment for that they have been disbelieving."** (TMQ, 10:4).

In no way has Allah created that except with the truth

The next ayah draws our attention to Allah's creation and management of the universe. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"He is The (One) Who has made the sun an illumination, and the moon a light and determined it by phases that you may know the number of years and the reckoning. In no way has Allah created that except with the truth. He expounds the signs for a people who know. Surely, in the alternation (Or: the differences) of the night and the daytime and whatever Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, are indeed signs for a people who are pious..." (TMQ, 10:5-6)**. The previous ayah tempts us to contemplate on Allah's alteration of day and night. Only Allah (SWT) is capable of such flawless management. The one who manages all these affairs is far from being frivolous, and He would never force people into hellfire unreasonably.

Who poses such questions?

Ayah seven specifies which types of people hold such invalid beliefs. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"Surely the ones who do not hope for the meeting with Us and are satisfied with the present life, (Literally: the lowly life, i.e., the life of this world) and feel composed with it, and the ones who are heedless of**

Our signs, Those (have) their abode in the Fire, for what they were earning" (TMQ, 10:7-8).

The ayah points here to a very significant observation that the surah encloses; only impious and stray people pose such questions regarding Allah's wisdom in order to relieve their consciences. Never do pious people say that Allah (SWT) compelled them to obey Him. The ayah also specifies the cause behind those people's misery. It is being unmindful of Allah's miracles and being unable to grasp Allah's magnificent wisdom that is evident in His creation.

The wisdom of Allah in all His deeds

The ayahs continue to confirm the notion that playfulness can never be attributed to Allah (SWT) as His deeds only indicate wisdom. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"Say, "Who provides you from the heaven and the earth, or even who possesses hearing and beholdings, (i.e., eyesights) and who brings out the living from the dead and brings out the dead from the living, and who conducts the Command?" Then will they soon say, "Allah.""** (TMQ, 10:31). Why are they suspicious then? Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"Then will you not be pious?"** (TMQ, 10:31). Thus, always observe Allah's boundaries in what you say.

Once again, we come across the words **"the True"** and **"has come true"** in the following ayah to put our hearts at ease as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"That then is Allah, your Lord, The True; so what is there, after the Truth, except error? Then wherever are you turned about? Thus the Word of your Lord has come true against the ones who were immoral that they do not believe."** (TMQ, 10:32-33).

Then after these ayahs, Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"Say, "Is there any of your associates (Those things associated with Allah) who gives guidance towards the Truth?" Say, "Allah guides to the Truth. Then is He who guides to the Truth (worthier) to be closely followed or he who finds no guidance (for himself or others) unless he is guided? What (plea) have you; how do you judge?"**" (TMQ 10:35).

I really wonder how those who are suspicious of Allah's design judge things; how do they not submit to Allah's will, while they are living their lives in His universe. The Compeller of Heavens and Earth makes the following vow in what can be translated as, **"And they ask you to inform them, "Is it true?" Say, "Yea, by my Lord! Surely it is true indeed; and in no way can you be defiant to (Him)."**" (TMQ, 10:53) After that, Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"Verily, to Allah surely (belongs) whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Verily, the promise of Allah surely is true; but most of them do not know."** (TMQ, 10:55). Thus, a big number of ayahs reinforce this same notion focusing mainly on the heart, so as to do away with any vestiges of suspicion.

Your deeds are the cause

As the ayahs focus on attributes like truth, wisdom, and wise management, they pave the way for the fact that what occurs to people is just the result of their deeds and acts.

Torment and destruction are never inflicted upon people unless they become unjust. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Surely Allah does not do injustice to mankind in anything, but mankind do injustice to themselves.”** (TMQ 44:10). People are directly responsible for what happens to them. They should not accuse Allah (*SWT*) of being unjust to them when they encounter anguish. On the contrary, they should reconsider their own deeds, as Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And We have already caused the generations even before you to perish as soon as they did injustice and their Messengers came to them with the Supreme evidences; and in no way were they to believe ‘thus We recompense the criminal people’”** (TMQ 13:10). They were doomed only when their corruption and injustice became evident.

Many more ayahs stress the same notion, as Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as,
“And for the ones who have earned odious deeds, the recompense of a bad deed will be the like of it, and humiliation shall oppress them...” (TMQ, 10:27),
“There! Every person will know (exactly) what he had earned before...” (TMQ 10:30), and
“Thus the Word of your Lord has come true against the ones who were immoral that they do not believe” (TMQ 10:33).

On the other hand, the ayahs indicate that Allah’s reward is not haphazardly granted. Rather, it is granted to those who well deserve it. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“To the ones who are fair-doers is the fairest reward and an increase...”** (TMQ 10:26).

Allah (*SWT*) knows his worshippers best

The surah then moves on to a new concept and introduces an abrupt question; how do you wonder at the destiny of Allah (*SWT*) when your attitude and deeds towards it are even stranger? Read the following ayah, where Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And when adversity touches man, he invokes Us to his side, or sitting, or upright, then as soon as We have lifted off him his adversity, he passes on, as if he had not invoked Us to an adversity that touched him...”** (TMQ 10:12).

This ayah depicts two different scenes in a very wonderful way; the image of a downhearted man who invokes Allah (*SWT*) at all times while lying on his side, sitting, or standing. This image implies slow motion on the part of the man invoking Allah (*SWT*). However, once the crisis is over, he rashly changes his behavior, **“he passes on”**, to indulge in life forgetting his Creator. He moves on without thanking Allah (*SWT*) for His blessing or even contemplating on the crisis he has been through. In the following ayah, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And when We cause mankind to taste mercy even after tribulation has touched them, only then do they have a scheming against Our signs; Say, “Allah is swifter at scheming...”** (TMQ, 10:21).

This ayah explains how fate and destiny take place. If some wonder at Allah's fate, Allah (*SWT*) does know who would thank Him and who would not. The next ayah follows to elaborate more, where Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“He is**

The (One) Who makes you to travel on the land and the sea till, when you are in the ships, and the ships run with them with a good wind, and they exult with it...(TMQ, 10:22). We have to stop here at the middle of the ayah to contemplate on how the human heart is ever so open and tender to its Creator at trying times. Yet, once a crisis clears out, the same heart is back again to being ungrateful toward its Creator.

What happened then, when the “good wind” and happiness was over? Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “...there comes to them (i.e., the ships) a tempestuous wind, and waves come on them from every place, and they expect that they are encompassed. They invoke Allah, making the religion His faithfully, “Indeed if You deliver us from these, (i.e., the wind and the waves) indeed we will definitely be of the thankful.””(TMQ 10:22).

What takes place in the water is very similar to what actually happens in the ever changing sea of life. How would the passengers of the ship act after having been saved? The reply is in the following ayah as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “Yet as soon as He has delivered them, only then do they (transgress) inequitably in the earth untruthfully. (Literally: with other than the truth).” (TMQ, 10:23) This is the peak of contradiction and deviation from the truth, because Allah (SWT) is Self-Sufficient as He (SWT) says what can be translated as, “O you mankind, surely your inequity is only against yourselves. The enjoyment is of the present life; (Literally: the lowly life, i.e., the life of this world) thereafter to Us will be your return, then We will fully inform you of whatever you were doing.” (TMQ, 10:23).

What is the relation between this example and the aim of the surah? This ayah asks the reader not to wonder about the destiny of Allah (SWT), since He already knows who will thank Him and repent after having been saved from the calamity, and who will return to sins again.

The messages of destiny

Sometimes, fate and destiny occur because Allah (SWT) knows how a person will behave after having been delivered from afflictions. Before facing real afflictions, we all go through situations that manifest our attitudes when the crisis is over. One might experience minor problems and makes *dua'a* (supplication) to Allah (SWT) to be saved. Nevertheless, Allah (SWT) may torment him because He knows how that person will behave if Allah saves him as usual.

Fate and destiny are strictly products of Allah's wisdom. We may understand this wisdom, and in some cases it is beyond our comprehension. What is really important is that we should never suspect it. We should declare our absolute submission to Allah (SWT) and trust in Him. We should believe that He is the Wise and the All-Knowing Who is never unfair.

The Prophets and their trust in Allah (SWT)

The stories of the Prophets are referred to in this surah in order to demonstrate the extent to which they put their trusts in Allah (SWT) during their missions as

messengers to their people; namely Nuh (Noah) and Musa (Moses) (AS). In this respect, Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And recite to them the tiding (Literally: information) of Nûh (Noah) as he said to his people, “O my people, in case my station (here) is greatly (annoying) to you, and my constant reminding you of the signs of Allah, then on Allah I have put my trust”...”** (TMQ, 10:71).

Allah (SWT) says about Musa (AS), what can be translated as, **“And Mûsa said, “O my people, in case you have believed in Allah, then in Him put your trust, in case you are Muslims.” (i.e., you have surrendered to Allah) Then they said, “On Allah we have put our trust. Our Lord, do not make us a temptation to the unjust people.”** (TMQ, 10:84-85).

The Pharaoh and The people of Yunus (AS) (Jonah)

Towards the end of the surah, two stories are used to clarify what has been mentioned, the story of Pharaoh and that of the people of Yunus (AS) (Jonah). After the wisdom and impeccable arrangement of Allah (SWT) are fully demonstrated, two examples are provided. The first example is of Pharaoh, who denied Allah’s miracles and warnings. The second is of the people of Yunus (AS) “Jonah”, who denied the existence of Allah (SWT) at the beginning.

In the two examples, both Prophets, Musa and Yunus (AS), went to the sea, leaving behind their peoples who disbelieved in Allah’s messengers, until they were tormented. What actually happened is that while the people of Yunus (AS) were saved, the people of the Pharaoh were drowned. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And We made the Seeds (Or: sons) of Israel) pass over the sea; then Firaawn and his hosts followed them up inequitably and aggressively till, when the drowning overtook him, he said, “I believe that there is no god except He in Whom the Seeds of believe, and I am one of the Muslims””** (TMQ, 10:90). Here, when he claims to be a believer, the answer to this claim can be translated as, **“Do you (believe) now? And before (that) you readily disobeyed, and you were (one) of the corruptors.”** (TMQ, 10:91).

The story of the people of Yunus (AS) is similar to that of Pharaoh. The only difference is that they were saved at the end, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“So, was there a town that believed (and) so its belief profited it, except the people of Yûnus? As soon as they believed, We lifted off from them the torment of disgrace in the present life, (Literally: the lowly life, i.e., the life of this world) and We gave them enjoyment for a while.”** (TMQ, 10:98).

Allah’s torment had been inflicted upon them but their subsequent faith saved them from that affliction. What is the difference between Pharaoh and the people of Yunus (AS)? Both of them declared by the end that they believed. Moreover, the messengers of both left them when they initially refused to believe. Why, then, did Allah (SWT) destroy Pharaoh and rescue the people of Yunus? Can Allah (SWT) be unjust or even biased towards the people of Yunus? It is indeed a wonderful example of how fate and destiny take place.

“Will He not know, (He) Who created?” (TMQ, 67:14)

Allah (SWT) knows best what lies in our hearts. If Pharaoh were rescued, he would have returned to his original state of disbelief, while the people of Yunus (AS) were rescued by Allah (SWT) because He knew they would be true believers following the right path. This is why Allah (SWT) destroyed Pharaoh and rescued the people of Yunus.

This is clearly demonstrated in what can be translated as, “...now? And before (that) you readily disobeyed...” (TMQ, 10:91). This means that Pharaoh was given a great deal of opportunities to repent. However, he was always a wrong-doer; he always returned to his ill-deeds and corruption. He even saw the miracle of dividing the sea into two parts so the believers would cross it, and instead of contemplating upon this great miracle, he followed the believers blindly until he himself drowned. In fact, instead of reflecting on the implications of this miracle, he followed the believers not out of belief in Allah (SWT), but rather out of fear of destruction

On the other hand, Allah (SWT) knew about the sincerity of the people of Yunus (AS) and since He is the Merciful, He saved them and gave them another chance. They actually proved that they deserved that chance by remaining as true believers after being saved. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “We lifted off from them the torment of disgrace in the present life, (Literally: the lowly life, i.e., the life of this world) and We gave them enjoyment for a while...” (TMQ, 10:98). They remained dutiful to Allah (SWT) and, consequently, enjoyed His blessings during their life. They were the winners and for that reason the surah was named after their Prophet's name.

Why the surah was entitled “Yunus”

Prophet Yunus' name is mentioned only once in the surah that carries his name, while it is mentioned more than once in many other Surahs of the Qur'an. Interestingly, only his people are referred to in this surah, and not him. He left them and was already in the whale's belly when they became believers.

This surah was entitled “Yunus” so that the people of Yunus (AS) remain a witness on the wisdom of Allah (SWT). It also reinforces the fact that man's deeds play a key role in what happens to him. After repentance, the people of Yunus maintained piety in spite of the absence of their Prophet. Thus, their story indicates that Allah's wisdom in saving them was well founded as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “So Allah suffices as Ever-Witnessing...” (TMQ 10: 29).

You may wonder why Allah (SWT) did not give Pharaoh the same chance since he may have repented in that case. The answer is in ayahs 22 and 23, which would ask you if you have even read the surah or if you believe in Allah's wisdom. Well, Allah (SWT) knows Pharaoh best. Moreover, fate and destiny are based on His great wisdom and are never haphazard. You may or may not understand Allah's wisdom; but rest assured that Allah (SWT) is the Wise and the All-Knowing Who is never unjust, so always put your trust in Him.

How do we deal with destiny?

The surah ends with a practical lesson that comprises three commandments concerning belief in fate and destiny; surrender to Allah (*SWT*), resort to no one but Him, and finally, put your trust only in Him. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And keep your (i.e. the Prophet’s) face up to the religion, unswervingly upright, and definitely do not be of the associators. (Those who associate others with Allah) And do not invoke, apart from Allah, that which neither profits nor harms you; then in case you do this, then you will surely be of the unjust (people).”** (TMQ 10:105-106).

Whatever happens, your faith in fate and destiny should never waver. Moreover, believe that what Allah (*SWT*) destines is out of His mercy and is for your good. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And in case Allah touches you with adversity, then none (can) lift it off except He; and in case He wills any charity for you, then none (can) turn back His Grace; He causes it to alight on whomever He decides of His bondmen; and He is The Ever-Forgiving, The Ever-Merciful.”** (TMQ, 10:107). Hence, submit to His fate and destiny to be safe in life and the hereafter.

Surat Hud

Surat Hud consists of 123 ayahs and was revealed in Makkah after Surat Yunus; this is also how the Surahs appear in the sequence of the Holy Qur'an.

Three consecutive Surahs with Prophets' names

There are several Surahs in the Qur'an that are named after Prophets, some of which are the three consecutive Surahs, Yunus, Hud, and Yusuf. These Surahs are united by several resemblances. They were the first Surahs of the Qur'an to be named after Prophets. They were revealed in the same sequence you would find in the Qur'an. In addition, they were revealed during the same Makkan period, which was characterized by increased distress on Muslims and the Prophet (SAWS).

It is important here to mention that there is a Qur'anic rule in narrating Prophets' stories. When the name of a Prophet is used as a title for a Surah, the objective of the Surah is always related to that Prophet's story, as in the example of Surat Yunus (AS), whose main objective was the submission to Allah's wisdom in fate.

Another Qur'anic rule that makes one feel the glory of this book and its magnificence is that every story of Allah's Prophets ends with an ayah or a group of ayahs that clarify the moral behind the story. If one wanted to know the divine message that any story carries, one just needs to read the last line in that Surah's Prophetic story. It is a magnificent rule that is repeated in a wondrous way in the Qur'an.

Earthquakes of Trials

This Surah was revealed ten years after the Prophet's (SAWS) call during the darkest and hardest of all times for him. The Muslims were oppressed in Makkah, and thus, the Prophet gave permission to his companions to migrate to Al-Habasha (Ethiopia). Other companions, who were left in Makkah, remained to suffer various types of torment.

As for Allah's messenger, his state wasn't much better than the state of his companions. His uncle and protector, Abu Taleb, and his wife Khadija bint Khuwailid, who used to solace him, both died. Moreover, when the Prophet went to "Al-Taif" to invite people to Islam, they rejected him and harshly threw stones at him. At the same time, additional people in Makkah stopped converting to Islam and all tribes refused to support the Prophet (SAWS) or to accept this religion.

How similar today is with yesterday

The circumstances that the Prophet (SAWS) and his followers passed through were harsh and very much resemble the hardships that Islam and Muslims are facing now. The aura of this Surah is useful to religious youth. Open your minds and hearts in order to understand Allah's aim from this Surah.

When humans live under pressure, just like the Prophet's companions, or similar to what we are facing today, they must fall in one of the following problems:

1. Loss of hope, will, and discontinuation of efforts toward reform and Islamic work.
2. Rashness and resorting to violence or other un-calculated actions in order to enforce change.
3. Relying on enemies, throwing themselves in their arms, completely surrendering to them, and living in their shadow.

Do you see similar kinds of problems in our society? What is the solution? What does this Surah say to such people?

Surat Hud's objective is balance

This Surah deals with these dangerous phenomena in a pivotal ayah that addresses the feelings of religious Muslims who suffer from the injustice happening to Islam. It also addresses those youth who love their religion and are enthusiastic towards doing any thing to support Islam. Allah says in this Surah what can be translated as:

“So go straight, as you have been commanded, (you) and whoever repents with you, and do not be inordinate; surely He is Ever-Beholding whatever you do. And do not (seek) support (you believers) for the ones who have done injustice, (for) then the Fire (would) touch you; and in no way do you have any patrons apart from Allah, (and) thereafter you will not be vindicated (i.e., if you seek support for the ones who have done injustice).” (TMQ, 11: 112-113).

These two ayahs come towards the end of the Surah, after all the Prophets' stories were mentioned, to give us three orders:

Endurance: **“So go straight,”** means to continue and persist in your call for Islam with patience. Never loose hope if you face difficulties. Straightness deals with the first kind of problems we have mentioned, which is the loss of hope and will.

Avoid transgression: **“do not be in ordinate”** this is the Qur'anic expression of rashness and resorting to violence.

Avoid inclination: **“Do not (seek) support (you believers) for the ones who have done injustice.”** This expression is the legal expression in the Qur'an referring to inclination to enemies by embracing them as allies or friends. It also refers to the complete submission to other cultures, and the blind mimicking, which leads any person to the loss of identity and sense of belonging to the Islamic way of life.

These three instructions are the treatment for the three problems that humans suffer from when they face crisis, defeat, and dark conditions. A Muslim is required to act in moderation when faced with any crisis or problems. A Muslim should not transgress or take action in something rash or pose any inclination towards his enemies. This balanced behavior can be achieved by endurance, just as Allah ordered, and by continuing the advancement on the path of Islam through reform, regardless of the circumstances. This can happen through improving your society, presenting good to the poor and needy, and striving to be successful in your practical life.

The order **“So go straight”** is the moderation of Islam and its balanced approach in handling life matters.

This Surah deals with the situation we are living in nowadays. It is, in fact, an evidence of Islam’s validity in reforming at any given place and time. Therefore, this ayah seems to be saying to us, ‘don’t transgress, don’t incline and travel straight’. The message of this Surah to all Muslims in every place and at every time is to be patient, continue reform with balance and moderation.

The beginning of the Surah - A book whose ayat are set clear

The Surah starts with what can be translated as: **“Alif, Lam, Ra. (These are names of letters of the Arabic alphabet, and only Allah knows their meaning here) A book whose ayat (i.e., verses, signs) are set clear; thereafter expounded from very close to (Or: close to the Grace of) One Ever-Wise, Ever-Cognizant, Alif, Lam, Ra. (These are names of letters of the Arabic alphabet, and only Allah knows their meaning here) A book whose ayat (i.e., verses, signs) are set clear; thereafter expounded from very close to (Or: close to the Grace of) One Ever-Wise, Ever-Cognizant,”** (TMQ, 11:1)

An interesting detail with respect to the correlation of the Qur’an and Surah is that the previous Surah (Surat Yunus) starts with the wise saying that can be translated as: **“In The Name of Allah, The All-Merciful, The Ever-Merciful Alif, Lam, Ra. (1) Those are the ayat (Verses) of the Wise Book.”**(TMQ, 10:1).

The two Surahs start with these wise words. Therefore, what is the difference between the two?

Surat Yunus concentrates on the wisdom of Allah in His disposal of matters and His decisions in fate, while Surat Hud addresses the wisdom of Allah in His book and ayat, concentrating on the wisdom of the believer in handling his hard reality through the help of Allah’s (The Wise) ayahs.

Insistence on the balanced Daw’ah (call for Islam)

The second ayah expresses clearly the meaning of persistence in calling for the way of Islam in a balanced manner, as Allah says what can be translated as: **“(Saying), “Worship none except Allah.” Surely I (myself) (i.e., Muhammad) am to you a warner and a bearer of good things from Him.”** (TMQ, 11:2).

Then the verses move on to show how the enemies had disbelieved the Prophet (SAWS), so that the reader of the Qur’an can live in an atmosphere resembling the times of the revelations of this Surah. Allah says what can be translated as: **“Verily, (Literally: Is it not “true that”?) they surely bend their breasts to try to conceal themselves from Him. ...”** (TMQ, 11:5).

Amid all these ayahs comes the seventh ayah with an interesting meaning. Allah says what can be translated as: **“And He (is The One) Who created the heavens and the earth in six days And He (is The One) Who created the heavens and the earth in six days ...”** (TMQ, 11:7). What is the relation between the creation of the heavens and earth, and the atmosphere of this Surah? Gradual progress is a cosmic rule in

Allah's (SWT) universe. This may be, and Allah knows, why He created the heavens and earth in six days. Although He is capable of doing this in an instant, this serves as a lesson for us to move step-by-step in handling matters, with patience and calmness.

The eleventh ayah refers to the same meaning. Allah says what can be translated as: **“Except the ones who (endure) patiently and do deeds of righteousness...”** (TMQ, 11:11). The ayah says: **“patiently and do deeds of righteousness,”** although most of the Qur'an ayahs come with Allah saying: **“believed and made good deeds.”** Do you see how there is wisdom behind every word and even every letter of the Qur'an, and that the ayahs of each Surah are all integrated around one topic. Allah (SWT) says at the beginning of the Surah what can be translated as: **“...A book whose ayat (i.e., verses, signs) are set clear A book whose ayat (i.e., verses, signs) are set clear...”** (TMQ, 11:1).

Due to the severity of the way the Prophet was doubted, the eleventh ayah of this Surah addresses the Prophet (SAWS) by saying what can be translated as: **“So, possibly you would leave some (ayat) (verses, signs) of what is revealed to you, and your breast would be straitened by it ...”** (TMQ, 11:12). Did the Prophet leave some of what was revealed to him from Allah? Did his chest strain upon delivering the call for Islam? No, and Allah forbid that it could have happened, but the reason for this ayah was to stand beside the Prophet (SAWS) and beside all the believers after him in all the times and places. Stubborn disbelievers always argue with callers for Islam in a way that leads to no results. For those who love Allah's religion, Allah says what can be translated as: **“...Surely you are only a warner; and Allah is an Ever-Trusted Trustee over everything.”** (TMQ, 11:12).

Thus, you are Allah slave and you must do as you are ordered to do without looking at the results, since Allah is the Only One who knows of the true end results; **“...Allah is an Ever-Trusted Trustee over everything”**.

The first 24 ayahs of the Surah form a clear message to the callers of Islam; mainly, that disbelieving is a hard path. You have to be firm, stable and exert all your efforts. Then leave the whole matter for Allah and depend on Him.

Models of straightness

The following ayahs are quite consistent in their narrative, stating different stories of Allah's (SWT) Prophets (Nuh, Hud, Saleh, Shu'ayb, and Musa, peace be upon them all). The concentration in each story is on the Prophet's implementation of the three orders (straightness in a persistent manner, **“So go straight”**, avoiding rashness, **“do not be in ordinate”**, and avoid inclination to enemies **“do not (seek) support (you believers) for the ones who have done injustice.”**)

Prophet Nuh (AS) - 950 years

The first story to project the meaning of endurance, firmness, and stability was Nuh's story. It's worth mentioning that Surat Hud contains the longest of all Nuh's stories in the Qur'an, even longer than Surat Nuh itself. Nuh remained 950 years inviting his people to the religion without any response from them. Thus, he can be considered a model and an example of endurance without loss of hope.

“And indeed We already sent Nûh (Noah) to his people (saying), “Surely I am for you an evident warner. That you worship none except Allah. Surely I fear for you the torment of a painful Day.” (TMQ, 11:25-26).

The words that Prophet Nuh used in addressing his people are the same as those by which the Surah starts. Allah says what can be translated as: **“(Saying), “Worship none except Allah.” Surely I (myself) (i.e., Muhammad) am to you a warner and a bearer of good things from Him.” (TMQ, 11:2).**

It is as if it means to say that the message is one, the call is one, and the circumstances that all the Prophets faced are the same. Stand straight and firm, like Nuh (*PBUH*).

The Righteousness of *Nuh* (Noah)

We can clearly see the resoluteness of Nuh (*AS*) and his persistence in his mission; Allah says what can be translated as, **“They said, “O *Nuh*, (Noah) you have already disputed with us and so made much disputation with us. Then come up to us with what you promise us, in case you are of the sincere”, (TMQ, 11:32).**

Nuh (*AS*) continued preaching his people for hundreds of years. To those who are missionaries, the message testifies: If you think your circumstances are dire, compare yourself to Nuh (*AS*), who stayed unwavering on the path of his mission. He preached his people in many different ways without ever feeling weary or jaded, until finally, his people themselves became bored with him.

They responded by commenting that if he was telling the truth, he should bring about the torment he was talking about. Previous to this, ayahs 28-31 show us various situations of his debates with them and the various efforts and methods that were used.

Thus, Nuh’s application of the first method comes to light in the surah; Allah says what can be translated as, **“So go straight, as you have been commanded...” (TMQ, 11:112).**

Distance from Recklessness in the Story of *Nuh* (*AS*)

What would you do if you were to be placed under the same conditions that Nuh (*AS*) faced, and was told as in what Allah says that can be translated as, **“...Then come up to us with what you promise us,” (TMQ, 11:32).** Would you turn reckless? Would you harm them? What would your response be?

Observe how Nuh (*AS*) spoke to his tribe, far from any recklessness or harshness. Allah says what can be translated as, **“He said, “Surely only Allah will be coming up to you with it, in case He (so) decides; and in no way will you be defiant to (Him). And my advice will not profit you, in case I am willing to advise you, in case Allah wills to misguide you; He is your Lord, and to Him you will be returned” (TMQ, 11:33-34).**

It is rather a soft and gentle tone that does not involve recklessness or harshness. Nuh (AS) articulated, 'the problem is not between you and me. It is Allah Who will inflict torment upon you if He so wills.'

Construct an Ark!

Allah says what can be translated as, **“And work out (i.e., make) the Ship(s)... (TMQ 11:37).** The ayahs continue until we reach the verse in which Allah says what can be translated as, **“And it was revealed to Nuh (that), “Never will any of your people believe, except him who has already believed; so do not feel chagrined for whatever they were performing (TMQ, 11:36).”** In view of that, what are we to do O' Lord? Do we depart from them since they would drown? Not yet, there are divine commandments still to come and the path ahead is far from over.

Allah says what can be translated as, **“And work out (i.e., make) the Ship(s) (Arabic *fulk* “ship” can mean singular or plural) under Our Eyes and by Our revelation, and do not address Me concerning the ones who have done injustice; surely they will be drowned”, (TMQ, 11:37).**

The manufacturing of an ark takes many long years. Nuh (AS) had lived in the desert and in order for him to construct a large ark, he needed to grow trees to build it with. Following that, he would take the wood from those trees to build an enormous ship that could accommodate all the believers and also carry two pairs from every type of animal.

That was a very difficult task and of long duration. Some scholars say that it took 100 years, some say 200 years, and others said 300 years. One might ask a question at this point; why did Allah not punish the disbelievers of Nuh in the same way that He had punished other disbelievers before? Why had Allah not miraculously sprout the trees between nightfall and its daybreak?

It is for you missionaries, so that you may learn about steadfastness and patience in obeying Allah, even if the results are not apparent and even if they have not yet been envisaged. Allah says what can be translated as, **“And it was revealed to Nuh (that), “Never will any of your people believe, except him who has already believed; ...”, (TMQ, 11:36).**

Nuh (AS) realized that none of his tribes were going to believe. However, he obeyed Allah's orders and was patient. Such is a missionary of Allah. Allah ordered him to cultivate the field and he did so, even if it did not seem that the field would produce any harvest. What is essential is carrying out divine orders, spending vast efforts, and then leaving the outcome to Allah. The importance of the matter is that at the end, one would gain their reward from Allah, whether or not the field was fruitful.

No Bias, Even Towards a Child

You may be asking yourself now, where is the 'no bias' in the story of Nuh? Where is the application of what Allah has ordered? Allah says what can be translated as, **“And do not (seek) support ...”, (TMQ, 11:113)?**

The answer to that is in the story of the son of Nuh (AS), which has not been mentioned in the entire Qur'an except in this Surah. Why?

Nuh (AS) called out, as Allah says what can be translated as, **"... Lord! Surely my son is of my family, and surely Your promise is the truth, and You are The Most Judicious of judges. (TMQ, 11:45)."**

What was the divine reply?

Allah says what can be translated as, **"Said He, "O Nuh, (Noah) surely he is not of your family; surely it is a deed not (Literally: other than being righteous) righteous; so do not ask of Me that of which you have no knowledge. Surely I admonish you that you should not be among the ignorant (46) He said, "Lord! Surely I take refuge with You that I should ask of You that of which I have no knowledge; and unless You forgive me and have mercy on me, I will be among the losers" (TMQ, 11:46-47)."**

The surah warns against inclining towards anything other than righteousness. Therefore, it clarifies Nuh's disownment of his child, who died in disbelief. Fatherhood compassion could drive some to be inclined towards their children, despite the mistakes those children make. Allah says what can be translated as, **"... so said, "Lord! Surely my son is of my family, " (TMQ 11-44).**

Thus, the surah was revealed to teach us that there should be no leniency when it comes to the disbelieving, even if it was among us, amid our homes and within our children, who are our offspring. Nuh (AS) was a role model and a leader in the rejection of the bootless and in the non-inclination towards it.

The Commentary: Be Patient

As we have previously stated, we shall read, as in the end of all stories of the Prophets, a commentary on the story and a conclusion in the last of its ayahs. In the story of Nuh (AS), Allah says what can be translated as, **"That is of the tidings of the Unseen that We reveal to you; in no way did you (yourself) know it, neither your people, even before this. So (endure) patiently; surely the (fair) end is for the pious" (TMQ, 11:49).**

Thus, the message that the story holds is **"... So (endure) patiently; ..."**, proactive patience accompanied by work and productivity with no recklessness or bias.

The Messengers of Allah and Equilibrium

All the stories of the Prophets contained in this Surah (Shu'ayb, Saleh, Lut, and Hud) serve the same denotation and compose a practical application of the core ayah in the surah (ayah 112) with its three axes:

Allah says what can be translated as,

1. **"So go straight, as you have been commanded, ...", (TMQ, 11: 112).**
2. **"...and do not be inordinate; ...", (TMQ, 11: 112).**

3. **“And do not (seek) support (you believers) for the ones who have done injustice, ...”, (TMQ, 11: 113).**

Thus, if we take for example the story of Shu’ayb, keeping in mind the possibility of applying those guidelines in all stories, we shall see the following:

- The resoluteness of rectitude and betterment with balance. Allah says what can be translated as, **“... Decidedly I would (do) nothing except reformation, (i.e., acting righteously) so far as I am able to ...”, (TMQ, 11: 88).**
- The unified message that all Allah’s messengers have called for (even in using the same words). Allah says what can be translated as, **“And ask forgiveness of your Lord, thereafter repent to Him; ...”, (TMQ, 11: 90).**
- The harsh circumstances and denial. Allah says what can be translated as, **“They said, “O Shuaayb, in no way do we comprehend much of what you say; and surely we indeed see you weak among us. And had it not been for your clan, we would indeed have stoned you, ...” (TMQ, 11:91).**
- The refraining from reckless replies. Allah says what can be translated as, **“He said, “O my people, is my clan mightier against you than Allah? ...,” (TMQ 11:92).**

What is noticeable is that Shu’ayb used the same diction as Nuh (AS) in referring the matter to Allah; indeed, He shall be The One to hold them accountable. Allah says what can be translated as, **“... Surely my Lord is Supremely Encompassing whatever you do,” (TMQ, 11:92).**

In parallel, the non-inclination of people is clearly present; Allah says what can be translated as, **“... And be on the watch; (Literally: watch for yourselves) surely I will be with you, constantly watching,” (TMQ, 11:93).**

So forth, until this ayah (94) came with victory for the Prophet and the believers, Allah says what can be translated as, **“And as soon as Our Command came, We safely delivered Shuaayb and the ones who believed with him by a mercy from Us ...,”(TMQ, 11:94).**

Therefore, to all young people who cherish Islam and wish to serve and protect it, learn from this noble surah and from its numerous stories how to be poised when calling people to Islam in times of extreme trial and distress.

Why was the Surah named Hud?

There remains one last question: Why was the surah named Hud, despite the fact that the story of Nuh (AS) is longer than that of Hud (AS) in this surah?

The answer is that the three axes of the surah (resoluteness, the absence of tyranny and recklessness, and familial leniency) have appeared in the story of Hud in a clear

and predominant manner, which led to naming the surah ‘surah of balance and non-recklessness’ after Hud.

For he told his tribe, when denial has become intense, in what Allah says what can be translated as, “... **He said, “Surely I call Allah to testimony and you bear testimony that I am quit of whatever you associate (with Allah) (45) Apart from Him; so (devise) plotting against me, altogether; thereafter do not respite me,” (TMQ, 11:54-55).** Have you ever seen such a strong and challenging statement?

Besides that, there appears the resoluteness and rectitude of Hud (AS) on the righteous path. Allah says what can be translated as, “**Surely I have put my trust in Allah, (Literally: I entrust “my self” to Allah) my Lord and your Lord; in no way is there any beast whatever except that He is taking it by the forelock. Surely my Lord is on a straight Path,” (TMQ, 11:56).**

Then, “**So, in case you turn away, then I have already proclaimed to you what I have been sent with to you, and my Lord will make other people than you to succeed you; and you will not harm Him anything. Surely my Lord is Ever-Preserving over everything”**, (TMQ, 11:57). Here appear non-recklessness and non-violence.

These words have strongly encompassed all axes of the surah, which again are: resoluteness, the absence of tyranny and recklessness, and familial leniency. The responsibility falls back on all successors of Hud, from the persistence in missionary activities, abolishing oppression, and steadfastness. For that reason, the Prophet (SAWS) said: “Surat Hud has caused my aging”, and that was for the power of its diction in rousing steadfastness on the path of Allah and His statute. Also, for the power of *Hud*, as a role model in keeping the balance in steadfastness, without being reckless or biased.

Remember the Hereafter as the Path of Equilibrium

Before the conclusion of the surah, come the ayahs (103-108) meaningful of the hereafter to reassure the believers that this life, even if it involved a gloomy and unjust reality, is not the provenance, and that the hereafter is what would fulfill the divine justice. Hence, be patient with the dire realities of this life.

Allah says what can be translated as, “**Surely in that is indeed a sign for him who fears the torment of the Hereafter; that is a Day mankind is to be gathered to, and that is a Day to be witnessed (103) And in no way do We defer it except to a term (already) fixed (Literally: numbered) (104) The Day it comes up, no self will speak except by His permission. So (some) of them are wretched, and (some) happy (105) So, as for the ones who are wretched, then they will be in the Fire; therein there will be for them groaning and sighing (106) Eternally therein (abiding) so long as the heavens and the earth (endure), except whatever your Lord decides; surely your Lord is The Sublime Performer of whatever He wills (107) And as for the ones who are made happy, then they will be in the Garden, eternally therein (abiding), so long as the heavens and the earth (endure), except whatever your Lord decides: a gift uninterrupted.” (TMQ, 11:103-108).**

Pointers that aid in Resoluteness

The conclusion of the surah consists of the two core ayahs that we have discussed:

Allah says what can be translated as, **“So go straight, as you have been commanded, (you) and whoever repents with you, and do not be inordinate; surely He is Ever-Beholding whatever you do (112) And do not (seek) support (you believers) for the ones who have done injustice, (for) then the Fire (would) touch you; and in no way do you have any patrons apart from Allah, (and) thereafter you will not be vindicated (i.e., if you seek support for the ones who have done injustice)”**, (TMQ, 11:112-113).

Thus, what is it that helps in staying steadfast and carrying out those three commands?

How does one stay resolute and patient with an outstretched hand, without weakness in leniency?

The answer is: Allah says what can be translated as, **“And keep up the prayer at the two extremities of the daytime and in the early reaches of the night. Surely the fair deeds will put away the odious deeds. That is a Reminding to the mindful (114) And (endure) patiently, (for) then surely Allah does not leave to waste the reward of the fair-doers”**, (TMQ, 11:114-115).

What helps you young man with **“So go straight ...”** (TMQ, 11:112):

- Devotion; **“And keep up the prayer ...”**, (TMQ 11:114).
- Patience, Allah says what can be translated as, **“And (endure) patiently, (for) then surely Allah does not leave to waste the reward of the fair-doers”**, (TMQ, 11:115).
- Work, resolving issues, and calling to Allah’s path. Allah says what can be translated as, **“And in no way would your Lord indeed cause towns to perish with injustice (while) their population are righteous-doers”**, (TMQ, 11:117).

The observation is that Surat Yunus, Surat Hud, and Surat Yusuf were all revealed together in the same period of time. Their order in the revelation of the Qur’an is also the same. It was revealed during the ordeal of the Prophet (SAWS) and his companions in Makkah, after the death of Khadijah and Abu-Taleb. It dealt with similar troubles.

The reason for choosing the name of a Prophet for each title of the three Surahs is that the Prophet’s story contains the moral that provide for the surah and its objective. These three Surahs speak to us now, because we are living the same phase, adversity, and darkness.

Therefore, let us be steadfast in obeying Allah. Let us beware of recklessness and oppression. Let us, also, beware of being inclined to other civilizations and get

thrown into their lap, where we surrender and live in their shadows, forget our association to Islam, and lose our identity.

This is the core of Surat Hud.

Surat Yusuf (Joseph)

Surat Yusuf is Makkan and was revealed during the same time and circumstances Surat Hud and Surat Yunus were revealed. It is considered to be the longest surah in the Ever-Glorious Qur'an in terms of the story it has. It includes the story of Prophet Yusuf (AS) "Joseph" from the beginning until the end. It consists of 111 ayahs.

The Best of Stories:

Novelists comment on Surat Yusuf saying that it includes all the craft and components of fiction: suspense, description, coherence, and symbolism. For example, the story commences with a dream that Prophet Yusuf (AS) had and ends with the explanation of that same dream. The shirt of Prophet Yusuf (AS), which is used as a means of exonerating his brothers, is later used as evidence of their betrayal. This shirt is later used as a means of exonerating Yusuf himself from the false accusation of molesting the wife of Al-Aziz.

Moreover, one of the wonders of this story is that its meanings and events are vividly dramatized for the reader, as if he is actually seeing and hearing them. Also, it is one of the most fascinating and striking stories you will ever read.

We barely need to solicit novelists' recognition of the story, as Allah Himself is the One Who substantiates its quality and excellence. He says what can be translated as, "**We, Ever We, narrate to you the fairest of narratives in that We have revealed to you this Qur'an.**" (TMQ, 12:3). However, the purpose of having this surah in the Ever-Glorious Qur'an is scarcely limited to telling a story. On the contrary, its real purpose is summarized in the last line of the story in which Allah says what can be translated as, "**They said, "Is it sure that you, indeed you, are Yûsuf?" (Joseph) "I am Yûsuf," he said, "and this is my brother. Allah has already been bounteous to us. Surely whoever is pious and (endures) patiently, then surely Allah does not waste the reward of the fair-doers."**" (TMQ, 12:90).

Thus, the core idea of the story is:

Allah is Omniscient and we are Deficient in Knowledge

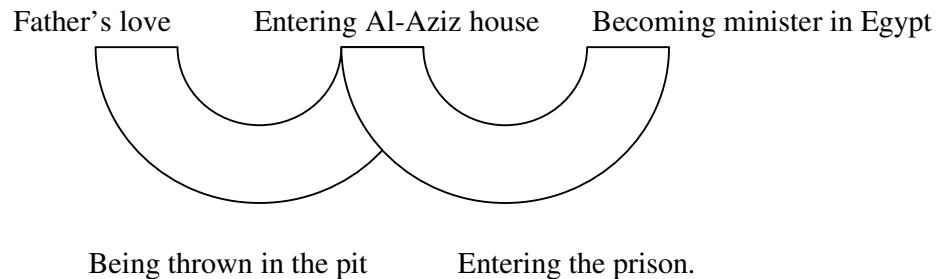
The aim of Surat Yusuf is to educate us that Allah's (SWT) manipulation of things is different from the limited perception of humans. It is as if it is telling us, "have faith in what Allah (SWT) plans, and be patient and do not give up."

The events in the surah are weird; they run contrary to what they seem to be. Yusuf is loved by his father, and this seems good. Nonetheless, Yusuf is thrown down a pit by his brothers as a result of that love. Furthermore, although the incident of throwing Yusuf in the pit appears vicious, Yusuf consequently moves to the house of al-Aziz. The presence of Yusuf in the house of al-Aziz is apparently a good thing, however, Yusuf is sent to prison afterwards. Moreover, whereas the imprisonment of Yusuf appears to be a very bad thing, yet Yusuf is appointed as the minister of finance in Egypt.

What Allah (*SWT*) wants to pass to us through the story of Yusuf (*SAWS*) is that He is the only One Who plans things. One may conceive of incidents as bad, however, this deficient perception characteristic of humans is far from realizing Allah's (*SWT*) discretion and wisdom in His judgment.

The Road of Curves:

When we read through the life-story of Yusuf (*SAWS*), we notice that there are three highs and two lows. This can be represented as follows:



The distressful stages in the life of Prophet Yusuf (*AS*) vary in their intensity. Which is more difficult: the pit or the prison? He stays in the prison for nine years, but he stays in the pit for only three days. However, these days in the pit are more difficult because he was still a little boy. In the midst of all these misfortunes, Yusuf stands firm by his morals and is not moved by the vicissitudes of life.

You are a Slave in Both Cases:

If you Muslims undergo hard times, learn from Prophet Yusuf (*AS*) who, despite all adverse circumstances, remained patient and hopeful. Similarly, learn from him how to cope with periods of tranquillity and comfort by being humble and loyal to Allah (*SWT*). Thus, the surah teaches us that there are ups and downs in man's life. Nobody leads a life of either utter prosperity or utter hardship. He is being tested in both cases. The story of Prophet Yusuf (*AS*) is the story of adhering to morals in both cases of hardship and prosperity. Prophet Yusuf (*AS*) is patient and does not lose hope in misfortunes. He is also loyal and humble to Allah (*SWT*) in prosperity. Thus, he abides by morals in times of prosperity and difficulty.

Between the Surah and the Biography:

As previously mentioned, the surah was sent down almost in the same circumstances of Surat Hud and Surat Yunus, and at a time when persecution of Prophet Muhammad (*SAWS*) and his companions had intensified. These circumstances are similar to those faced by Prophet Yusuf (*AS*). For example, Prophet Yusuf (*AS*) was separated from his father. Similarly, when the surah descended upon our Messenger (*SAWS*) in the tenth year of his mission, he had already lost his uncle Abu-Taleb and his wife Khadijah (*RA*). Leaving his family behind, Prophet Yusuf (*AS*) left his father's country, Palestine, and went to Egypt. Two years after the revelation of the surah, our Messenger (*SAWS*) left Makkah and travelled to Madinah. Thus, the surah of Yusuf

prepares the Messenger for the misfortunes and afflictions he will face. Also, it prepares all the believers to face misfortunes in their lives. That is the reason why scholars comment on it by saying that any distressed person who reads this surah is bound to become happy.

Yusuf the Human:

It is important to realize that the surah focuses on the life of Prophet Yusuf (AS) as a man. However, Surat Ghafir sheds light on Yusuf the Prophet when Prophet Musa (AS) "Moses" says to his people in Allah's words what can be translated as, "**And indeed Yûsuf (Joseph) already came to you earlier with the supreme evidence (s), yet in no way did you cease being in doubt concerning what he came to you with**"(TMQ, 40:34).

The experience of Yusuf in this surah is merely the experience of a human being, and it ends up in ultimate success both in this life and in the hereafter. As for this life, he is appointed as the Egyptian minister of finance. For the hereafter, he resists the temptations of the wife of al-Aziz and the other women in the city. Thus, it is a story of human success. It is a story of a patient human being who does not lose hope, despite all the circumstances which he undergoes. His success is unpredictable as he moves from misfortune to misfortune: his brothers' hatred, slavery, his emigration from his country, the seductiveness of the wife of Al-Aziz, and putting up with lies and false accusations.

Where are the Miracles in the Story?

The story does not refer to any miracles happening during the events Prophet Yusuf encounters. Some may consider the vision itself a miracle, but any ordinary person may have a vision. The surah concentrates on how Allah (SWT) paves for him the way to success, just as He would do to any other person. For instance, Allah teaches Prophet Yusuf how to render visions. Allah says what can be translated as, "**And thus your Lord will select you and teach you (a portion) of the interpretation of discourses** (TMQ, 12:6). However, the success of Prophet Yusuf (AS) is achieved by taking advantage of the qualifications bestowed upon him by Allah.

"Never Give up Hope on Allah's Mercy":

The story of Prophet Yusuf (AS) is the story of the success of a person who has lived through difficult circumstances and who is not equipped with the necessary potentialities for success. However, he refuses to give up hope. The ayahs of the surah are full of hope. For instance, when Prophet Yaqub (AS) "Jacob" lost his second son, and his calamity is duplicated, He says in Allah's words what can be translated as, "**... and do not despair of relief from Allah; surely none despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people.**" (TMQ, 12:87). This ayah does not mean that the hopeless person is a disbeliever. It means that he acts like a disbeliever because he does not realize that nobody knows what Allah plans in the universe and that Allah is the Generous, the Merciful, and the Wise in all that He does.

Success is Achieved by Allah's Support:

Part of the greatness of this magnanimous Prophet consists in the fact that when he has succeeded in his life occupying senior positions, he is not carried away by the euphoria of victory by showing humility to Allah and feeling grateful to Him. He says at the end of the story what can be translated as, **“Lord! You have already brought me (my share) of kingship and You have taught me (my share) of the interpretation of discourses. O Originator (Literally: Renderer; i.e., Creator) of the heavens and the earth, You are my Ever-Patronizing Patron in the present (life) (Literally: the lowly (life), the life of this world) and the Hereafter, Take me up to You as a Muslim (One who submits to you) and join me with the righteous.” (TMQ, 12:101).** Notice his humbleness when he says, **"and join me with the righteous"** as if the righteous preceded him and he wanted to join them. Thus, Prophet Yusuf (AS) has succeeded in the test of prosperity by being grateful and humble to Allah, and in the test of misfortunes by being patient and hopeful.

You are up to it:

The comment on the experience of Prophet Yusuf (AS) comes in a wonderful ayah for two reasons: to assure Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) of the fulfillment of Allah’s promise and His victory, and afterwards to pass it to his people so that they may know it for certainty. Listen to this ayah with all your heart and soul, **"Till, when the Messengers finally despaired and expected that they were counted liars, Our victory came to them. So, whoever We decided will be safely delivered. And Our violence will not be turned back (i.e., turned away from) from the criminal people.” (TMQ, 12:110).**

The Summary of the Experience:

The surah concludes with a core idea. After Prophet Yusuf (AS) becomes victorious and fulfills all his wishes, he says what can be translated as, **"They said, ‘Is it sure that you, indeed you, are Yûsuf?’ (Joseph) ‘I am Yûsuf, ” he said, “and this is my brother. Allah has already been bounteous to us. Surely whoever is pious and (endures) patiently, then surely Allah does not waste the reward of the fair-doers.” (TMQ, 12:90).**

The story of Prophet Yusuf (AS) teaches us that whoever wants to succeed and bears in mind a goal he wishes to accomplish, he will certainly achieve it via patience and hope, seeking Allah’s support and not succumbing to despair: **"They said, ‘Is it sure that you, indeed you, are Yûsuf?’ (Joseph) ‘I am Yûsuf, ” he said, “and this is my brother. Allah has already been bounteous to us. Surely whoever is pious and (endures) patiently, then surely Allah does not waste the reward of the fair-doers.” (TMQ, 12:90).**

In these words, Prophet Yusuf (AS) summarizes for us his own experience in life which, as mentioned before, is a mere human experience. Thus, whoever wants to succeed in life has to first fear Allah. Second, he has to request Allah’s assistance. Third, not only does he have to be patient in coping with the misfortunes, but he also has to conquer the obstacles surrounding him.

The patience recommended here is conducive to being positive and perseverant. It follows that one should, for example, take advantage of every opportunity to learn a new skill, as Prophet Yusuf (AS) has done, since he learned how to manage finance during his stay at the house of al-Aziz. This is the reason why Prophet Yusuf says in Allah's words what can be translated as, "**He (Yûsuf) said, "Set me over the lands treasuries. Surely I am constantly-persevering, (i.e., guardian) constantly-knowing."** (TMQ, 12:55).

O youth! Learn from Prophet Yusuf (AS) these two things: be successful in your professional life and excel in this life and hereafter through knowledge and hard work; and second, to resist temptations and abstain from them so that you can win the *Jannah* (Paradise).

Surat Ar-Ra'd (Thunder)

Surat Ar-Ra'd is a Madinan Surah. It succeeded Surat Muhammad in revelation. It follows Surat Yusuf in the order of Surahs of the Qur'an. It consists of 43 ayahs.

Power of Truth

Surat Ar-Ra'd is one of the most magnificent Surahs of the Qur'an. Its message is that truth is strong and deep-rooted, though it may sometimes seem unperceivable. Falsehood, on the other and, is weak and vulnerable though it may also seem rife sometimes. It remains fragile and worthless.

Gulled by the insincere glamour of falsehood, many people overlook such a simple fact. Falsehood takes several forms, such as widespread pornography, sweeping sinfulness, mendacious employees or merchants, as well as an unjust nations oppressing the Islamic nation and seizing its rights. These are all different forms of the frail power of falsehood.

Impact of Falsehood on People

Hoodwinked by falsehood, people grow afraid of it when they fail to perceive these facts. They, therefore, underestimate the truth they possess and might sometimes even try to imitate untruth. We often see many people thinking highly of a man having a lucrative business built on theft, fraud, and deceit. Since this is a common practice, such people deem there is no harm in following suit.

Surat Ar-Ra'd addresses people of this sort. It reminds them that the power of untruth, no matter how widespread or overt it is, is fragile and rootless. No matter how long truth is shrouded or rendered covert, it remains solid and deep-rooted.

Truth and the Recited Book

The Surah opens by emphasizing the fact that Allah (*TWT*) is the Truth, and so is the Book sent down by Him. Allah says what can be translated as, "**Alif, Lam, Mîm, Ra (These are the names of letters of the Arabic alphabet, and only Allah knows their meaning here). Those are the ayat (Verses, signs) of the Book; and that which has been sent to you from your Lord is the Truth, but most of mankind do not believe**" (TMQ, 13:1).

As the first ayah mentions the Book of Allah (*SWT*), the next two ayahs (2-3) proceed to tackle the omnipotence of Allah (*AW*) manifested in the universe. They somehow address people as a whole telling them that if they deny the Recited Book (the Qur'an), then they should look at Allah's seen book (the whole universe). In the second and third ayahs, Allah says what can be translated as, "**Allah is He Who raised up the heavens without pillars you (can) see, thereafter He levelled Himself up on the Throne; (How He did so is beyond human understanding) and He subjected the sun and the moon, each one running to a stated term. He conducts the Command; He expounds the signs that possibly you would have certitude of the meeting with your Lord**" (TMQ, 13:2); and "**And He is (The One) Who extended the earth and made therein anchorages and rivers; and of**

all products He made therein two pairs, enveloping the daytime with the night ...” (TMQ, 13:3).

Thus, Allah (*SWT*) has two books in this universe. Both lead to Him and each one gives evidence of and substantiates the other.

The Recited Book (the Qur'an) asks that a Muslim ponder over the seen book (the universe) through many ayahs like the ones we have just mentioned. On the other hand, the seen book further reinforces one's belief in the Qur'an.

Truth and the Seen Book

Who is the Conductor? Who is the Omnipotent? Who is the Owner of the universe? Would you follow Him or follow falsehood?

The Surah proceeds to discuss the seen book (the universe), and how it leads to the greatness of the Creator (*JWA*). Allah says what can be translated as, "**And in the earth are tracts neighbouring each other, and gardens of vineyards and plantation, and palms in pairs and other than in pairs, (Or: having the same root or different ones) watered with one water; and We have graced some of them over others (Literally: some “others”) in crop. Surely in that are signs for a people who consider”** (TMQ, 13:4).

Touring the Sovereignty of Allah (*SWT*)

Part of the magnificence of the Surah is that it leads one gradually and downwardly in the sovereignty of Allah (*SWT*) for him to meditate upon the universe and its signs. If we consider ayahs 2-4, we shall find that they start with the heavens, moving down to the sun and the moon, and then earth, mountains, and rivers. After that, they deal with how farm lands are divided into contiguous plots and with the varied crops they yield. You feel as if you were on a plane descending from above, holding in your hands the Qur'an as a guide substantiating these signs and asking you to look at the sovereignty of Allah (*SWT*) from the higher to the lower. It makes you wonder about who raised the heavens up without pillars for land division and how the water, which supplies all kinds of crops, springs from one source; Allah.

Their Saying is Wondrous

Following all these ayahs and signs, Allah (*SWT*) comments saying what can be translated as, "**And in case you would wonder, then (really) wondrous is their saying, “When we are dust, will we surely be (raised) indeed in a new creation ...”** (TMQ, 13:5).

Are you still in wonder despite witnessing all of Allah's sovereignty in the universe, and how He (*SWT*) is ever-Determiner over giving life to the dead? How could anyone with a sound mind doubt the power of Allah (*SWT*)? Therefore, the ensuing ayahs shift focus to another side of Allah's omnipotence: the ability to reconcile all contradictions in the universe.

Only Allah is Capable of Reconciling Them All

The Surah begins to highlight the contradictions found in this peculiar universe. There exist almost 32 contradictory phenomena in nature. Nobody, save Allah (SWA), can ever harmonize these contradictions. By observing such contradictions, we can discern the secrets of the greatness of Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "... wombs subsiding (i.e., what wombs fall short of or exceed) and increase, (i.e., what wombs fall short of or exceed) ..." (TMQ, 13:8); "... he who keeps his saying secret and who speaks aloud and he who conceals himself in the night and he who sallies by daytime" (TMQ, 13:10); "... for fear and longing (of Him) ..." (TMQ, 13:12); "... willingly and unwillingly ..." (TMQ, 13:15); "... neither profit nor harm ... the blind and the beholding ... the darkness and the light ..." (TMQ, 13:16); "... Truth and the untruth ..." (TMQ, 13:17); "... outspreads ... determines ... present life ... the Hereafter ..." (TMQ, 13:26); and "... erases ... makes firm ..." (TMQ, 13:39).

It is as if these magnificent ayahs were addressing us in wonder: 'how you do not surrender to Allah (SWT), although He is the whole Truth Who owns the whole universe with all of its contradictions, and Who can reconcile them all! This reiterates the core idea of the Surah being that truth is solid and well-founded, whereas falsehood is weak and transient.

Delusive Happiness

The ayahs unfold to provide us with three examples that amazingly and miraculously serve the objective of the Surah. The first example of which is considered the key to understanding the Surah and its core idea mentioned earlier. Let us read ayah 14 where Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "**To Him is the call of Truth ...**" (TMQ, 13:14). There is a call for the youth to tread on the path leading to Allah (SWT) because the complete truth lies in it. What about falsehood? What does it look like? Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "...**And the ones upon whom they invoke, apart from Him, do not respond to them in anything, except it is as one who stretches out his hands to water that it may reach his mouth; and in no way will it reach it ...**" (TMQ, 13:14). I swear that one can barely come across similes of truth and falsehood that are more striking than these Qur'anic figures of speech.

Allah (TWT) likens people pursuing untruth to a man looking at his reflection in the water, trying to reach his mouth, but to no avail. Therefore, all of those who go after untruth shall remain searching forever for chimerical happiness. They think that it is in sipping a goblet of wine, in hankering after and singing a four-letter song, or in laying their hands on illicit money. However, they shall never find happiness just like the man who is trying to reach his mouth that is reflected on the water surface, and as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "... **in no way will it reach it**" (TMQ, 13:14).

Correspondingly, the youth are hereby warned not to be deluded by falsehood, regardless of how glittering and shiny it might be. Even if it disguises itself as balls attended by both boys and girls where dancing and abandon prevail, even if some

people veneer it with flimflam like ‘courage,’ ‘modernity,’ and ‘tradition-buster’; falsehood is inevitably doomed and truth shall always remain to be the real essence.

Untruth: Scum Floating on the Surface of Water

Allah (*SWT*) gives us another remarkable example to underline the fact that truth is strong and deep-rooted even if it is covert, and that falsehood is fragile and has no value even if it rises to the surface and swells up. Note the following ayah where Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, "**He sends down from the heaven water so that valleys flow, each to its determined (course) ...**" (TMQ, 13:17). Water falling from the sky stands for truth and good, descending with the revelation from heaven. What is the effect of this water? Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, "**... so that valleys flow, each to its determined (course)...**" (TMQ, 13:17). Observe the power and greatness of this water and how it flows in the valley to carry good to the people. What happens next? Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, "**... so that the flood carries away (on its surface) a swelling scum ...**" (TMQ, 13:17). Worthless stray and leftovers gather on the water surface and cover it such that the valuable matter is overlaid. Accordingly, good and the water, which are used in cultivation, are overwhelmed with worthless stray and scraps (scum).

Allah (*SWT*) gives another amazing example. He says what can be translated as, "**... And from that on which they kindle fire (i.e., or) seeking (to make) ornaments or belongings, out of that there is a scum like it ...**" (TMQ, 13:17). Therefore, if you put a piece of gold onto fire to test its purity, the impurities inside shall rise to the surface and the precious metal precipitates below. The same principle works for water. It is as if Allah (*SWT*) is telling us that this is water and that is fire, but the same principle holds for both. By the same token, both truth and falsehood have identical shapes and essences. Falsehood shall always rise to the surface whereas the good shall remain underneath. However, good is deep-rooted even if you do not see it, and falsehood is doomed even if it rises to the surface.

Thus Allah Strikes the Truth and the Untruth

Here stands a clear comment on these two examples to confirm their agreement with the objective of the Surah. "**... Thus Allah strikes the Truth and the Untruth ...**" (TMQ, 13:17). What shall the fate of those two be?

Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, "**... So, as for the scum, then it goes away as jetsam (i.e., vanishes as useless) and as for whatever profits mankind, then it stays in the earth. Thus Allah strikes the similitude**" (TMQ, 13:17).

Thus, let us call for truth and accompany its people and followers, whom Allah (*SWT*) refers to in what can be translated as, "**For the ones who have responded to their Lord, (the reward) is the fairest ...**" (TMQ, 13:18).

Why “Ar-Ra’d” (Thunder)?

We are left with the reason behind the title of the Surah. The reason consists in the fact that thunder is a model for contradiction. Scientifically speaking, thunder carries contradictory charges: positive and negative. From the angle of religious belief,

thunder carries terror and fright along with good and rain to people. Thunder sounds horrible from the outside but deep inside it extols Allah (*SWT*). Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, "**And the thunder extols (with) His praise and the Angels out of the fright of Him; and He sends the stunning (thunderbolts) (and) so He afflicts with them whomever He decides. And they dispute about Allah, and He is strict in (equitable) contriving**" (TMQ, 13:13).

Its as if the signs of creation in the Surah, with the example of thunder topping the list, are conveying the same message: be careful not to be fooled by appearances but rather search deep inside.

The Greatness of the Qur'an

After the aforementioned ayahs have illustrated the influence of the seen book (the universe) of Allah (*SWT*) distinguishing truth from untruth, Allah (*SWT*) strikes a far more amazing example based on His Recited Book. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, "**And if there had been a Qur'an whereby the mountains were made to travel or the earth were cut up (into pieces) or the dead were spoken to- no indeed, to Allah is the Command altogether ...**" (TMQ, 13:31).

This ayah means that should there be anything that could move mountains or make earth travel or give life to the dead, it would be this Qur'an. The ayah simply denotes that this amazing universe can only be moved by this Qur'an. Why? It's because the Qur'an embodies the whole truth on earth. This confirms what Allah (*SWT*) says in what can be translated as, "**To Him is the call of Truth ...**" (TMQ, 13:14).

For that reason, you are kindly asked to read Surat Ar-Ra'd and live with the truth sent down by Allah (*SWT*), as truth is the speech of Allah (*SWT*). It is the Qur'an. It is the road to good and righteousness. After reading this holy Surah, do not ever let yourself be misled by untruth, regardless of how much it builds up and how high it rises above truth because falsehood is ultimately fragile and rootless.

Surat Ibrahim (Abraham)

The Objective of the Surah: The Blessings of Belief and the Afflictions of Disbelief

When asked, “What is the greatest blessing endowed by Allah”, many people would refer to mundane affairs such as their spouse, children, home, or money. On the other hand, when asked about the worst affliction undergone, they would mention worldly problems such as loss of money, or ruined business. To remove such misconceptions, Allah points out in Surat Ibrahim (AS) “Abraham” that the greatest blessing ever is the blessing of belief in Allah, and the worst affliction is disbelief and estrangement from Allah (SWT).

Is darkness identical to light?

The surah constantly juxtaposes truth and untruth, believers and disbelievers, as well as light and darkness. The opening of the surah unmistakably bears this meaning, **“Alif, Lam, Mîm, Ra (These are the names of letters of the Arabic alphabet, and only Allah knows their meaning here). A Book We have sent down to you that you may bring mankind out of the darkness (es) to the light by the permission of their Lord, to the path of The Ever- Mighty, The Ever-Praiseworthy” (TMQ, 14:1)**. It is as if man is being asked to observe the darkness and light, to ponder over Allah’s (SWT) blessing, and to opt for either of them.

Two-sided day

By referring to the story of Prophet Musa (AS) “Moses” in the fifth ayah, Allah further accentuates the same meaning, **“And indeed We already sent Mûsa (Moses) with Our signs (saying), “Bring out your people out of darkness (es) to the light and remind them of the Days of Allah. Surely in that are signs indeed for everyone (who is) most patient, constantly thankful” (TMQ, 14:5)**.

What could be the relationship between the Days of Allah and being patient and thankful? The Days of Allah were those days on which Allah had perished those who were unjust to their respective peoples, and spared those who were righteous. Thus, it was a blessing endowed upon the believers and an affliction for the disbelievers. A believer should learn his lesson from those days of learning to be patient, enduring, as well as more thankful for the generous blessing of belief, **“Surely in that are signs indeed for everyone (who is) most patient, constantly thankful” (TMQ, 14:5)**.

As commanded by Allah, Prophet Musa (AS) went about conveying Allah's message to his people constantly reminding them of His greatest blessings to them, **“And as Mûsa said to his people, “Remember the favor of Allah upon you as He delivered you from the house of Firaawn, (Pharaoh) (who were) marking you out for odious torment, constantly slaying your sons and (sparing) alive your women; and in these (acts) was a tremendous trial from your Lord” (TMQ, 14:6)**.

The path of Allah (SWT) is both, a blessing and an honor and any other path brings but belittlement and humiliation. Prophet Musa (AS) clearly says in Allah’s words

what can be translated as, **“Indeed in case you thank (Him), indeed I will definitely increase you” (TMQ, 14:7).**

Allah (*SWT*) has made a general rule and a divine promise to whoever thanks Him for His generous blessings; **“And as your Lord has notified (you), “Indeed in case you thank (Him), indeed I will definitely increase you and indeed in case you disbelieve, surely My torment is indeed strict” (TMQ, 14:7).**

Though the ayah applies to whom Allah-endowed His blessings, its occurrence amongst those ayahs dealing with the blessing of belief underscores the significance of thanking Allah for the blessing of belief in particular. In so doing, Allah will grant us more of this particular blessing. Else, Allah is Ever-Affluent and will surely dispense with the worlds. Allah says what can be translated as, **“And Mûsa (Moses) said, “In case you disbelieve, you and whoever is in the earth altogether, then surely Allah is indeed Ever-Affluent, (Literally: Ever-Rich) Ever-Praiseworthy” (TMQ, 14:8).**

The messages of Prophets

Next, the ayahs tackle the issue of the confrontation between the believers and disbelievers. Unlike other Surahs addressing each Prophet’s issue with his people, this surah does not deal with each and every Prophet because the objective here centers around the blessing of belief and the affliction of disbelief. This surah deals with the Prophets as a whole along with their respective peoples. For instance, Allah says what can be translated as, **“Their Messengers said to them...” (TMQ 14:11); “And the ones who disbelieved said to their Messengers...” (TMQ 14:13); as well as “Their Messengers said, “Is there any doubt regarding Allah, The Originator (Literally: Renderer; i.e., creator) of the heavens and the earth? He calls you that He may forgive you (some) of your guilty deeds...” (TMQ, 14:10).**

Have you ever mulled over the significance of this blessing? Allah the Mighty and the Compeller is calling on you in order to absolve you from your sins, yet He can dispense with you.

Observe the Prophets’ repeated emphasis that their knowledge of, and belief in Allah (*SWT*) represent His greatest bestowments ever. Allah says what can be translated as, **“...but Allah bestows His Bounty to whomever He decides of His bondmen...” (TMQ, 14:11).**

Blessings and afflictions

References to various blessings and afflictions recur in the surah: Allah says what can be translated as, **“And indeed We will definitely make you to dwell (in) the land even after them; that (is) for him who fears My station and fears My threat” (TMQ, 14:14).**

In contrast, Allah (*SWT*) strongly warns of His afflictions in other ayahs. He says what can be translated as, **“Beyond him (is) Hell, (i.e., Hell awaits every stubborn potentate after his life) and he is given to drink of festering water, Which he gulps and almost cannot find it palatable; (i.e., He is barely able to drink it) and**

death comes up to him from every place, and in no way will he be dead; and beyond him is a harsh torment. (Such) is the likeness of the ones who have disbelieved in their Lord: their deeds are like ashes on which the wind blows severely upon a tempestuous day...” (TMQ, 14: 16-18).

Many ayahs unfold, proceeding to the sermon of *Iblis* (Satan) in hell, which is considered the worst affliction of all to be sent down on the disbelievers.

***Iblis*'s sermon**

Allah says what can be translated as, **“And Ash-Shaytan (The all-vicious “one”, i.e., the Devil) says, as soon as the Command is decreed, “Surely Allah promised you a promise of Truth, and I promised you, then I failed you; and in no way did I have any all-binding authority over you except that I called you, so you responded to me...” (TMQ, 14:22).**

Just imagine the sorrow overwhelming the audience of this sermon! How come they heed Satan at a time when he is washing his hands of them? Allah cites Satan as saying what can be translated as, **“...So do not blame me and blame yourselves. In no way can I be a screamer (i.e., able to every for help for you) for you, and in no way can you be screamers for me. Surely I disbelieved in your associating me (with Allah) earlier” Surely the unjust will have a painful torment” (TMQ, 14:22).** Can you imagine an affliction worse than this?!

The good word

Ayahs now reach a core idea. This core idea clearly points out that belief is the greatest blessing ever. Allah (*SWT*) exemplifies the case for us saying what can be translated as, **“Have you not seen how Allah has struck a similitude? A good word is as a good tree...” (TMQ, 14:24).** People might think that most blessings are materialistic, but Allah (*SWT*) gives us this example to show that one word or one blessing is greater than all the material blessings man can conceive of! Allah says what can be translated as, **“Have you not seen how Allah has struck a similitude? A good word is as a good tree: its root is firm and its branch is in the heaven. It brings its crop every season (Literally: every while) by the permission of its Lord; and Allah strikes similitude’s to mankind that possibly they would remind themselves” (TMQ, 14:24-25).**

Just as trees bear good crops, so does the deep-rooted and lofty-branched tree of *la ilaha ila Allah* (there is no god but Allah) which yields believing people. Examples of such people include disciples of the Qur’an, callers to Allah’s path, positive people, and other benevolent believers. Indeed, it does bring its crops every season by the permission of Allah. These crops are in the form of good deeds and righteous acts that remain as an ever-running *sadaqah* (charity) even after the person is deceased.

On the other hand, the word of disbelief is fragile, wicked, rootless and branchless. Allah says what can be translated as, **“And the similitude of a wicked word is as a wicked tree: uprooted from above the earth; in no way does it have any stability” (TMQ, 14:26).**

Do not try to change Allah's blessings

The ayahs continue to corroborate the same core idea, which is the blessing of belief and the affliction of disbelief. Allah unequivocally says what can be translated as, **“Have you not regarded the ones who the favor of Allah with substituted disbelief and caused their people to inhabit the Residence of futility?” (TMQ, 14:28)**. What will their retribution be? Allah says what can be translated as, **“Hell, wherein they are roasted; and miserable is the residence!” (TMQ, 14:29)**.

Oh Muslim brethren, do not ever let go of or repudiate the blessing of belief, which Allah (*SWT*) has bestowed upon you. Do not be one of those about whom Allah says what can be translated as, **“And they made up compeers to Allah, that they (might) lead (people) into error away from His way...” (TMQ, 14:30)**.

How can we thank Allah the Mighty for this great blessing of belief? Allah says what can be translated as, **“Say to My bondmen who have believed (that) they keep up the prayer and expend of what we have provided them, secretly and in public...” (TMQ, 14:31)**; and He adds, **“...And in case you number the favor(s) of Allah, you (cannot) enumerate them” (TMQ, 14:34)**.

The surah goes on enumerating other blessings that Allah (*SWT*) has endowed upon us. Allah says what can be translated as, **“Allah is He Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down from the heaven water...”; “...And He subjected to you ships to run in the sea at His Command”; and He says, “...And He subjected to you the rivers”; “And He subjected to you the sun and the moon, both in a steadfast manner, and He subjected to you the night and the daytime” (TMQ, 14:32-33)**.

Why has Allah (*SWT*) subjected all those blessings for us? So that we may feel Allah's power, feel His blessings, and follow His path.

Allah states in ayah 34 what can be translated as, **“...And in case you number the favor(s) of Allah, you (cannot) enumerate them” (TMQ, 14: 34)**. Allah (*SWT*) does not imply that we have already started counting. Instead, He states that if we only made an attempt to count the particulars of one blessing (e.g., the sun), we would not be able to do so; Let alone the greatest blessing of all, which is the blessing of belief and following Allah's (*SWT*) path.

Ibrahim as a role model

The surah concludes with a comparison between two models. The first one is of a man, Prophet Ibrahim (*AS*), who lived on Allah's blessings and internalized the blessing of belief. The other one is of people living away from Allah's path, being unjust to themselves and to their communities. Prophet Ibrahim's (*AS*) thankfulness for the blessings received is always evident, **“Praise be to Allah, Who has bestowed upon me, though being great with (years), (i.e., though I am old) Shuaayb and Ishaq; (Ishmael and Isaac, respectively) surely my Lord is indeed Ever-Hearing of invocation” (TMQ, 14:39)**.

In a wonderful supplication and prayer, Prophet Ibrahim (AS) implores Allah to fulfill the blessing of posterity granted onto him with a greater blessing. He prays for Allah to preserve his religion for him and his offspring through *Salah* (Prayers). Allah says what can be translated as, **“Lord! Make me one who keeps up the prayer and of my offspring (ones who keep up the prayer), our Lord, and graciously accept my invocation. Our Lord, forgive me, and my parents, and the believers upon the Day when the reckoning will come up”** (TMQ, 14:40-41).

Observe this compassion from our father Ibrahim invoking Allah to help us and our children keep prayers. Allah says what can be translated as, **“And warn mankind of the Day when the torment will come up to them”** (TMQ, 14:44).

Finally, the surah concludes with ayahs carrying harsh expressions against unjust and stray people. Allah says what can be translated as, **“And definitely do not reckon that Allah is heedless of what the unjust (ones) are doing; surely He only defers them to a Day (when) be holdings will glaze over. Hurrying with their heads protruding, their glances not returning towards them, and their heart-sights (as) air. And warn mankind of the Day when the torment will come up to them. Then the ones who did (an) injustice will say, “Our Lord, defer us to a near term, (then) we will answer Your Call and closely follow the Messengers” (But) did you not swear earlier that in no way will you (face) extinction?”** (TMQ, 14:42- 44).

Is there any affliction, disgrace and humiliation worse than this?

The greatest blessing of all is to avoid that situation and the worst affliction of all is to be amongst those about whom Allah says what can be translated as, **“And you will see the criminals upon that Day interlinked in the fetters. Their apparels of pitch, and their faces enveloped by the Fire”** (TMQ, 14:49-50).

Surat Ibrahim is all about the blessing of belief and the affliction of disbelief. It was named after our father Prophet Ibrahim (AS) being a model of a man quite gratefully internalizing Allah’s whole blessings. Please read this surah and thank Allah for this great bestowment. Being grateful to Allah promotes you along the ranks of belief. Allah says what can be translated as, **“...Indeed in case you thank (Him), indeed I will definitely increase you”** (TMQ, 14:7).

Surat Al-Hijr (Thamood's Habitation)

Surat Al-Hijr was revealed in Makkah after Surat Yusuf. In the Holy Book it comes after Surat Ibrahim and has 99 ayahs.

For the callers of Islam only

This surah was revealed during a time when the Prophet (SAWS) and the Muslims were experiencing all forms of harsh abuse. It was sent during a time very similar to modern times when Islam was perceived in a suspicious and derogatory manner.

Being subject to belittling can sometimes be more difficult to cope with than actual physical harm. To find oneself being faced by a strong opposition, despite one's strong belief that they are on the right path, is very harsh on that person. Surat Al-Hijr was sent to reassure the Prophet (SAWS) and all his followers throughout the centuries by saying to them: "Do not be afraid, for you are protected and Allah (SWT) will protect His religion. Place your trust in Him (SWT), do not be overwhelmed by your enemies' strength, and continue in your path of inviting people to Allah's path (SWT)."

Surat Al-Hijr is a surah that is directed at the callers of Allah (SWT). It is sent to those who love Islam and love to associate themselves with it. It is a surah specifically sent as a spiritual and divine reassurance for those callers whom people ridicule because of their strong understanding of the teachings of their religion. It also comforts the young women who are ridiculed because of their *hijab* (modest Islamic clothing). It is as if the surah is saying to these people: "Place your trust in Allah (SWT) and do not be overwhelmed by your enemies' might. Go on in your path of inviting people to Allah's path and guiding them to Islam."

Objectives of the surah

The objective of this surah is therefore very clear: Allah (SWT) is the Preserver of His religion and He (SWT) alone will ensure that it is established on this earth. Therefore, do not be overwhelmed by other civilizations and do not take notice of those who insult and doubt your convictions. Instead, focus on your efforts on inviting people to Allah (SWT) and worshipping Him (SWT) alone. It is a comforting and encouraging message to all those who fear for Islam, due to the present trials we are going through.

These implications are made clear throughout the surah, from beginning to end.

In the first few ayahs, Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "**Leave them to eat and enjoy, and let them be preoccupied with (false) hope. They will come to know!**" (TMQ, 15:3).

Allah (SWT) says, at the end of the Surah, what can be translated as, "**So glorify the praises of your Lord and be of those who prostrate themselves (to Him).**" (TMQ, 15:98).

These ayahs therefore reiterate the fact that one should not be distracted by the power of others. One should instead focus on their own worshipping through *Dhikr*

(invoking the name of Allah (*SWT*)), prostrating to Him (*SWT*), and ensuring that they remain steadfast and consistent in their actions until the end of their life. Allah (*SWT*) says, what can be translated as, **“And worship your Lord until there comes unto you the certainty (i.e. death).”** (TMQ, 15:99).

The ayahs of preservation mentioned in the surah

The surah refers to Allah’s protection of several points, which include:

1. The Preservation of the Qur’an. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Verily, it is We Who have sent down the *Dhikr* (i.e. the Qur’ân) and surely, We will guard it (from corruption)”** (TMQ, 15:9). Have you forgotten that the Book that serves as your guide is preserved? It confirms that the One (*SWT*) who is able to preserve His Book is able to preserve His (*SWT*) religion and those who follow and invite others to it.
2. The Preservation of the heaven from *Iblis* (Satan) by making it an enjoyable sight for those who look at it. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And indeed, We have put the big stars in the heaven and We beautified it for the beholders. And We have guarded it (near heaven) from every outcast *Shaitân* (devil).”** (TMQ, 15:16-18).
3. The Preservation of the earth. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And the earth We have spread out, and have placed therein firm mountains, and caused to grow therein all kinds of things in due proportion.”** (TMQ, 15:19). If the heavens and the earth have been protected to this extent, what do you think is the extent to which Allah (*SWT*) has protected His (*SWT*) Book and religion?
4. The protection of *rizq* (sustenance) on this earth, **“And the earth We have spread out, and have placed therein firm mountains, and caused to grow therein all kinds of things in due proportion. And We have provided therein means of living, for you and for those whom you provide not [moving (living) creatures, cattle, beasts, and other animals]. And there is not a thing, but with Us are the stores thereof. And We send it not down except in a known measure.”** (TMQ, 15:19-21). Therefore, the Qur’an, the earth, and the believers are all protected.
5. The protection of the believers from the *Iblis* as Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Certainly, you shall have no authority over My slaves, except those who follow you of the *Ghâwûn* (*Mushrikûn* and those who go astray, criminals, polytheists, and evil-doers).”** (TMQ, 15:42).
6. It is further gratifying that the following ayahs, which gave glad tidings to the believers informing them that they will enter paradise, point out the concept of protection. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“(It will be said to them): ‘Enter therein (Paradise), in peace and security.’”** (TMQ, 15:46), and **“No sense of fatigue shall touch them, nor shall they (ever) be asked to leave it.”** (TMQ, 15:48).

Therefore, as a believer, you have been protected just as the Book of Allah (SWT), the heavens, and the sustenance have been protected. Allah (SWT) has indeed protected all of this for your own benefit to boost your heart and spirituality.

Iblis and Adam

As mentioned in previous Surahs, the stories mentioned in any surah are intended to stress on the objectives of that surah. The story of Adam and *Iblis* serves that same purpose. Throughout the Qur'an, the details of this story focus on Adam (AS). However, in Surat Al-Hijr the focus is on *Iblis* himself. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an what can be translated as, “[*Iblis* (Satan)] said: **“O my Lord! Give me then respite till the Day they (the dead) will be resurrected.”** Allâh said: **“Then, verily, you are of those reprieved, Till the Day of the time appointed.”** [*Iblis* (Satan)] said: **“O my Lord! Because you misled me, I shall indeed adorn the path of error for them (mankind) on the earth, and I shall mislead them all. “Except Your chosen, (guided) slaves among them.”** (TMQ, 15:36-40).

Notice *Iblis*'s consistent method of temptation, compelling man by making evil on earth seem attractive. This confuses concepts as well as distorts those with weak beliefs. However, the sincere servants of Allah (SWT) are protected by Allah's mercy and He (SWT) replies to *Iblis*'s temptations with what can be translated as, “(Allâh) said: **“This is the Way which will lead straight to Me. Certainly, you shall have no authority over My slaves, except those who follow you of the *Ghâwûn* (*Mushrikûn* and those who go astray, criminals, polytheists, and evil-doers).”** (TMQ, 15:41-42).

This surah is the surah of protection, for you are protected and so are the heavens, the earth, and the Qur'an. Why then should you ever be afraid? The surah was sent in order to comfort the Prophet (SAWS) and his followers, telling them that they are protected at a time when the enmity towards them in Makkah was at its peak. Today, it is a comfort to all those who make *da'wa*, assuring their protection. One is always protected as long as they maintain their closeness to Allah (SWT), as He (SWT) says what can be translated as, “**Certainly, you shall have no authority over My slaves, except those who follow you of the *Ghâwûn* (*Mushrikûn* and those who go astray, criminals, polytheists, and evil-doers).”** (TMQ, 15:42) The '*ghawwoon*' are those who chose the path of *Iblis* and are therefore, deprived from this spiritual and divine protection. *Iblis* is aware of this reality when he says to Allah (SWT), “**Except Your chosen, (guided) slaves among them.”** (TMQ, 15:40)

When you are guaranteed protection from Allah (SWT) why should you ever fear?

The people of the rocky tract (Al-Hijr)

The question that now needs to be answered is why was the surah was given this name?

Al-Hijr is the area where the tribe of Thamood (the people of Saleh (AS)) lived. However, what relationship does this have to the theme of protection?

The people of Al-Hijr did not believe in Allah's (SWT) miracles and refused to follow the path of *Iman* (belief in Allah (SWT)). Consequently, they felt that Allah (SWT) was going to punish them, so they began to search for a place where they could feel secure. The only place they found was Al-Hijr or the 'rocky tract'. In this new found home, they began to develop their civilization to an extent where they were hewing out houses from the mountain's rocks to feel secure. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an what can be translated as, **“And verily, the dwellers of Al-Hijr (the rocky tract) denied the Messengers. And We gave them Our Signs, but they were averse to them. And they used to hew out dwellings from the mountains (feeling themselves) secure.”** (TMQ, 15:80-82). They believed that if they lived within these mountains, they would shield themselves against the punishment and torture of Allah (SWT). This is why they began to build their houses within the mountains to protect themselves from floods and other natural disasters. So what happened?

Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an what can be translated as, **“But As-Saihah (torment - awful cry) overtook them in the early morning (of the fourth day of their promised punishment days).”** (TMQ, 15:83) No wall or mountain was able to protect them from that cry which came in the early morning, which is a sign of security, whereas night is always associated with fear and insecurity. It is as if the message to man is that protection comes from Allah (SWT) alone.

Do not be in astonishment with their civilization. It did not protect them from the might that Allah (SWT) mentions at the start of the surah. The method in which the tribe of Thamood was punished was unique in the sense that no other people had experienced it; a *Saihah* or an awful cry which no wall, wind, water, or rock can serve as protection.

This is why the surah was named Al-Hijr as a symbol of the strength of civilizations that could overwhelm us. It reminds us not to be overcome by such nations, reminding us that there is no protector except Allah (SWT).

The story of Lut (AS) (Lot)

To reiterate this meaning, Allah (SWT) mentions the story of Lut (AS) with obvious signs. The people of Lut (AS) were punished when they were at the peak of dwelling in their lusts. Allah (SWT) says in the Qur'an what can be translated as, **“Verily, by your life (O Muhammad SAWS), in their wild intoxication, they were wandering blindly”** (TMQ, 15:72). They were also punished in the morning as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And We made known this decree to him, that the root of those (sinners) was to be cut off in the early morning.”** (TMQ, 15:66) Allah (SWT) also describes their punishment in what can be translated as, **“So As-Saihah (torment - awful cry) overtook them at the time of sunrise”** (TMQ, 15:73).

Guidelines for callers of Allah (SWT) throughout time

Now that the reader of this surah has come to feel and appreciate the extent to which Allah (SWT) protects the believers in a way that no one else can, the surah begins to provide important guidelines, derived from the stories included in it, that implement its objectives:

1. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And indeed, We have bestowed upon you seven of *Al-Mathâni* (seven repeatedly recited Verses), (i.e. *Sûrat Al-Fâtihah*) and the Grand Qur’ân.”** (TMQ, 15:87). In place of all that has been granted to others from power to materialistic property, Allah (*SWT*) has granted you Surat Al-Fatiha with its amazing meanings and the grand Qur’an. Hold on to what He (*SWT*) has granted you, be proud of it, and do not aim at anything else besides it. The following ayah reasserts this concept:

2. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Look not with your eyes ambitiously at what We have bestowed on certain classes of them (the disbelievers), nor grieve over them. And lower your wings for the believers (be courteous to the fellow-believers).”** (TMQ, 15:88). So do not be in awe with the materialistic objects of this world that are given to other civilizations and be proud of your Islam and be humble towards your fellow Muslim brothers and sisters. Do not be overwhelmed by Western technology and its modern buildings, for the divine law which was applied to the people of Al-Hijr applies to them as well; there is no protector but Allah (*SWT*).

3. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Therefore proclaim openly (Allâh’s Message - Islâmic Monotheism) that which you are commanded, and turn away from *Al-Mushrikûn* (polytheists, idolaters, and disbelievers - See V.2:105).”** (TMQ, 15:94). Openly call to the way of Allah (*SWT*) despite any hardships that you may encounter because Allah (*SWT*) is The Protector. This ayah was the turning point during the time of the Prophet (*SAWS*). It shifted making *da’wa* in secret to making it in the open with public propagation of the message. The *sahabah* (companions of the Prophet (*SAWS*)) experienced some difficulty with regards to this issue and this ayah was sent to reassure them that they were protected by Allah (*SWT*) despite their being ridiculed.

4. **“Therefore proclaim openly (Allâh’s Message - Islâmic Monotheism) that which you are commanded, and turn away from *Al-Mushrikûn* (polytheists, idolaters, and disbelievers - See V.2:105). Truly! We will suffice you against the scoffers.”** (TMQ, 15:94-95).

5. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Indeed, We know that your breast is straitened at what they say. So glorify the praises of your Lord and be of those who prostrate themselves (to Him). And worship your Lord until there comes unto you the certainty (i.e. death).”** (TMQ, 15:97-99). Being ridiculed is unpleasant, and despite being convinced of Allah’s (*SWT*) protection of oneself, a Muslim may tire of the comments of others. This ayah gives an antidote for this problem; it provides an outstanding end to the theme of protection this surah centres about. It is like a practical application of the concept to allow a person to feel this spiritual and divine protection. It is the antidote of glorifying Allah (*SWT*) and worshipping Him (*SWT*) until death. Let them ridicule you, for their end will not be different to that of the people of Al-Hijr. Indeed, you are protected.

Have a high zeal for your religion, work on improving yourself and inviting others to the way of Allah (*SWT*), and you will enjoy the protection and care of Allah (*SWT*) in this world, and you will earn the reward of Paradise in the hereafter.

Surat An-Nahl (The Bees)

Surat An-Nahl is Makkan. It was revealed after Surat Al-Kahf. It consists of 128 ayahs and falls in order after Surat Al-Hijr in the Qur'an. Many scholars agree that it is "The Surah of Blessings."

Remember it and be thankful

If one is to sit down and write all the blessings that Allah (SWT) had bestowed on him on a piece of paper then reads Surat An-Nahl, one would find all those blessings mentioned in the surah. Likewise, if one would read the surah, then writes down all the blessings that he/she comes across in it, one would find out that they have encompassed all that could possibly be imagined.

It is indeed "The Surah of Blessings". It calls upon the reader's attention to the blessings of Allah (SWT) that permeate the universe; beginning with the basic blessings, such as life necessities, to the inconceivable and disguised blessings that people usually forget, take for granted, or are even unaware of. After a comprehensive presentation of each group of blessings comes a conclusive ayah to remind us that Allah (SWT) is the provider of all those blessings. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "**And whatever favor you have, (then) it is from Allah; ...**" (TMQ, 16:53); or "**And in case you number the favor (s) of Allah, you will not enumerate them; ...**" (TMQ, 16:18).

There are many ayahs in the surah that explain the different sections of blessings, warning against the abuse of the blessing by using it to commit sins. In contrast, these ayahs urge mankind to thank Allah (SWT) and to employ those blessings in what they are created for.

Surat An-Nahl and Surat Ibrahim:

One might reflect that Surat Ibrahim also focuses on the blessings of Allah (SWT), so how is it connected to Surat An-Nahl? Surat Ibrahim focuses on one single blessing only, namely faith, as its main axis and the most important of Allah's blessings. In contrast, Surat An-Nahl covers all of Allah's blessings, starting with the simplest most basic life necessities to the most important of all, which are faith and revelation. For that reason, Surat An-Nahl starts with a reference to the same blessing that Surat Ibrahim starts with; revelation.

In Surat Ibrahim, Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "**Alif, Lam, Mîm, Ra (These are the names of letters of the Arabic alphabet, and only Allah knows their meaning here). A Book We have sent down to you that you may bring mankind out of the darkness (es) to the light by the permission of their Lord, ...**" (TMQ, 14:1), and "**He (always) sends (i.e., He has been sending down) down the Angels with the Spirit of His Command upon whomever He decides among His bondmen, ...**" (TMQ, 16:2).

An incessant presentation:

The surah starts with a presentation of Allah's blessings:

- The blessing of revelation, which is the first blessing in the surah; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“He (always) sends (i.e., He has been sending down) down the Angels with the Spirit of His Command upon whomever He decides among His bondmen, (saying), “Warn that there is no god except I; so be pious to Me” (TMQ, 16:2).**
- The blessing of the creation of earth and the heavens; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“He created the heavens and the earth with the truth. Supremely Exalted be He above whatever they associate (with Him)” (TMQ, 16:3).**
- The blessing of the creation of man; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“He created man of a sperm-drop; yet, (behold) how he is an evident adversary” (TMQ, 16:4).** The souls that inhabit our bodies are themselves a blessing from Allah (*SWT*), after He had created us from naught.
- The blessing of animals (cattle) as a source of food, clothes, and a means of transportation; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And the cattle-He created them for you; in them is warmth and (various) uses (i.e., profits) and of them you eat” (TMQ, 16:5); and “And horses and mules and asses for you to ride, and as an adornment; and He creates what you do not know” (TMQ, 16:8).**

This ayah includes the means of transportation during the Prophet’s (*SAWS*) days as well as the reference to all modern means of transportation in present world as Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“... and He creates what you do not know.”, (TMQ 16:8),** which includes planes, cars ... etc. that are all blessings that Allah has bestowed on us

- The blessing of water, falling down from the skies; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“He is The One Who sends down to you from the heaven water of which you have drink, and of which (you have) trees, wherein you mark for (your herds) to graze”(TMQ, 16:10).**
- The blessing of plantation; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Therewith He causes to grow for you plantation, and olives, and palms, and vineyards, and all (kinds of) products. Surely in that is, indeed, a sign for a people who meditate” (TMQ, 16:11).**
- The blessing of the subjection of the universe to man; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And He has subjected to you the night, and the daytime, and the sun, and the moon. And the stars are subjected to His Command. Surely in that are indeed signs for a people who consider” (TMQ, 16:12).**

This entire universe in its magnitude is subjected to you so you would live and fulfill your obligation for the Vicegerency. Imagine the world without the blessing of the subjection of the universe to mankind. Imagine the earth without oxygen, or without a sun providing light and warmth.

- The blessing of the adornment of earth; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And whatever He has propagated for you in the earth of different colors. Surely in that is indeed a sign for a people who constantly remember”** (TMQ, 16:13).

This is a blessing that people see every day, but unfortunately goes unnoticed. We took those blessings for granted and this surah shakes our senses and revives them all over again. It draws back our attention to perceive Allah’s blessings in the universe.

Help your heart

Remembering Allah’s blessings is essential to maintain a pious heart. Therefore, if you seem to be unable to contemplate upon them, I recommend that you follow these steps:

- Write down the blessings you know and speculate upon them.
- Remember and repeat *“Al-Hamdu l’Allah”* (Praise be to Allah) wherever you go even if it is done on your way to run an errand.
- Ponder upon Allah's blessings on you as you start your prayers reading Surat Al-Fatiha. For each *raka’a* (section of a prayer), have a specified blessing in mind, contemplate upon it, and thank Allah (*SWT*) for it. Evoking the blessings helps the heart to thank Allah (*SWT*) Who bestowed them. Man thanks his equals, the human beings, day and night but how many times does he really thank the Giver? How many times in a given day does a man say *“Al-Hamdu l’Allah”*?

More blessings

The ayahs go on numerating to us more blessings that Allah, The Lord of the worlds, brings from sources unimaginable to us, among which:

- The blessing of the subjection of the sea to mankind; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And He is the One Who subjected the sea that you may eat of it fresh flesh and draw forth out of it ornaments for you to wear ...”** (TMQ, 16:14).

Could one imagine that this scrumptious meat comes from the depths of such grisly growler sea? The problem of mankind lies in the fact that those blessings have become habitual to him and that he has taken them for granted. Surat An-Nahl comes to remind people of Allah's blessings, to revive our sense of wonder, and to evoke our feelings of gratitude for Allah (*SWT*).

- The blessing of the creation of mountains; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And He has cast in the earth anchorages (i.e., mountains) so that it should not reel with you, ...”** (TMQ, 16:15). For Allah (*SWT*) has made anchorage of mountains, which protects, as modern science has proven,

the earth against earthquakes.

- The blessing of the creation of the stars; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And way marks; and by the star they are guided” (TMQ, 16:16)**. These stars point us in all directions when traveling, in addition to the *qibla* (the direction of Makkah).
- The blessing of cattle’s milk; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And surely in (the) cattle (there) is indeed a lesson for you. We give you to drink of what is in their bellies, even between filth and blood, exclusively (pure) milk, palatable to the drinkers”, (TMQ, 16:66)**.

Can you imagine the area from which pure milk comes in pleasant taste and odor, from among blood and stool? Nevertheless, it comes clean and pure without a drop of blood or dung! **“exclusively (pure) milk, palatable to the drinkers”**.

- The blessing of knowledge, hearing, and sight; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And Allah brought you out of your mothers’ bellies not knowing anything ...” (TMQ, 16:78)**; then he gave us the tools to acquire science, **“... and He has made for you hearing and be holdings (i.e. eye sights) and heart-sights, (i.e., perception “s”) that possibly you would thank (Him)” (TMQ, 16:78)**.
- The blessing of birds; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Have they not regarded the birds subjected in the firmament of the heaven? In no way does anyone hold them except Allah. Surely in that are, indeed, signs for a people who believe” (TMQ, 16:79)**.

The question here is, which one of us would take that into consideration and be thankful? Who would employ his bestowed blessings and use them in what pleases Allah (*SWT*) to gain His contentment?

“And in case you number the favor (s) of Allah, you will not numerate them” (TMQ, 16:18)

After mentioning all those blessings comes a core ayah; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And in case you number the favor (s) of Allah, you will not enumerate them; surely Allah is indeed Ever-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful” (TMQ, 16:18)**. But what is to be counted? Do we count the known and tangible blessings or the intangible ones? If we assume that we could count up the concrete blessings, could we then calculate the benefits that each blessing encompasses? In the Qur’an, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And in case you number the favor (s) of Allah, you will not enumerate them ...”** He did not say the “favors” altogether! (In Arabic the translation of “favor”, as mentioned in this ayah, means only one).

However, the ayah ends with, **“...surely Allah is indeed Ever-Forgiving, Ever-Merciful”**, to illustrate that man does not usually thank Allah (*SWT*) for the blessings

and that if Allah (*SWT*) were not merciful and forgiving, He would have severely tortured mankind for not thanking Him for his magnificent blessings.

Abusing the blessings

The objective of the surah is not limited to enumerating the blessings, but it also includes putting emphasis on their use, as well as employing them for what they are created for. Hence, after each wave of mentioning a blessing there is an ayah that warns against the abuse of blessings (ayahs 19-29).

Ayah 24, for instance, denounces those who do not appreciate or even deny the blessing of revelation; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And when it is said to them, “What has your Lord sent down?” they say, “Myths of the earliest (people)” (TMQ, 16:24).** For this reason, they were destined to have an inauspicious ending; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“That they may carry their encumbrances complete on the Day of the Resurrection and (some) of the encumbrances of the ones that they lead into error without (any) knowledge ...” (TMQ, 16:25).**

The ayah that follows depicts a horrifying scene of those who deny Allah’s blessings; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“The ones that were before them did already scheme; then Allah came upon their structure from the foundations, so the roof collapsed upon them from above them, and the torment came upon them from where they were not aware” (TMQ, 16:26).**

In contrast, there come the ayahs 30-32, directly following the aforementioned ayahs to bring about glad tidings to those who best utilize Allah’s blessings upon them. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And it will be said to the ones who were pious, “What has your Lord sent down?” They will say, “Most Charitable!” (i.e., He has sent down the best) ...” (TMQ, 16:30)** Observe that divine praise of those who acknowledge and appreciate the blessing of revelation, in comparison to those who deny it in ayah 24.

Next, and in ayah 32, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Whom the Angels take up while they are goodly. They say, “Peace be on you! Enter the Garden for whatever you were doing” (TMQ, 16:32).** This too is juxtaposed with ayah 28, where Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“(The disbelievers are the ones) whom the Angels take up while they are unjust to themselves. So they will cast forth-full submissiveness. “In no way were we doing anything odious ...”,(TMQ, 16:28).**

The blessing of sending messengers and the guidance

Those two highly important blessings recur in the holy surah. Sending messengers to mankind with Allah's laws and methodology is the greatest blessing ever for the people in all ages. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And indeed We have already sent forth in every nation a Messenger (saying), “Worship Allah and avoid the *Taghût* ...” (i.e., false gods)” (TMQ, 166:36).**

Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as: **“And in no way did We send (even) before you, except men to whom We revealed. “So ask the population of the Remembrance, in case you (i.e. the pagan Arabs) do not know. With clear evidences and the Scriptures, (i.e., the *Zubur*, pl, of *Zabûr*, usually understood to be the psalms) and We have sent down to you (i.e. the Prophet) the Remembrance that you may make evident to mankind what has been sent down (ever since) and that possibly they would meditate”, (TMQ, 16:43-44).**

Have you written among the blessings that Allah (*SWT*) has bestowed upon us sending Prophet Muhammad (*SAWS*)? How about the revelation of the Ever-Glorious Qur’an that has the ayahs we read and live? Have you ever thought of applying the Qur’an and the Prophet’s *sunnah* with the intention of thanking Allah (*SWT*) for those two grand blessings?

Whatever blessing you have, it is from Allah

After a list of successive blessings comes a core and conclusive ayah to comment; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And whatever favor you have, (then) it is from Allah ...” (TMQ, 16:53).** This ayah draws our attention to the fact that recognizing Allah’s blessings is a step towards thanking The Creator for the blessing, which is contingent on gratitude; and gratitude in turn is the guarantee for the continuance of blessings. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And as your Lord has notified (you), “Indeed in case you thank (Him), indeed I will definitely increase you ...” (TMQ, 14:7).**

If man would trace back everything in his life to its origin, he would find that he actually possesses nothing that is originally his; starting with his basic needs like clothes, food, and drink, to the latest in modern technologies, such as space shuttles, computers, and cars. They all are based on the raw material that Allah (*SWT*) makes available to us and are also products of the human mind, which in turn is the greatest blessing He had bestowed upon us.

The misuse of blessings

Once again, the surah warns against the abuse of blessings, this time, describing a group of people who pray only when in tribulation, then turn to polytheism when in good times (ayahs 53-55); how would their destiny wind out? Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“That they may disbelieve in what We have brought them. So enjoy (this life); then eventually you will know” (TMQ, 16:55).**

In such case, Allah’s blessing turns into some sort of introduction to a well-deserved retribution, **“So enjoy (this life) ...”.** Thus, if you find Allah’s blessings upon you are incessantly increasing while you are negligent in thanking Him or in using them in good deeds, then beware that you will pay for this eventually.

Of the most horrific manifestation of the abuse of blessings is *wa’d al-banat* (burying female children alive); Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And when one of them is given the tidings of (the birth) of a female, his face lingers blackened and he is ever-repressed (with sorrow) (58) He hides himself from (Literally: overlays himself beyond) (the sight) of the people because of the odious tidings**

(given) him, whether he should retain it in degradation or shove it in the dust...” (TMQ, 16:58-59). It is inconceivable that after Allah’s bestowal of such blessing, man would actually utilize it in sinning by killing an innocent soul!

The blessing of mercy and concealment

One of the blessings that Allah (*SWT*) bestowed on His worshippers is His patience with them and concealment of their sins; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And if Allah should take mankind to task for their injustice, in no way would He leave hereon any beast ...”**, (TMQ, 16:61).

Imagine if Allah (*SWT*) lifted his mercy and concealment of your sins! Imagine if Allah (*SWT*) disclosed your sins just for one single day! What if you woke up one day only to find posted on your door: Yesterday, he committed such and such? Or even worse; what if Allah (*SWT*) would have a list of your sins simply inscribed on your forehead? What if there would be an odor for every sin you commit?

It is indeed one of the greatest blessings of Allah (*SWT*) that what is exposed from our deeds is only the accepted and the good; concealed is all what is ugly of our sins. All praise and gratitude are for Allah (*SWT*).

The blessing of rain and revelation

Of the blessings that are concurrently mentioned in the surah is the blessings of revelation and rain; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And in no way have We sent down upon you the Book except that you may make evident to them that wherein they have differed, and as a guidance and a mercy to a people who believe”** (TMQ, 16:64); and **“And Allah sends down from the heaven water; so He gives life therewith to the earth after its death ...”** (TMQ, 16:65).

One might wonder about the secret behind those two blessings being inseparable! Each blessing resembles the other; while revelation is sent to people carrying benevolence, rain pours down to revive earth. Revealed ayahs, in the same manner, revive hearts, after they have been hardened. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And thus We have revealed to you a Spirit of Our Command...”** (TMQ, 42:52); and **“And is he who was deceased, then We gave him life ...”** (TMQ, 6:122).

Alcohol as a misuse of blessings

Once again, the surah warns against the misuse of blessings; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And of the products of the palms and the vineyards you take to yourselves there from an intoxicant and a fair provision ...”** (TMQ, 16:67).

This ayah was revealed before the prohibition of alcohol; it does not talk about alcohol jurisprudentially, it rather warns against it as a form of misuse of blessings. Alcohol originates from fine fruits that are part of great blessings that Allah (*SWT*) has provided. However, some people changed its use into something other than what it was created for; they used it as a substance that deteriorates their minds and

humiliates them, a dangerous aspect of using the blessings for purposes other than the ones intended.

Social blessings

One might inquire about the blessing of a wife and family in this ayah! Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And Allah has made for you of yourselves spouses, and made for you from your spouses sons (i.e. sons and daughters; seeds) and grandchildren, and He has provided you of the good (things)...”** (TMQ, 16:72).

A peaceful family life is one of the finest blessings that Allah (*SWT*) has bestowed on us. Therefore, the following ayah is a harsh one that warns against ingratitude of the blessing. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“... Is it then that they believe in untruth, and in the favor of Allah they (do) disbelieve? And they worship, apart from Allah, that which does not possess (power to give) them (any) provision for them from the heavens and the earth, and they are unable to (provide) anything”** (TMQ, 16:72-73).

The very homes that we inhabit are also a blessing; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And Allah has made for you of your homes a dwelling ...”** (TMQ, 16:80). So is the furniture that we utilize; **“...and made for you from the skins of (the) cattle homes (that) you find light on the day of your sojourning and on the day of your stationary abode, and of their wool (Literally: wools) and of their furs and of their hairs furnishings and an enjoyment for a while”** (TMQ, 16:80); the clothes we wear; **“...and He has made for you of the mountains nestled (refuges), and He has made for you apparels to protect you from the heat and apparels to protect you from your (own) violence ...”** (TMQ, 16:81); and even the simplest of all, the shade that we relax under; **“And Allah has made for you of what He created shades ...”**; (TMQ, 16:81).

For such reasons comes this core ayah; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“... Thus He perfects His favor upon you, that possibly you would be Muslims (Literally: surrender “to Him”)”** (TMQ, 16:81).

The danger of abusing the blessings

A succession of ayahs continues in the same context, as mentioned before; a wave of blessings, exhortation in using them in the approved manner, then the warning against their abuse. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“They recognize the favor of Allah; thereafter they deny it; and most of them are the disbelievers”**, (TMQ, 16:83). It is clear now that ignoring the blessings could result in falling into atheism, Allah forbids.

The following is a string of intense ayahs that warn against breaking Allah’s covenant after having all those bestowed blessings; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And do not be as she who breaks her yarn, even after it is strongly spun, (Literally: powerfully spun) into strands...”**, (TMQ, 16:92); **“And do not take to yourselves your oaths fraudulently among yourselves for that a foot should slide back after firm (steadiness) ...”** (TMQ, 16:94); **“And do not trade the covenant**

of Allah for a little price ...” (TMQ, 16:95); “Whatever is in your presence is depleted, and whatever is in the Providence of Allah is enduring ...” (TMQ, 16:96).

Other ayahs follow to warn against ingratitude; Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “**And Allah has struck a similitude: a town that was secure (and) well composed, its provision coming up to it opulently from every place, then it disbelieved (i.e., they were unthankful) in the amenities of Allah; so Allah made it taste the garment of hunger and fear for the things they were working out (i.e., doing)**” (TMQ, 16:112).

It would have been more appropriate had those people acted as Allah (SWT) commanded. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “**So eat of what Allah has provided you, lawfully good, and thank (Him) for the favor of Allah, in case it be Him only that you do worship**” (TMQ, 16:114).

Ibrahim’s (Abraham) (AS) gratefulness to Allah (SWT)

The surah concludes with the story of a man, who was grateful to Allah, he is Prophet *Ibrahim (AS)*. What attracts one’s attention is that the surah describes him with one of his traits that serves the surah’s objective; Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “**Thankful for His amenities ...**” (TMQ, 16:121).

The surah indicates that being grateful to Allah (SWT) guarantees His guidance. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “**... He selected him and He guided him to a straight Path**” (TMQ, 16:121).

The reason behind the title

Now we arrive to the reason behind the title of the surah. Why is the surah not entitled “the Surah of Blessings”, since it is inundated with blessings? Why “An-Nahl” (the bees) in particular? Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “**And your Lord revealed to the bees, (saying), “Take to yourselves, of the mountains, homes, and of the trees, and of whatever they trellis. Thereafter eat of all (kinds of) products, (and) so insert (yourselves) (Or: follow) through the ways of your Lord, tractable (to you).” (Literally: made subservient) There comes out (Literally: goes out) of their bellies a drink of different colors, wherein is a cure for mankind ...**” (TMQ, 16:68-69).

Firstly, the organization of the bees’ kingdom, and the way they secrete honey are per se great blessings of Allah (SWT) and among His miracles on earth. Secondly, the ayahs mentioned above start with “**...And your Lord revealed to the bees ...**” which points out that bees follow the divine inspiration, obey Allah (SWT), and accurately abide by what they have been instructed to fulfill: “**...Take to yourselves ... eat ... so insert (yourselves) (Or: follow) through ...**”.

Bees, therefore, constitute an exemplary model that employs the blessings of Allah (SWT). They obeyed Allah (SWT), carried out His orders, and as a result, Allah blessed them with bellies that generate curative and useful honey for all those that inhabit earth.

Please observe the following Qur'anic expression; **“...There comes out (Literally: goes out) ...”** The ayah does not come in the imperative mode “bring out honey”, because when inspiration was followed and when Allah’s method was applied, then the honey came forth curative and useful. Likewise, if the nation follows Allah’s revelation and abides by His methodology, the “honey” of the guiding light will come readily for the whole society.

One interesting fact in the kingdom of bees is that it is basically dependant on females. The commands in Arabic are really addressed to females; **“... eat ... so insert (yourselves) (Or: follow) through ...”** This is obviously the case since the drone’s sole mission is to impregnate the queen, while the responsibility of labor, construction, and honey secretions fall on the females.

Qur’an and honey cure bodies and souls

Magnificently enough, the word “cure” occurs in the Qur’an only twice; once describing the Qur’an itself and once describing honey! Qur’an and honey, therefore, are equally curative. Allah (SWT) enumerates a great deal of blessings in this surah (including the blessing of revelation) and warns us against misusing them. Therefore, if we use the blessing of honey the right way, we would cure our bodies. Likewise, if we would properly use the Qur’an, we would cure our minds, hearts, and souls.

Provide for the cost of honey

This was Surat An-Nahl, the surah of blessings. When you remember the blessings that Allah (SWT) has bestowed on you, but do not feel gratitude for Him, with every iota of your being, then you truly need to look within yourself, because you have not benefited from the surah. It is the surah of praise, the surah of knowing Allah’s blessings and of thanking Him for them.

We ought to ask ourselves whether we have employed Allah’s blessings to gain His acceptance, or have we used them in committing sins? One who abuses the blessings of Allah must fear this ayah; Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And Allah has struck a similitude: a town that was secure (and) well composed, its provision coming up to it opulently from every place, then it disbelieved (i.e., they were unthankful) in the amenities of Allah; so Allah made it taste the garment of hunger and fear for the things they were working out (i.e., doing)”** (TMQ, 16:112).

He, who utilizes Allah’s blessings in disobedience, shall live an insecure life; his fortune in life shall diminish and he would live in poverty, famine, and fear. Therefore, among the most important graces that Allah had bestowed on the *Quraish* tribe (with whom Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) lived in Makkah) was security. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“So let them worship The Lord of this House (3) Who has fed them against hunger and secured them from fear”**, (TMQ, 106:3-4).

A practical project

Why not follow our recitation of this surah with a practical project that intensifies our appreciation of Allah's blessings and heightens our interaction with Surat An-Nahl? First, read Surat An-Nahl, then trace the blessings of Allah (*SWT*) and write them all down; regulate those blessings into parts of your everyday life by using some specific examples (e.g. shelter, family, or food). After that, think of the best way of utilizing these blessings to please Allah (*SWT*). That way, you would have fulfilled Allah's aim in this surah.

May Allah be our Ever-Helper.

Surat Al-Israa (The Night Journey)

The Surah was revealed in Makkah after Surat Al-Qasas (the stories). It comes after Surat An-Nahl in the Qur'an, and consists of 111 ayahs. It is also known as the Surah of Israelites.

A Majestic congregation

In order to grasp the core ideas and the objectives of the surah, it is essential to refer to the story of *Al-Isra'*, the night journey of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) from Makkah to Jerusalem, that was followed by *Al-Mi'raj*, his ascension to the seventh Heaven. Given the magnitude of the latter, why is it that the surah is not entitled *Al-Mi'raj* instead, and what secret could the current title possibly hold?

An equally significant event occurred alongside this one; the greatest congregation in the history of mankind. *Al-Aqsa* mosque was filled up with the cream of the crop; the Prophets of Allah (SWT) from Adam (AS) to Isa (AS) "Jesus" were all waiting for the Prophet (SAWS) to be their *Imam* (leader in prayer).

The Imam of the Prophets and messengers

The Prophet (SAWS) led the prayer of the Prophets symbolizing the transference of the divine message they bore to the Muslim nation. It also indicates the Prophet's (SAWS) leadership in a holy place, *Al-Aqsa* mosque. Muhammad (SAWS) and his nation are now responsible for the Book i.e. the message sent by Allah (SWT) to mankind, the message that had been taken up by messengers, one after another. Nuh (AS) "Noah" carried the message with his sons after the flood. Then, Ibrahim (AS) "Abraham" was succeeded by Musa (AS) "Moses", Isa (AS) "Jesus", and eventually Muhammad (SAWS) and his nation.

The responsibility of the Scripture

Each of these Prophets was ordered to guard the Book of Allah (SWT) and enjoin upon his people to guard it and to abide by its rules. However, they always failed to fulfill this obligation after their Prophet's passing away. They distorted the Book and changed its commandments. Upon doing so, Allah (SWT) replaced them with another nation to entrust it with the Scripture. The last nation to be in charge of the Scripture was the Israelites, who corrupted earth and did not comply with the Book's instructions. For this reason, the surah is also entitled after them as it tackles the shift of the Book's responsibility from them to the nation of Muhammad (SAWS), indicated in the fact that all the Prophets sent to the people of Israel prayed with Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) as their *Imam*. Thus, Allah (SWT) replaced them with the nation of Muhammad (SAWS) and this surah is a declaration of the delivery of the message.

The objective of the Surah: feel the value of the Qur'an

How this could be the objective of the surah and how it is related to *Al-Isra'* can be explained by the following; the Qur'an and the Book are mentioned in Surat Al-Israa, more than in any other surah, which is indicative of the importance of treasuring the Qur'an. *Al-Isra'* itself is a representation of the transfer of the Book to the nation of

Muhammad (SAWS); as if it invites us, the nation in charge of this Book, the Qur'an, to recognize its value and make sure not to let go of it like our predecessors did lest Allah (SWT) would replace us as He did with them.

Make it your Imam

Now, since we are roughly in the middle of our journey with explanation of the Ever-Glorious Qur'an, let us go through the surah and try to feel its greatness through its ayahs.

The transfer of the Book through nations

The surah starts with the *Al-Isra'* incident as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“All Extolment be (to Him), Who made His bondman to set forth by night from the Inviolable Mosque to the Further (Literally: Remotest) Mosque, around which We have blessed...”** (TMQ, 17:01). **In the next ayah, Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “And We brought Mûsa (Moses) the Book...”** (TMQ, 17:02). This ayah comes after the incident of *Al-Isra'* to emphasize that mentioning it is to declare the transfer of the Scripture from Israelites to the nation of Muhammad (SAWS). Thus, we find that the second ayah tackles the nation that had the scripture before as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“and We brought Mûsa (Moses) the Book and We made it a guidance to the Seeds (Or: Sons) of Israel) (saying), “Do not take to yourselves any trustee apart from Me”** (TMQ, 17:02). How did the scripture reach them? Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Offspring of whomever We carried with Nûh, (Noah) surely he was a constantly thankful bondman.”** (TMQ, 17:03).

Hence, the three ayahs are a concrete representation of the transfer of the scripture among nations. What did they do with the scripture? Why were they replaced? The answer is in what Allah (SWT) says and can be translated as, **“And We decreed for Seeds (Or: Sons) of Israel) in the Book: “Indeed you will definitely corrupt in the earth twice, and indeed you will definitely (become) exalted a great exaltation.”** (TMQ, 17:04).

The Ayahs from 4 to 7 go on to demonstrate how the previous nation did not assume its responsibility until we reach the pivotal ayahs that declares that the scripture is the responsibility of the Muslim nation. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Surely this Qur'an guides to (the way) that is more upright, and gives good tidings to the believers who do deeds of righteousness that they will a great reward, And (gives the tidings) that that the ones who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have readied for them a painful torment”** (TMQ, 17:09-10).

Therefore, cling to this Book, and let it be your shield, for it guides you, Muslims, to what is best for you.

The record of the afterlife

Amidst the speech about the Day of Judgment comes an ayah about the Book of the Day of Judgment, the Book of the good and bad deeds, in order to illustrate the destiny of those who do not stick to the Allah's Book on earth. Allah (SWT) says

what can be translated as, **“And every man We have imposed on him his book (of augury) upon his neck, and “We will bring out for him, on the Day of the Resurrection, a Book (that) he will meet with, spread open. Read your Book! Your self suffices you this day as a constant-reckoner against you” (TMQ, 17:13–14).**

The Book is a major issue in the life of Muslims for if they do not read it, understand its essence, and apply it to their lives, what would they do with the Book of the afterlife?

The commandments of the Book

As of the second quarter, the surah deals with the greatness of the Book, as it orders us to do what is necessitated by pure human intuition. Any man of sound judgment and pure nature, cannot, upon reciting the Qur'an, but admit its greatness. Among such commandments are:

- Being dutiful to one's parents; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And your Lord has decreed that you should not worship any except Him (only) and (to show) fairest companionship to parents; in case ever one or both of them reaches old age (Literally: being great “in years”) in your presence, do not say to them, “Fie!” nor scold them; and speak to them respectful words (Literally: say to them an honorable saying). And lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy and say, “Lord! Have mercy on them, as they reared me (when I was) small” (TMQ, 17:23–24).**
- Using money for the common good; Allah says what can be translated as, **“And bring to a near kinsman his true (right) and (to) the indigent and the wayfarer; and do not squander wantonly (Literally: in “wanton” squandering). Surely the squanderers have been brethren of Ash-Shayâtîn (The all-vicious ones, i.e., the devils), and Ash-Shaytan has ever been ever-disbelieving to his Lord” (TMQ, 17:26–27).**
- Balancing miserliness and squandering; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And do not set up your hand shackled to your neck, (i.e., Do not be niggardly) nor outspread it widespread altogether, (Literally: outspread it all outspreading, i.e., do not be a spendthrift) for then you will sit blamed and regretfully rejected” (TMQ, 17:29).**

The call of intuition

All of those are commandments that address a sound mind and a pure nature and no body can possibly disregard or desert them, especially that they are well-devised to serve the common good. Thus, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as,

- **“And do not kill your children in apprehension of want; We provide for them and for you (too); surely the killing of them has been a great sinning” (TMQ, 17: 31).**

- **“And do not come near to adultery; surely it has been an obscenity and odious as a way”(TMQ, 17: 32).**

Since the ayahs address the pure nature, they describe *zena* (unlawful sex) as **“odious as a way”** for it is an extremely foul deed even if some of the weak souls do not find it so. Adopting such an evil way leads to nothing but destruction and disasters like murders, lack of *rizq* (sustenance), darkness of faces (the troubled state of mind that shows on the face), confusion of lineage, and a miserable sad life. Moreover, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as,

- **“And do not kill the self that Allah has prohibited, except by truthful (right) (Literally: with the truth)” (TMQ, 17:33).**
- **“And do not draw near the wealth of the orphan except in the fairest (manner)...” (TMQ, 17:34).**
- **“And fill up the measure when you measure, and weigh with the straight equitableness... (TMQ, 17: 35).**
- **“And do not pursue what you have no knowledge of; surely hearing and beholding and heart-sight, (Or: perception) all of those will be questioned of” (TMQ, 17:36).**
- **“And do not walk in the earth merrily; surely you will never pierce the earth, and you will never reach the mountains in height” (TMQ, 17:33-37).**

Such words cannot possibly be rejected or deserted; the Book quite plainly orders Muslims to do all these good things and warns them against what may cause their destruction. Allah says (*SWT*) what can be translated as, **“All the bad aspects of these (the above mentioned things) are hateful to your Lord” (TMQ, 17:38).**

For this reason, these ayahs are followed by an interesting comment; Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“That is of (the) Wisdom your Lord has revealed to you...” (TMQ, 17:39).** All the forth mentioned concepts constitute great wisdom and lead to a decent existence here and in the afterlife. Nevertheless, whoever disregards them is guaranteed a long stay in hell as Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“and do not make up with Allah another god, (or) then you will be cast in Hell blamed (and) rejected” (TMQ, 17:39).** This illustrates the greatness of the Qur'an since in ayah after ayah, Allah (*SWT*) informs Muslims that all the good they could ever need is simply in it. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And indeed We have already propounded (i.e., Our warnings) in this Qur'an that they may constantly remember; and in no way does it increase them except in repulsion” (TMQ, 17:41).**

The value of the Qur'an

Thus, the ayahs do not only establish the greatness of the Qur'an and the significance of its commandments, but also they enumerate the qualities of the Book from one

ayah to the other as this surah is considered the one with the largest number of references to the Book.

For example, the Qur'an acts as a shield of protection for its people. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And when you read the Qur'an, We make between you and the ones who do not believe in the Hereafter a screened curtain. And We make lids upon their hearts so that they could not comprehend it, and (we make) in their ears an obstruction. And when you mention your Lord alone in the Qur'an, they turn their backs in repulsion” (TMQ, 17:45-46).**

Furthermore, the Qur'an includes historical secrets and civilization-building norms. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And decidedly not a city is there excepting that We will be causing it to perish before the Day of the Resurrection, or We will be tormenting it with a strict torment. That has been in the Book inscribed” (TMQ, 17:58).**

The stress laid on the greatness of the Qur'an in Surat Al-Isra' is quite palpable to readers who have started the journey with us and have reached Part 15, the middle of it. Readers are by all means encouraged to sense the significance of the Qur'an and are not advised to read it indifferently, simply because the ayahs such as the ones discussed here offer them a great opportunity to improve their status on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet (SAWS) says, " On the Day of Judgment, the reciter of the Qur'an will be summoned: "Read, and be promoted (be raised to sublimity) and recite melodiously (i.e. the Qur'anic verses) for your (religious) rank accords with the last ayah you recited."²

Dear Muslim brother/sister, the number of the levels of *Jannah* (Paradise) equal that of the Qur'anic ayahs. Don't you want to go to *Jannah*? Don't you dream of it? Don't you want *Al-Ferdaos Al-A'ala* (the highest level of *Jannah*)? If you do, then always read the Qur'an, especially in *Al-Fajr* prayer (the dawn prayer) and in *Qiyam* (night prayers). In this regard, Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Keep up the prayer at the sinking of the sun to the dusk of the night and (the reading) of the Qur'an at dawn; surely the reading of the Qur'an at dawn has been witnessed” (TMQ, 17:78).** Allah (SWT) also says what can be translated as, **“And keep constant vigil with it (The Qur'an) (part) of the night (These are the late night supererogatory prayers) as an accordance for you; it may be that your Lord will make you rise again to a praised station.” (TMQ, 17:79).**

A cure and mercy to believers

Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And We are sending down, of the Qur'an, that which is a cure and a mercy to the believers; and it increases the unjust in nothing except in greater loss” (TMQ, 17:82).** As mentioned in Surat An-Nahl, the word “cure” in Qur'an is only associated with Qur'an and honey. This is because honey is a cure to bodily diseases while Qur'an is a cure to the hearts and souls that truly understand its value.

The challenge of Qur'an

² Good Hadith, narrated by Al-Albany.

Many are the ayahs that tackle the greatness of Qur'an in this surah. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Say, “Indeed in case humankind and the jinn gathered together to come up with the like of this Qur’an, they would not come up with its like, even if they were backers of one another” (TMQ, 17:88).**

Be proud of this challenge that will continue to exist until the Day of Judgment. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And indeed We have already propounded for mankind in this Qur’an every type of similitude; yet most of mankind have refused (all) except constant disbelief” (TMQ, 17:89).**

All the requirements of human well-being are in Qur'an, yet the majority of people choose to disbelieve.

The role of the Qur’an

Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And with the Truth We have sent it down, and with the Truth it has come down; and in no way have We sent you except (as) a constant bearer of good tidings and a constant warner. And (this is) a Qur’an; We have distinctly separated (its verses) that you may read it to mankind staidly, (Or: at intervals) and We have been sending it down successively (i.e., by successive revelation on different occasions)”(TMQ, 17:105-106).**

The Surah was entitled “Surat Al-Isra’el” so that every time we read it, we remember the Prophet (*SAWS*) when he first received the divine message during his *Al-Isra’* and handed it to us afterwards.

Since we are responsible for the Qur'an, we should read it frequently, not only in Ramadan but in all months. We should consider, spread, apply, and teach it to those around us.

The lovers of Qur’an

The end of the surah is reminiscent of people who loved the Qur’an, and perceived the objective of this surah in such a way that they reacted sincerely to the Book and got overwhelmed by its words. In this regard, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Say, “Believe in it or do not believe. Surely the ones who were brought the knowledge even before it, when it is recited to them, collapse upon their faces (Literally: up to the chins) constantly prostrating, and they say, All Extolment be to our Lord! Decidedly the promise of our Lord has indeed been performed! And they collapse upon their faces weeping, and it increases them in submissiveness. (A prostration is to be performed here)” (TMQ, 17: 107-109).**

It is a blessing from Allah (*SWT*) that we see a number of young people nowadays reacting to the Qur’an the way those people used to do, especially in Ramadan. They get so affected by it that they **“collapse upon their faces (Literally: up to the chins) constantly prostrating” (TMQ, 17:108).** Whenever they listen to the ayahs of the Qur'an, **“increases them in submissiveness” (TMQ, 17:109),** which is very reassuring. When the youth reach such a level in dealing with Qur'an, this foretells a promising future for this nation.

It raises nations and destroys others

If we were not like the lovers of the Qur'an mentioned above, Allah (SWT) uses the same ayah to warn us of being replaced, saying what can be translated as, **“Believe in it or do not believe...”**(TMQ, 17:107). Throughout ages, the bygone nations were negligent and indifferent to the Books of Allah (SWT). Hence, it has been moved from a nation to another until it reached us. What then would be the punishment in case we failed to fulfill our obligation towards it?

The punishment on the Day of Judgment will be tougher because we are the last nation to bear this responsibility. We should not fall short of such task. Rather, we should strive to fulfill this responsibility. Nothing can ensure the nation's progress, dignity, and usher it into enlightenment except for this Book. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“...A Book We have sent down to you that you may bring mankind out of the darkness(es) to the light”** (TMQ, 14:01).

Treasures of *Hasanat* (rewards)

When you read the Qur'an, try to feel, in addition to its greatness and significance, the heaps of *Hasanat* (rewards) that accompany the recitation of Qur'an.

The Prophet (SAWS) says, “Whoever recites a letter from Allah's Book (the Noble Qur'an), he will be credited with one virtue, and a virtue gets a ten-fold reward. I do not say that *Alif-Lam-Mim* is one letter, but *Alif* is a letter, *Lam* is a letter and *Mim* is a letter”.³

If you recite **“In The Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful,”** which comprises 29 letters (in Arabic), you receive the reward of one hundred and ninety *Hasanat*. Consequently, on reading a chapter/part of the Qur'an, which includes an average of seven thousand letters, the Muslim is granted 70 thousand *Hasanat* at regular times. Can you imagine what the reward be in the favorable times of *Al-Fajr* prayer, *Al-Qiyam* (night prayer), or Ramadan; where the reward is doubled?

If thousands of *Hasanats* are granted for reciting a chapter, which normally does not consume more than 45 minutes, how many are given to those who apply Qur'an and listen to it with the intention of applying and abiding by it? What about those who understand Qur'an and know the objective of every surah? Try to imagine the huge amount of *Hasanat* a Muslim would get if he/she feels that Qur'an is a huge responsibility and arouses the interest of people around him/her in reading Qur'an and explains to them some of its ayahs

A young Muslim who recites Surat Al Israel and understands Allah's objective should deal with the Qur'an, from now on, with absolute seriousness, devoting his life to Qur'an in the aim of joining the lovers of Qur'an, who are special to Allah (SWT).

From Al-Israel to Al-Kahf (The Cave)

³ Authentic Hadith, Al-Albany.

Interestingly, the meanings of Qur'an run all through it, since they link Surahs together. In our case, an idea links the end of Surat Al-Israel to the beginning of Surat Al-Kahf. After Surat Al-Israel which ends with a *Sajdah* (prostration) that enables us to feel the beauty of the Qur'an, fall in tears out of the fear of Allah (*SWT*), and thank Him for his great blessing (i.e. Qur'an), comes Surat Al-Kahf, which starts with pure gratitude to Allah for such a blessing. In this respect, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Praise be to Allah Who has sent down upon His bondman the Book and has not made to it any crookedness” (TMQ, 18:01).**

Surat Al-Kahf (The Cave)

Surat Al-Kahf is a Makkan Surah. It was revealed after Surat Al-Ghaashiyah, but in the order of the Qur'an it comes after Surat Al-Isra'. It consists of 110 ayahs.

Threads for One Fabric

Surat Al-Kahf consists of four stories: The story of the people of the cave; that of the man with the two gardens; that of Prophet Musa (AS) (Moses) and Al-Khidr; and that of Dhul Qarnain. Several ayahs follow each story for further comment. Thus some questions are to be raised : What do these stories then have in common? Why is the Surah named Surat Al-Kahf? Why should it be read every Friday?

The Advantages and Rewards for whoever reads Surat Al-Kahf

The Prophet (SAWS) said, "He who reads Surat Al-Kahf on Friday, Allah will light for him radiance that stretches from his feet to the holy Ka'ba."⁴

The Prophet (SAWS) also said, "...and he who reads the last ten ayahs of Surat Al-Kahf, Al-Dajjal will not be able to harm him."⁵

And in another Hadith, "...whoever among you encounters him – Al-Dajjal – should read upon him the opening ayahs of Surat Al-Kahf."⁶

What is Al-Dajjal's relationship with Surat Al-Kahf and what do the stories within the Surah have in common? Let's then have a brief survey of the four above mentioned stories.

The cave of mercy

The first story talks about young men who believed in Allah (SWT) and called to Him despite the fact that the tribe they lived in was ruled by an unjust king who did not believe in Allah (SWT). The young men presented their religion (surrender to Allah as an only One Lord) to their people, but the latter rejected them. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"And We made their hearts firm and strong (with the light of Faith in Allah and bestowed upon them patience to bear the separation of their kith and kin and dwellings) when they stood up and said: "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, never shall we call upon any *illah* (god) other than Him; if we did, we should indeed have uttered an enormity in disbelief. These our people have taken for worship *illah* (gods) other than Him (Allah). Why do they not bring for them a clear authority? And who does more wrong than he who invents a lie against Allah... but no one knows its true meanings except Allah" (TMQ, 18:14-15).**

The young men began to call people to Allah (SWT), but they were denied and oppressed. Thus, Allah (SWT) inspired them to seek refuge in the Cave. Allah (SWT)

⁴ Sahih Al-Game': 6471.

⁵ Sahih Al-Targhib: 225.

⁶ Muslim: 2937.

says what can be translated as, “...then seek refuge in the Cave; your Lord will open a way for you from His Mercy and will make easy for you your affair (i.e. will give you what you will need of provision, dwelling)... but no one knows its true meanings except Allah” (TMQ, 18:16).

Allah (SWT) supported them with great miracles: they dwelled in the cave for “**three hundred (solar) years, adding nine (for lunar years)**” (TMQ, 18:25). Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “...And you might have seen the sun, when it rose, declining to the right from their Cave, and when it set, turning away from them to the left, while they lay in the midst of the Cave...but no one knows its true meanings except Allah” (TMQ, 18:17).

“**And you would have thought them awake, whereas they were asleep. And We turned them on their right and on their left sides...**” (TMQ, 18: 18). All of these miracles were accomplished for the sake of protecting these young men. In fact, they awoke 309 years later to find that the people around them had become believers and that they were now part of a new society, filled with faith.

Arrogance challenging faith

The second story is that of a man upon whom Allah (SWT) bestowed His blessings and bounty. The man became absorbed in his new fortune, forgetting completely who granted it to him, and responding with challenge and doubt. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “**And put forward to them the example of two men: unto one of them We had given two gardens of grapes, and We had surrounded both with date-palms; and had put between them green crops (cultivated fields)...And he went into his garden while in a state (of pride and disbelief) unjust to himself. He said: “I think not that this will ever perish... but no one knows its true meanings except Allah” (TMQ, 18:32-35).** Money had seduced him and distracted him from turning to Allah (SWT). “**And I think not the Hour will ever come, and if indeed I am brought back to my Lord, (on the Day of Resurrection), I surely shall find better than this when I return to Him.” His companion said to him during the talk with him: “Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you out of dust (i.e. your father Adam), then out of *Nutfah* (mixed semen drops of male and female discharge), then fashioned you into a man?” (TMQ, 18:36-37).** The fate of the man whose money left him arrogant and conceited: “**So his fruits were encircled (with ruin). And he remained clapping his hands (with sorrow) over what he had spent upon it, while it was all destroyed on its trellises, and he could only say: “Would that I had ascribed no partners to my Lord” (TMQ, 18:42).**

How to behave with regard to Allah’s predestination of events

The third story is that of Prophet Musa (AS) and Al-Khidr. Prophet Musa (AS) was asked by his people about who was the most knowledgeable on earth. Prophet Musa (AS) replied that he himself was. He thought that he had enough knowledge to earn that title, especially because he was one of Allah’s favored Prophets. However, Allah (SWT) revealed to him that there was a learned man elsewhere. For this reason, He commanded him (AS) to go to where the two seas met. Musa (AS), accompanied by a boy servant, traveled a great distance until he was overcome by fatigue. He then told

his servant, **“Truly, we have suffered much fatigue in this, our journey” (TMQ, 18:62).**

He was extremely exhausted by the time he met up with the righteous and more knowing man. The type of knowledge that man had is in fact the trust in Allah’s predestination: the way Allah predetermines and arranges the course of events in life. There is also wisdom in Allah’s predestination which makes necessary for one to know for certain that Allah alone handles life matters. This knowledge, in short, is learning how to know Allah (SWT) in the correct way in so far as His handling of life matters is concerned.

Before Prophet Musa (AS) could accompany Al-Khidr on his journey, the latter set forth a few conditions. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Ask me not about anything till I myself mention of it to you... but no one knows its true meanings except Allah” (TMQ, 18:70).** Prophet Musa (AS) replied, **“If Allah wills, you will find me patient, and I will not disobey you in aught” (TMQ, 18:69).**

The trip was marked by three incidents which seem very negative or malicious at first glance:

- 1- The ship Al-Khidr pierced because there was an unjust king who was taking away every ship by force.
- 2- The child Al-Khidr killed because he was not dutiful towards his parents who were righteous. His disobedience caused them too much trouble.
- 3- The wall Al-Khidr rebuilt because it was damaged in part, without recompense for his work especially in a town he wasn’t warmly welcomed. In fact, a treasure belonging to two orphan boys was buried beneath it. It would have been stolen had he (Al Khidr) not built the wall.

Allah’s wisdom seems to be not apparent at first glance in the way the three above-cited incidents are arranged; Al-Khidr’s acts seem not to be justified. This is to prove to the believers that Allah (SWT) may handle matters in ways we may not understand. Consequently, we may neither grasp the wisdom behind this nor appreciate the goodness or the positive effects this may have on our life. This is the type of knowledge, not found in any book, that Allah (SWT) wishes to teach not only to Prophet Musa (AS) but to us as well.

Verily, We established him in the earth

The last story is that of Dhul-Qarnain, the just king who spread truth, justice and goodness on earth. He had also the material means (scientific and technological) needed to achieve success and progress in life.

Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Verily, We established him in the earth, and We gave him the means of everything...but no one knows its true meanings except Allah” (TMQ, 18:84).** The king traveled eastwards and westwards to spread guidance on earth and fill it with justice and righteousness. On his journeys, he reached people who scarcely understand a saying. They said to him, **“O Dhul-Qarnain! Verily Ya’juj and Ma’juj (Gog and Magog) are doing great mischief in**

the land. Shall we then pay you a tribute in order that you might erect a barrier between us and them?” (TMQ, 18:94).

Despite the fact that he was capable of building the barrier alone, he asked for help so that they may learn a lesson from it. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“So help me with strength (of men), I will erect between you and them a barrier...but no one knows its true meanings except Allah” (TMQ, 18:95).** He built the barrier, which has remained standing until today. However, we do not know where the barrier actually is, and thus will not be able to know where Ya’juj and Ma’juj’s are located until their appearance before the Day of Judgment.

The connection between the four stories

We must remember that the Qur’an does not just narrate stories in quite a random manner; they rather form an integral structure and serve a specific meaning. For example, the story of Prophet Musa (*AS*) does not mention the Pharaoh or the miracle of the stick because the meaning intended in this case is different from that found in either of those stories. What is then the thread which ties the four aforementioned stories together?

The stories talk about the major trials and temptations in human life:

- 1- The trial of religion:** the case of people’s evil acts towards a believer in the form of harm, torture or threats which may cause his loss of faith, deviation from religion or fear. This was the trial the people of the cave experienced and passed.
- 2- The trial of wealth:** this was the trial of the man with the two gardens, who was so proud of his wealth that he considered the hereafter not to be true. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And I think not the Hour will ever come, and if indeed I am brought back to my Lord, (on the Day of Resurrection), I surely shall find better than this when I return to Him...but no one knows its true meanings except Allah “ (TMQ, 18:36).**
- 3- The trial of knowledge:** The case of a man who boasts of the knowledge he possesses to the extent that he feels arrogant and hence forgets about modesty. Such a man may learn things of no benefit to him or to his community. Or else he may misuse the knowledge he was granted in a way that may harm him or the society in which he lives. The trial of knowledge is illustrated in the story of Prophet Musa (*AS*) and Al-Khidr. Prophet Musa (*AS*) thought that no one on earth was more knowledgeable than him. However, once he realized that this was untrue, he traveled a long distance to meet the more knowing man and to learn from him in a truly respectful and modest relation of a pupil to his teacher. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Musa said to him (Khidr): “May I follow you so that you teach me something of that knowledge (guidance and true path) which you have been taught (by Allah)? But no one knows its true meanings except Allah” (TMQ, 18:66).**
- 4- The trial of power:** The example of a man who, given all the means to achieve material and technological success to push civilization forward and to

gain authority and power, denies Allah, abuses power and oppresses his people. In contrast to this sets the story of Dhul-Qarnain. The latter is presented as a just king who attributes his wealth and power to Allah (*SWT*) alone. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“He said: “As for him (a disbeliever in the Oneness of Allah) who does wrong, we shall punish him, and then he will be brought back unto his Lord, Who will punish him with a terrible torment (Hell). “But as for him who believes (in Allah’s Oneness) and works righteousness, he shall have the best reward, (Paradise), and we (Dhul-Qarnain) shall speak unto him mild words (as instructions)...but no one knows its true meanings except Allah” (TMQ, 18:87-88). Dhul-Qarnain said: “This is a mercy from my Lord...” (TMQ, 18:98).**

The stimulus of temptation

The four basic trials and temptations mentioned above represent the thread that tie the four stories together in Surat Al-Kahf. Half-way in the Surah, between the first two stories and the two remaining others, we are told that the stimulus of temptation is the enemy of Allah (*SWT*), namely, Iblis (Satan). Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Will you then take him (*Iblis*) and his offspring as protectors and helpers rather than Me while they are enemies to you? What an evil is the exchange for the *Zâlimûn* (polytheists, and wrong-doers)...but no one knows its true meanings except Allah” (TMQ, 18:50).** Who, in their right mind, would take Allah’s enemy and theirs as a master and defender?

Protection from temptation

The main idea of the Surah is protection from temptation. As it is mentioned in the Hadith before, the Surah safeguards one from the greatest trial in the history of Mankind, from Prophet Adam (*AS*) until the Day of Judgment. It is that of Al-Dajjal. In this respect, the Prophet (*SAWS*) says: “Between the creation of Adam and the Day of Judgment, there exists no greater trial than that of Al-Dajjal.”⁷ A question is then to be raised : What is the connection between the trial of Al-Dajjal and the four aforementioned trials and temptations?

Al-Dajjal will appear before the Day of Judgment and present the four temptations. He will try to push people to abandon their faith and will ask them to worship him and not Allah (*SWT*). Allah (*SWT*) will give him the ability to perform miracles: Al-Dajjal then may promise to bring to life one’s mother and father if one rejects Allah (*SWT*) and believes in him instead. Everybody will be tempted except those blessed by Allah (*SWT*). Al-Dajjal has the temptation of wealth: he simply commands the sky to rain down on a particular piece of land and vegetation then flourishes. He will be able to transform a barren desert land into a beautiful green garden. He also has the temptation of knowledge: he captivates people with what he knows which leads some of them to believe in him. Finally, he has the temptation of power: he subjugates people to his strength and authority in many parts of the earth except Makkah and Al-Madinah. These are serious temptations that all Muslims, in all parts of the land and throughout all of time, must beware of. Reading Surat Al-Kahf and understanding the

⁷ Muslim: 2946.

meanings within it, especially the four stories and the divine messages they carry can do this.

Objectives of the Surah: Protection from trial and temptation

The four stories in the Surah are linked together through the string of trials. Each story is followed by comments which point out the lessons to be learned from it and how we can protect ourselves from trials and temptations. This is the magnificence of the Qur'an; it does not tell stories for their own sake but to serve the end of the Surah namely protection from trials and temptations and to emphasize the lessons to be learned after each story. In this respect, the whole thrust of the Surah is to make the following message crystal clear: protecting oneself from the various forms of temptation. One may wonder how this can be made.

'Lifeboats'

1- The importance of having righteous companions

The first trial is that of religion which was mentioned in the story of the people of the cave. In order for one to remain steadfast in one's religious conduct and be protected from this trial, Surat Al-Kahf advises:

a) Be in righteous company: **“And keep yourself (O Muhammad, SAWS) patiently with those who call on their Lord (i.e. your companions who remember their Lord with glorification, praising in prayers, and other righteous deeds) morning and afternoon, seeking His Face; and let not your eyes overlook them, desiring the pomp and glitter of the life of the world” (TMQ, 18:28).** Having good companions in life and striving to keep such companionship helps one to remain committed to his religious principles.

b) Remembering the hereafter: The hereafter is the ultimate destiny of both believers and disbelievers. By thinking continuously about it the Muslim protects himself from the various temptations he experiences **“Verily, We have prepared for the *Zâlimûn* (polytheists and wrong-doers.), a Fire whose walls will be surrounding them (disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah). And if they ask for help (relief, water), they will be granted water like boiling oil that will scald their faces. Terrible is the drink, and an evil *Murtafaq* (dwelling, resting place.)!”(TMQ, 18:29).**

2- Avoidance of Becoming Attached to this Life

There are two lessons to be learned regarding protection from the trial of wealth to which the man with the two gardens was subjected:

1. Understanding the true purpose of this life: This is mentioned very clearly in the Ayah coming immediately after the story of the man with the two gardens. **“And put forward to them the example of the life of this world.”** I hereby invite you, my Muslim brothers, to take a long and contemplating look, , at the type of life you are attached to : **“it is like the water (rain) which We send down from the sky,”** so what happened to it **“And the vegetation of the**

earth mingles with it,” so simply and so quickly and what else **“But (later) it becomes dry and broken pieces, which the winds scatter. And Allah is Able to do everything” (TMQ, 18:45)**. The ayah lays out a picture in which we see quick flashes from the beginning of life to its middle and then to its end. The stages pass by quickly, and are tied together by the Arabic letter “fa” (meaning ‘and’) [**And ...mingles... becomes dry and broken pieces**] which implies quick vanishing and thus refer to the nature of life itself. This life is passing; do not become attached to it, my brother in Islam, if you really want to be protected from trials and temptations.

2. Remembering the hereafter: Remember in particular the time you will stand in front of Allah, The Compeller. It is as if remembering the hereafter is a basic requirement one should meet in order to be protected from all trials (the trial of religion as well as that of wealth): **“And (remember) the Day We shall cause the mountains to pass away (like clouds of dust), and you will see the earth as a leveled plain, and we shall gather them all together so as to leave not one of them behind” (TMQ, 18:47)**.

“And they will be set before your Lord in (lines as) rows, (and Allah will say): “Now indeed, you have come to Us as We created you the first time...” (TMQ, 18:48).

“And the Book (one’s Record) will be placed (in the right hand for a believer in the Oneness of Allah, and in the left hand for a disbeliever in the Oneness of Allah), and you will see the *Mujrimun* (criminals, polytheists, sinners), fearful of that which is (recorded) therein. They will say: “Woe to us! What sort of Book is this that leaves neither a small thing nor a big thing, but has recorded it with numbers!” And they will find all that they did, placed before them, and your Lord treats no one with injustice” (TMQ, 18:49).

3- Humility

To be granted protection from the trial of knowledge, one must be humble first to Allah (*SWT*) then in case one is a learner, to the teacher (the example of Musa’s relation to Al Khidr). This can be found in ayah 69: **“Musa said (to Al Khidr) despite the fact that he was one of the favored Prophets of Allah (*SWT*) and the only one to speak with Him directly: “If Allah wills, you will find me patient, and I will not disobey you in aught.” (TMQ, 18:69)**. So beware of arrogance which may stem from the fact that you have high academic degrees, that you have encyclopedic knowledge or that you have learnt the Qur’an by heart . This may keep you from being humble to Allah (*SWT*).

4- Sincerity

The trial of power can be overcome through sincerity and humility to Allah (*SWT*) and by attributing one’s power and strength to Him: **“(Dhul-Qarnain) said: “This is a mercy from my Lord...” (TMQ, 18:98)**.

The Surah warns those who associate partners with Allah on the one hand and those who are not sincere in their acts of worship (*SWT*) on the other. Allah says what can be translated as : **“Say (O Muhammad): “Shall We tell you the greatest losers in respect of (their) deeds? “Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought that they were acquiring good by their deeds. “They are those who deny the *Ayat* (proofs, evidence, ayahs, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of their Lord and the Meeting with Him (in the Hereafter). So their works are in vain, and on the Day of Resurrection, We shall assign no weight for them” (TMQ, 18:103-105).** This ayah is directed towards the polytheists, it warns them against associating partners with Allah (*SWT*). It concludes with the instruction for the believers to be sincere in their worship of Allah (*SWT*) alone. The Ayah addresses both categories in a parallel way.

“So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord” (TMQ, 18:110).

Whoever seeks Allah’s full acceptance of his deeds in the hereafter must satisfy to the following conditions : his work in this life must be done correctly in conformity with the *Sunnah* (sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad *SAWS*), and must be wholly dedicated to Allah (*SWT*). These two conditions are mentioned in the closing ayah of Surat Al-Kahf.

The magnificence of the surah

Throughout the Surah, we see many comments and brilliant remarks that increase our love and attachment to the Qur’an and to this Surah, and at the same time serve the objective and core idea of the Surah.

A lot of movement and positiveness

It is noticeable that there is a lot of movement in the Surah. All of the stories in the Surah deal with lively people who have constructive plans: ranging from the people of the cave who left their homes and their families and sought refuge in the cave (“...**then seek refuge in the Cave**”), to Prophet Musa’ (*AS*) journey to the junction of the two seas until he was worn out (“**truly, we have suffered much fatigue in this, our journey**”). We also see much movement when he accompanied Al-Khidr on his journey: **“So they both proceeded, till, when they embarked the ship, he (Al-Khidr) scuttled it... Then they both proceeded, till they met a boy, and he (Al-Khidr) killed him... Then they both proceeded, till, when they came to the people of a town, they asked them for food...” (TMQ, 18:71-77).**

Movement is also apparent in the story of Dhul-Qarnain: **“So he followed a way” (TMQ, 18:85).** Not only that, but he traveled the earth from east to west: **“Until, when he came to the rising place of the sun...Until, when he reached between two mountains” (TMQ, 18:90-93).** And he directed the people he was helping: **“So help me with strength (of men)” (TMQ, 18:95).** They did not simply stand there and watch him building the barrier, they were asked to assist him for it will make them acquire a certain know-how.

This all goes to prove that we can protect ourselves from trials and temptations by being active and positive and not by giving in and being passive. If a person is harmed or hurt in a particular place or region on earth, he should move to another place for the sake of practicing his religion. It is for this reason that Islam decrees immigration for the sake of preserving one's religion (faith). The Surah hints at this issue through the story of the people of the cave: the latter "immigrated" and sought refuge in the cave.

It is a pleasant matter that this Surah is to be read on Friday which is a holiday for the Muslims. Instead of being idle and lazy on that day, the Muslims should read it and thus learn how to be active and positive because passivity makes them easily a prey to trials and temptations.

The Qur'an and protection from trials and temptations

It is interesting to note that the Surah starts and ends with reference to the the Qur'an because it is a shield against temptation provided that we read it and understand the core ideas and objectives of its Surahs.

"All the praises and thanks be to Allah, Who has sent down to His slave (Muhammad, SAWS) the Book (the Qur'an), and has not placed therein any crookedness" (TMQ, 18:1).

"Say (O Muhammad, SAWS, to mankind): "If the sea were ink for (writing) the Words of my Lord, surely, the sea would be exhausted before the Words of my Lord would be finished..." (TMQ, 18:109).

In other words, nothing surpasses Allah's (*SWT*) words and actions. The first and foremost helper and protector is His Book: allusions to this truth are made both before and after the four trials and temptations.

Da'wa (missionary activity meaning the Call to Allah) and Protection From Trials and Temptations

Another interesting point in the Surah is the fact that the four stories mentioned in it involve all of the aspects of the Call to Allah (*SWT*) :

Young men calling a king (the people of the cave).
A man calling his companion (the man with the two gardens).
A teacher calling his pupil (Al-Khidr and Prophet Musa (*AS*)).
A king calling his people (Dhul-Qarnain).

This carries a very important meaning : the call to Allah (*SWT*) along with one's attachment to the Qur'an act significantly to protect one from trials and temptations.

Believing in the unseen

We notice that the mentioning of the unseen is found in many parts of the stories in the Surah. The story of the people of the cave is full of obscurities: how long they stayed in the cave, the location of the cave, and their number. There is an entire ayah (ayah 22) that evokes the controversy about their number ...why?

There is also a certain vagueness about the location of the barrier built by Dhul-Qarnain, and where Ya'juj and Ma'juj will appear, as well as the actions of Al-Khidr and Prophet Musa' (AS) questions...why is this so?

It is as if the Surah reminds us that Allah alone knows the unseen, that situations in life appear in a way we don't understand. The Surah hence urges us to have trust in Allah and surrender to Him so that we can be assured protection from temptation *insh'Allah* (if Allah wills).

The cave of da'wa

There remains one last question: Why is the Surah called Surat Al-Kahf?

By simply hearing the word 'cave', a person may feel afraid, terrified and confused. So when the phrase **"seek refuge in the cave"** is uttered, two things are associated in his mind: darkness and the feeling of fear in such a dark place. However, Allah (SWT) makes the cave mentioned in the ayah a safe place and sends down his mercy upon the young men : **"...then seek refuge in the Cave; your Lord will open a way for you from His Mercy"** (TMQ, 18:16).

Allah (SWT), who alone knows the unseen, predetermines the course of events in a way Man totally ignores and can never predict as in the case of the young men who sought refuge in the deserted cave and ignored what will happen to them. Surat Al-Kahf (the cave) was called so in order to make Man aware of his ignorance of the unseen and to tell the Muslim : "leave the unseen to Allah and put your trust in Him. Just as the young men sought refuge in the cave and Allah sent down his mercy upon them, do seek refuge in the 'cave' of Da'wa (the call to Allah) and surrender your situation to Allah (SWT) so that He will spread for you of His mercy and pave the way for you to obtain whatever you like.

Surat Maryam (AS) (Mary)

Surat Maryam is Makkan. It was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) after Surat Fatir and is set in the Holy Qur'an after Surat Al-Kahf. It is composed of 98 Ayahs.

Pomp and glitter of life

Each person would love to have offspring, so when Allah grants him children, his main preoccupation is to secure their living and to provide their needs. In one's youth, one is concerned with: having children, bringing them up, feeding them, educating them, and securing the required medical care whereas in old age he thinks rather about what they will inherit from him.

Loving one's children is in fact an instinct that Allah (SWT) instilled in people. Surat Maryam in the Holy Qur'an not only emphasizes this fact but also asks parents the following questions: why do you want to have children? Is it only for self-enjoyment? What will you leave them after your death? Just money and properties?!!!

Bequeathing religion for children

Surat Maryam includes a more elevated reason for having children - protecting religion by leaving it to the following generations to preserve it and to stick to its rules. This is the best legacy for children, much better than material goods which like life itself are bound to disappear. It is as if the Muslim delivers the lantern of religion to his child. The latter, in turn leaves it to the grandchild, and so on. It's not right at all to have a pious generation followed by others who know nothing about religion, even about the superficial issues. Desires and fornication prevail in the society as children are not educated according to the religious rules. All they inherit from their parents is simply money.

The core idea of Surat Maryam thus is children and the question of inheriting religion. This is one of the Surahs where "children" and "inheritance" are frequently mentioned.

'Divine Families'

This Surah refers to people who had children with the intention of leaving them religion as a trust. The Surah mentions: Prophet Zakariya (AS) (Zachariah) and his son Yahya (AS) (John), Maryam (AS) (Mary), Imran's daughter, and her son Isa (AS) (Jesus), Ibrahim (AS) (Abraham), Isma'il (AS) (Ishmael), Ishaq (AS) (Isaac), and Yaqub (AS) (Jacob). It is as if this Surah addresses all parents and asks them, "Are you keen on raising your children in a way that guarantees their safe arrival to Allah's (SWT) path? Are you keen on bequeathing them Allah's (SWT) religion and instilling the rules of Islam in them?"

Prophets Zakariya (AS) and Yahya (AS)

From the outset of the Surah, we realize Prophet Zakariya's (AS) wish to have a child. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "**Kaf-Ha-Ya-Ain-Sad**. [These Arabic letters are one of the miracles of the Qur'an, and none but Allah (Alone) knows their

meanings]. (This is) a mention of the mercy of your Lord to His slave Zakariya. When he called out his Lord (Allah) a call in secret. He said: “My Lord! Indeed my bones have grown feeble, and gray hair has spread on my head, and I have never been unblessed in my invocation to You, O my Lord! “And verily I fear my relatives after me, and my wife is barren. So give me from Yourself an heir. “Who shall inherit me, and inherit (also) the posterity of Yaqub (Jacob) (inheritance of the religious knowledge and Prophet hood, not of wealth.). And make him, my Lord, one with whom You are Well-Pleased!” (Allah said) “O Zakariya (Zachariah)! Verily, We give you the glad tidings of a son, whose name will be Yahya (John). We have given that name to none before (him).” (TMQ, 19:1-7).

It is as if Zakariya is saying, “O Allah! I find no one (heir) to shoulder the responsibility of religion. My wife is sterile, and I have no hope to have a child. Yet, I am keen on Your religion”.

How wonderful was his jealousy and vigilant care for Allah’s (SWT) religion. Prophet Zakariya (AS) was afraid because Israelites living at his time were unworthy to such a responsibility. Thus, he prayed for Allah (SWT) to give him a child to assume that responsibility after him. As he was so honest and faithful in his prayers, Allah (SWT) responded in what can be translated as, “O Zakariya! Verily, We give you the glad tidings of a son, whose name will be Yahya. We have given that name to none before (him).” (TMQ, 19:7).

How was Yahya (AS) raised and educated? Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “O Yahya! Hold fast the Scripture [the Taurat (Torah)].” And We gave him wisdom while yet a child.” (TMQ, 19:12).

Though people’s desire to have children and the will to secure their future by all means are a matter of instinct created by Allah (SWT), such instinct should be used for the sake of obeying Allah (SWT). Hence, we have to raise our children with the same fear from Allah (SWT) and the same care to teach them to obey Allah (SWT) and thus hold the flag of His religion.

Maryam (AS) and Isa (AS)

Maryam’s (AS) story does not differ from Zakariya’s (AS). Her mother, Imran’s wife, vowed her to Allah (SWT), before knowing she would have a baby girl, to free Jerusalem from the Roman invasion. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “O my Lord! I have vowed to You what (the child that) is in my womb to be dedicated for Your services (free from all worldly work; to serve Your Place of worship)”. (TMQ, 3:35).

In Surat Maryam, Maryam bequeathed such a trust to her son. When she approached her people carrying her son Isa (AS), Allah (SWT) describes this situation saying what can be translated as, “They said: “How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?” (TMQ, 19:29). They did not know that this boy in the cradle would carry the message of religion and of *Da’wa* (missionary activity). Allah (SWT) clarifies this saying in what can be translated as, “He [‘Isa] said: “Verily I am a slave of Allah, He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet; “And He has made me

blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me *Salat* (prayer), and *Zakat*, as long as I live. “And dutiful to my mother, and made me not arrogant, unblessed (TMQ, 19:30-32).

Children’s duty towards their parents

Surat Maryam is one of the Qur’an Surahs that strongly focus on duty towards one’s parents. That was indeed Yahya’s (AS) most important trait. This is clear as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “**And dutiful towards his parents**” (TMQ, 19:14), and so was Isa (AS), “**And dutiful to my mother**” (TMQ, 19:32).

Apparently, a child cannot be dutiful towards his parents unless he is brought up in a good and right environment. Hence, Surat Maryam makes clear to the parents that they have to prepare their children to carrying the trust of religion and defending it. By doing so, they enjoy their children’s righteousness and obedience and will be greatly rewarded by Allah (SWT) in the hereafter.

Ibrahim (AS) and his father

The following Ayahs refer to a completely opposite example: Ibrahim (AS) a son who believed in Allah (SWT), and who was trying to help his father get to the right path. He was so merciful toward his father that he kept calling him in a loving and tender manner to Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) describes Ibrahim’s (AS) situation saying what can be translated as, “**O my father! Why do you worship that which hears not, sees not and cannot avail you in anything? “O my father! Verily there has come to me of the knowledge that which came not unto you. So follow me, I will guide you to the Straight Path.”** (TMQ, 19:42-43).

Try to learn, our youth, from Ibrahim (AS) the good manners in calling to Allah when talking to the elder people, especially your parents. People mostly repel from religion because of ill-mannered youths who are religious, but at the same time do not address people politely. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “**O my father! Worship not Shaitan (Satan). Verily Shaitan (Satan) has been a rebel against the Most Gracious (Allah). “O my father! Verily I fear lest a torment from the Most Gracious (Allah) should overtake you, so that you become a companion of Shaitan (Satan) (in the Hell-fire).”** (TMQ, 19:44-45).

Although his father was a disbeliever, Ibrahim (AS) treated him so politely and righteously that Allah (SWT) granted him his two good sons. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, “**So when he had turned away from them and from those whom they worshipped besides Allah, We gave him Ishaq and Yaqub, and each one of them We made a Prophet. And We gave them of Our Mercy (a good provision in plenty), and We granted them honor on the tongues (of all the nations, i.e. everybody remembers them with a good praise).”** (TMQ, 19:49-50). His being righteous and dutiful to his father was the reason of his having two good sons, who were “a delight of the eye” (dear ones) to him, and who shouldered the responsibility of carrying the lantern of religion after him.

Isma’il (AS) (He commanded his family to perform the prayers and pay *Zakat* “Alms”)

Generations passed one after another, each one delivering the trust of religion to the next one. Ayahs refer to Isma'il (AS), and Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And he used to enjoin on his family and his people As-Salat (the prayers) and the Zakat and his Lord was pleased with him.”** (TMQ, 19:55).

It is made clear that each generation delivered the message to the one coming after. The Ayahs refer also to Musa (AS) (Moses) and highlight the same meaning, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And We granted him his brother Harun (Aaron), (also) a Prophet, out of Our Mercy.”** (TMQ, 19:53).

After mentioning all these bright examples, the Ayahs make a wonderful comment so as to praise those who bequeath the lantern of religion to their children. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Those were they unto whom Allah bestowed His Grace from among the Prophets, of the offspring of Adam, and of those whom We carried (in the ship) with Nuh (Noah), and of the offspring of Ibrahim and Israel, and from among those whom We guided and chose. When the Verses of the Most Gracious (Allah) were recited unto them, they fell down prostrate and weeping.”** (TMQ, 19:58).

Inheriting the lantern of religion through generations was a rule for all Prophets (May Allah be pleased with them all) since Allah (SWT) appointed Adam as successor on earth. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“of the offspring of Adam”** (TMQ, 19:58). Unfortunately, they were succeeded by generations who cared only for raising their children to fulfill desires and accumulate riches. They did not contemplate Surat Maryam in the Holy Qur'an, and they never considered the importance of bequeathing religion to their children. Thus, their children did not care about praying and followed the path of desire. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Then, there has succeeded them a posterity who have given up As-Salat [i.e. made their Salat to be lost, either by not offering them or by not offering them perfectly or by not offering them in their proper fixed times] and have followed lusts. So they will be thrown in Hell.”** (TMQ, 19:59).

Dear brother in Islam, determine which path you would like to follow together with your family. With whom would you like to be resurrected? is it with those **“whom Allah bestowed His Grace”** (TMQ, 16:58), or with those **“who have given up As-Salat [i.e. made their Salat to be lost, either by not offering them or by not offering them perfectly or by not offering them in their proper fixed times] and have followed lusts.”**? (TMQ, 19:59).

If you belong to the first category, you will be happy because Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Such is the Paradise which We shall give as an inheritance to those of Our slaves who have been Al-Muttaqun”** (TMQ, 19:63). As the reward is similar to the work done, if your children inherit religion from you, then you will inherit Paradise together with them.

Beware of being one of them

If you belong to the second category, beware of Allah's (SWT) warning. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Have you seen him who disbelieved in Our Ayat**

(this Qur'an and Muhammad SAWS) and said: **"I shall certainly be given wealth and children [if I will be alive (again)]."** (TMQ, 19:77). On the one hand, a child might be a blessing, a good remembrance, and a *Sadaqa* (regular charity) for the parents. On the other hand, he or she might be a reason for the parents' disbelief and disobedience. The Surah emphasizes the same point : one shouldn't wish to become a parent only for its own sake but for the sake of religion as well.

Allah (SWT)

The Ayahs then move to another meaning; you people need to have children, but Allah (SWT) is never in need for them. The Surah rebukes those who claim that Allah (SWT) has a son, be He glorified and exalted. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"And they say: "The Most Gracious (Allah) has begotten a son (or offspring or children) [as the Jews say: 'Uzair (Ezra) is the son of Allah, and the Christians say that He has begotten a son ['Isa (Jesus) AS], and the pagan Arabs say that He has begotten daughters (angels and others.)]. Indeed you have brought forth (said) a terrible evil thing. Whereby the heavens are almost torn, and the earth is split asunder, and the mountains fall in ruins, that they ascribe a son (or offspring or children) to the Most Gracious (Allah). But it is not suitable for (the Majesty of) the Most Gracious (Allah) that He should beget a son (or offspring or children). There is none in the heavens and the earth but comes unto the Most Gracious (Allah) as a slave. Verily He knows each one of them, and has counted them a full counting. And every one of them will come to Him alone on the Day of Resurrection (without any helper, or protector or defender)."** (TMQ, 19:88-95).

The same Surah refers to people's insistent need for children, yet denies that Allah (SWT) needs to have a child, because He (SWT) is the Ever Living. People need to have children because they get old and eventually die.

Waves and breezes

The first section in the Surah focuses on man's need to have children and offspring. Thus, the Ayahs were so tender in referring to this, while the endings of the syllables are strong, **"(This is) a mention of the mercy of your Lord to His slave Zakariya. When he called out his Lord (Allah) a call in secret... as a mercy (or a grant) from Us"**. (TMQ, 19:2-3, 13).

This Surah is one among many in the Holy Qur'an to refer to the word "mercy" and Allah's (SWT) name "the Compassionate". The word "mercy" and its derivatives are mentioned 20 times in this Surah.

As for the second section of the Surah, it denies the claim that Allah (SWT) has a son in strong and forceful words. This suits the fabrication made by some people, claiming that Allah (SWT) has a son. Hence, the Surah uses both tender and harsh language without changing the cadence of the Surah or the effects it has on the reader, which proves the miraculous nature of the Holy Qur'an.

Why was the Surah named Maryam?

This Surah mentions a number of people who delivered the lantern of religion to their children (Ibrahim, Zakariya, and Isma'il), so why was it called Maryam?

Because the mother is the real person who is able to deliver religion to her children, she is the one who raises the children and fosters them, until they grow and become mature. Thus, the Surah was named after Lady Maryam, because of the importance of the woman's role, and because Lady Maryam was an excellent model for a woman who successfully delivered the message of religion to her son after inheriting it from her family.

Surat Ta-Ha

Surat Ta-Ha is Makkan. It comes after Surat Maryam both in the order of revelation and the order of the Holy Qur'an. It is composed of 135 Ayahs.

We have not sent down the Qur'an unto you (O Muhammad) to cause you distress

The objective of this Surah is clear from the first Ayah, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Ta-Ha. We have not sent down the Qur'an unto you (O Muhammad SAWS) to cause you distress”**. (TMQ, 20:1-2).

This means that Allah's (SWT) religion and way are never meant to cause people to suffer; it is rather the way of happiness. There can be no distress with Islam despite all the difficult circumstances and obstacles facing religious and pious people. Yet, man suffers only when he deviates away from the right path of Allah (SWT), as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“We have not sent down the Qur'an unto you (O Muhammad SAWS) to cause you distress”** (TMQ, 20:2).

Youth who are not religious, or who want to be so but fear that this will bring them unhappiness if they follow Allah's (SWT) right path, can benefit from this Surah more than anybody else. Most of them think that following the right way of Allah (SWT) will cause them depression and will deprive them of the pleasures of life and means of entertainment. This is a completely wrong concept: the Surah highlights the fact that Islam is the source of real happiness and shows that those who get away from it will suffer in life and in the hereafter. What a wonderful meaning! How can this Surah stress it? Let's go through the Ayahs from the very beginning.

How can you suffer while being with Allah the Compassionate?

The Surah starts with a remarkable introduction that attracts hearts, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Ta-Ha. We have not sent down the Qur'an unto you (O Muhammad SAWS) to cause you distress but only as a Reminder to those who fear (Allah).”** (TMQ, 20:1-3). The Holy Qur'an will never be the source of misery for you Muslims; it will rather act as a reminder which will lead you to happiness. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“A revelation from Him (Allah) Who has created the earth and high heavens. The Most Gracious (Allah) rose over (Istawa) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty).”** (TMQ, 20:4-5). Who sent this method for us? Of course, Allah the Compassionate did. Allah's (SWT) best name the Compassionate was mentioned directly after the reference to suffering so that people would know that the religion of Allah the Compassionate can never be the cause of suffering. How can man suffer due to the method set by Allah (SWT) who owns all the best names (attributes)? Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Allah! La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He)! To Him belong the Best Names.”** (TMQ, 20:8)

Musa (AS) being happy with Allah's (SWT) method

The Surah then gives an example that we all know well: Prophet Musa (AS). Allusion is made to stress the hardships he endured while he was performing Da'wa (the call to Allah) thanks to the care and support of Allah (SWT).

The Surah conveys the message that even though the Qur'an is a method of happiness and rest, life will not be in smooth waters all the time without any problems or sorrows. Life is rather full of complications and difficulties, especially if you are a believer who carries the message of Allah (SWT) and calls for it. Nevertheless, such difficulties do not cause suffering (suffering in this context means sadness, depression, sorrow, or distress), because a believer is always connected to Allah (SWT) and seeking continuously his help and support. Accordingly, a believer is always satisfied and reassured.

Illuminating words

The story of Musa (SAWS) stresses the mercy and compassion of Allah (SWT) that mark the fact of experiencing difficulties in one's life. The way the story is narrated in this Surah and the choice of words are totally different from those used to present other events in Musa's life elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“When he saw a fire, he said to his family: “Wait! Verily, I have seen a fire; perhaps I can bring you some burning brand there from, or find some guidance at the fire.” (TMQ, 20:10).**

The Ayahs starts with a friendly question in order to support Musa (AS) in the hard mission and lighten the burden that he carried. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And what is that in your right hand, O Musa?” (TMQ, 20:17).**

When Prophet Musa (AS) prayed for Allah (SWT), he asked according to what he knew about Allah's (SWT) methodology: happiness, tranquility and facilitation. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“[Musa] said: “O my Lord! Open for me my chest (grant me self-confidence, contentment, and boldness).” And ease my task for me; “And loose the knot (the defect) from my tongue, (i.e. remove the incorrectness from my speech)” (TMQ, 20:25-27).** The Ayahs hence continue to address him gently and compassionately. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as: **“Allah said: “Grasp it and fear not; We shall return it to its former state” (TMQ, 20:21); “(Allah) said: “You are granted your request, O Musa!” (TMQ, 20:36); “And indeed We conferred a favor on you another time (before).” (TMQ, 20:37); “And I endued you with love from Me, in order that you may be brought up under My Eye” (TMQ, 20:39).**

Do you see how many times the words “fear not” were repeated? It serves as a proof for the victory Allah (SWT) grants for believers. This is the result of the trust Musa's (AS) mother had in Allah (SWT), and her obedience to Allah (SWT) when He commanded her to throw her baby boy into the river. It is also a compensation for Musa (AS) who was then thrown as a baby in a dark box (ark). Musa's (AS) mother exerted herself and got tired in resisting to her human weakness. In turn, Musa (AS) got tired of his confrontation with Firaawn (the Pharaoh). Yet, Allah (SWT) wonderfully reassured them. This is the situation of believers; despite the afflictions they may experience, they are always satisfied and reassured.

Such questions are to be asked: why do we put barriers between us and religiousness? Why do we fear being religious, although it is our path towards happiness?

Blessings of divine care

The Holy Qur'an was very tender with Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). Allah (SWT) provided him with many of the things that He provided Prophet Musa (AS) with. For example, Allah (SWT) mentions Prophet Musa's (AS) prayer in the Holy Qur'an, and says what can be translated as, **"O my Lord! Open for me my chest (grant me self-confidence, contentment, and boldness)" (TMQ, 20:25)**, while He (SWT) addressed Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) saying what can be translated as, **"Have We not opened your breast for you (O Muhammad SAWS)?" (TMQ, 94:1)**; Allah (SWT) said to Prophet Musa (AS) what can be translated as, **"in order that you may be brought up under My Eye" (TMQ, 20:39)**, while He (SWT) said to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) the same that can be translated as, **"So wait patiently (O Muhammad SAWS) for the Decision of your Lord, for verily, you are under Our Eyes" (TMQ, 52:48)**. It is as if those Ayahs which are closely related to each other make clear that everything has been complete for Prophet Muhammad (SAWS).

Magicians tasted happiness

Although the Pharaoh in Musa's (AS) story strongly harmed the magicians who believed in Allah (SWT), they never felt misery. The Pharaoh threatened them, and Allah (SWT) describes this saying in what can be translated as **"[Fir'aun (Pharaoh)] said: "Believe you in him [Musa] before I give you permission? Verily he is your chief who has taught you magic. So I will surely cut off your hands and feet on opposite sides, and I will surely crucify you on the trunks of date-palms, and you shall surely know which of us [I (Fir'aun - Pharaoh) or the Lord of Musa (Allah)] can give the severe and more lasting torment." (TMQ, 20:71)**. Allah (SWT) mentions their answer in what can be translated as, **"Verily we have believed in our Lord, that He may forgive us our faults, and the magic to which you did compel us. And Allah is better as regards reward in comparison to your [Fir'aun's (Pharaoh)] reward, and more lasting (as regards punishment in comparison to your punishment)." (TMQ, 20:73)**. How beautiful are those words when said by people who have just announced their belief in Allah (SWT), thus clarifying who is miserable and who is happy. Allah (SWT) confirms this saying in what can be translated as, **"Verily whoever comes to his Lord as a Mujrim (criminal, polytheist, sinner, disbeliever in the Oneness of Allah and His Messengers), then surely, for him is Hell, wherein he will neither die nor live. But whoever comes to Him (Allah) as a believer (in the Oneness of Allah), and has done righteous good deeds, for such are the high ranks (in the Hereafter), 'Adn (Eden) Paradise (everlasting Gardens), under which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever: such is the reward of those who purify themselves (by abstaining from all kinds of sins and evil deeds which Allah has forbidden and by doing all that Allah has ordained)." (TMQ, 20:74-76)**.

It is an overwhelming happiness, springing from the hereafter and reaching our lives in this world. Believers feel strong enough to face the oppressors and tyrants on earth without any fear, simply because they know the taste of real happiness.

Misery away from Allah's (SWT) method

The same story reflects the opposite side, which is As-Samery, who misled the Israelites and deluded them into worshipping the golden calf. The last Ayah in Musa's (AS) story describes the misery of As-Samery, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as **"Musa said: "Then go away! And verily, your (punishment) in this life will be that you will say: "Touch me not (i.e. you will live alone exiled away from mankind); and verily (for a future torment), you have a promise that will not fail." (TMQ, 20:97).**

This story is followed by some ayahs that comment on it and clarify the main objective of the Surah : real happiness lies in following the path of religion, while misery is in keeping away from it. Allah (SWT) describes this saying in what can be translated as, **"Thus We relate to you (O Muhammad SAWS) some information of what happened before. And indeed We have given you from Us a Reminder (this Qur'an). Whoever turns away from it (this Qur'an - i.e. does not believe in it, nor acts on its orders), verily, they will bear a heavy burden (of sins) on the Day of Resurrection, They will abide in that (state in the Fire of Hell) - and evil indeed will it be that load for them on the Day of Resurrection" (TMQ, 20:99-101).** Allah (SWT) comments on the happiness and misery of people in the hereafter saying what can be translated as, **"And (all) faces shall be humbled before (Allah), Al-Hayyul-Qayyum (the Ever Living, the One Who sustains and protects all that exists). And he who carried (a burden of) wrongdoing (i.e. he who disbelieved in Allah, ascribed partners to Him, and did deeds of His disobedience) will be indeed a complete failure (on that Day). And he who works deeds of righteousness, while he is a believer (in Islamic Monotheism), then he will have no fear of injustice, nor of any curtailment (of his reward)." (TMQ, 20:111-112).**

Prophet Adam and happiness

When the Surah reaches the story of Prophet Adam (AS), it focuses through it on the objective of the Surah. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"Then We said: "O Adam! Verily, this is an enemy to you and to your wife. So let him not get you both out of Paradise, so that you will be distressed." (TMQ, 20:117).** Hence, abandoning the methodology set by Allah (SWT) and following the path of *Iblis* (Satan) are the main reasons for one's misery in the hereafter. Accordingly, the ayahs go on depicting the various forms of happiness found in *Jannah* (Paradise), and Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"Verily, you have (a promise from Us) that you will never be hungry therein nor naked. And you (will) suffer not from thirst therein nor from the sun's heat." (TMQ, 20:118-119).** This rule applies to Adam (AS) and his offspring, even after he had got out of *Jannah* (Paradise), as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **"He (Allah) said: "Get you down (from the Paradise to the earth), both of you, together, some of you are an enemy to some others. Then if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My Guidance he shall neither go astray, nor shall be distressed." (TMQ, 20:123).**

Real misery

The word "distress" and its derivatives have been mentioned three times in this Surah, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as: **"We have not sent down the Qur'an**

unto you (O Muhammad SAWS) to cause you distress” (TMQ, 20:2); “So let him not get you both out of Paradise, so that you will be distressed.” (TMQ, 20:117); “whoever follows My Guidance he shall neither go astray, nor shall be distressed.” (TMQ, 20:123). The aim of this is that no one should be afraid of being religious or of following the path of Allah *SWT*), as real happiness lies in the full adherence to the religion of Allah (*SWT*). As for those who repel from this methodology, the following ayahs describe in quite a horrible way their misery both in this life and in the hereafter. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, “**But whosoever turns away from My Reminder (i.e. neither believes in this Qur’an nor acts on its teachings.) Verily, for him is a life of hardship,**” in this life. Allah describes their misery in the hereafter in what can be translated as, “**We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection. He will say: “O my Lord! Why have you raised me up blind, while I had sight (before).” (Allah) will say: “Like this: Our Ayat (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) came unto you, but you disregarded them (i.e. you left them, did not think deeply in them, and you turned away from them), and so this Day, you will be neglected (in the Hell-fire, away from Allah’s Mercy).” And thus do We requite him who transgresses beyond bounds [i.e. commits the great sins and disobeys his Lord (Allah) and believes not in His Messengers, and His revealed Books, like this Qur’an], and believes not in the Ayat (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of his Lord; and the torment of the Hereafter is far more severe and more lasting.” (TMQ, 20:124-127).**

Highest levels of happiness

The highest level of happiness is to be satisfied with yourself, with your life, and Allah (*SWT*), and to feel that He (*SWT*) is satisfied with you. This is highlighted at the end of the Surah, where Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, “**So bear patiently (O Muhammad SAWS) what they say, and glorify the praises of your Lord before the rising of the sun, and before its setting, and during some hours of the night, and at the ends of the day (an indication for the five compulsory congregational prayers)” (TMQ, 20:130).** Where does all this lead to? Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, “**that you may become pleased (with the reward which Allah shall give you).**” (TMQ, 20:130).

Glorifying, mentioning and obeying Allah (*SWT*) represent the only way to reach the highest level of happiness, which is satisfaction. In fact, happiness is nothing but satisfaction, a feeling of which many are deprived in spite of all the desires and pleasures they attain in life. They were deprived of satisfaction, a blessing that the believer obtains by glorifying Allah (*SWT*) and obeying Him (*SWT*).

For all those who seek happiness, for those youth who committed forbidden deeds in search of happiness but gained nothing, please read Surat Ta-Ha, where Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, “**Ta-Ha. We have not sent down the Qur’an unto you (O Muhammad SAWS) to cause you distress” (TMQ, 20:1-2).**

Surat Al-Anbiya (The Prophets)

Surat Al-Anbiya is Makkan. It was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) after Surat Ibrahim, and is set in the Holy Qur'an after Surat Ta-Ha. It is composed of 112 Ayahs.

The role of Prophets in reminding humanity

The Surah deals with the stories of Prophets (May Allah be pleased with them all) that Allah (SWT) sent to humanity, and their role in reminding people. Those Prophets (May Allah be pleased with them all) are the best creatures Allah (SWT) created; they guided the world to righteousness and happiness. Surat Al-Anbiya moves in the same pattern, it shows the message of each Prophet (May Allah be pleased with them all) and how each of them called his people to the right path of Allah (SWT), how he worshiped Allah (SWT) and prayed for Him humbly. Finally, the Surah proves, as we will see, the unity of all Prophets' missions (May Allah be pleased with them all).

The danger of unawareness

The very first mission of Prophets (May Allah be pleased with them all) is to awaken people from their unawareness, because it has always been the cause of misleading people over ages and everywhere, and the causes of the rejection of all the previous Prophets' (May Allah be pleased with them all) messages. It is such a dangerous illness that infects people and societies, taking them away from Allah (SWT).

People are either pious worshipers of Allah (SWT), or dissolute disobedient ones, but the real danger lies in the intermediate type, those unaware, careless people who are away from obeying Allah (SWT). Therefore, the Surah starts by a tough warning from this disease and its symptoms through three successive ayahs, where Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Draws near for mankind their reckoning, while they turn away in heedlessness. Comes not unto them an admonition (a chapter of the Qur'an) from their Lord as a recent revelation but they listen to it while they play. With their hearts occupied (with evil things). Those who do wrong conceal their private counsels, (saying): “Is this (Muhammad SAWS) more than a human being like you? Will you submit to magic while you see it?”“** (TMQ, 21:1-3).

(While they turn away in heedlessness... while they play... With their hearts occupied)

The model in worship and attitude

One of the most important objectives of the Surah is to ask you, my brother in Islam, the following question, “Who is the model in your life?” and if we ask most of the contemporary youth this question, how many of them will answer that Prophet Ibrahim (AS) is their model? How many will say that Prophet Yusuf (AS) is? How many will mention Prophet Muhammad (SAWS)? How many of them will mention singers or actors? How many will say they have no model at all?

Thus, Surat Al-Anbiya focuses on this meaning, and highlights two bright sides in each Prophet's (May Allah be pleased with them all) life: on the one hand, his worshiping, obedience and fear of Allah (*SWT*), and on the other hand, his call to Allah and his role as a reformer. The Surah wants to tell you, "These are the models you should follow in so far as your relation to Allah (*SWT*) and to people are concerned, i.e. in worshiping and in Da'wa (missionary activity).

Unity of vocabulary in supplication and responding

The Surah includes a lot of ayahs which describe supplications of the Prophets (May Allah be pleased with them all), and show how Allah (*SWT*) responded to them. For example, Allah (*SWT*) mentions Prophet Nuh's (*AS*) supplication as what can be translated as, "**And (remember) Nuh, when he cried (to Us) aforetime.**" (TMQ, 21:76); Ayyub's (*AS*) supplication is mentioned by Allah (*SWT*) as what can be translated as, "**And (remember) Ayyub, when he cried to his Lord**" (TMQ, 21:83); Yunus (*AS*) prayed to Allah (*SWT*) when he was in the inside the belly the whale, and Allah (*SWT*) describes his prayer as what can be translated as, "**But he cried through the darkness**" (TMQ, 21:87); and Zakariya's (*AS*) supplication is mentioned by Allah (*SWT*) as what can be translated as, "**when he cried to his Lord: 'O My Lord! Leave me not single (childless)'**" (TMQ, 21:89).

This impressive atmosphere of the Prophets' (May Allah be pleased with them all) communion with Allah (*SWT*) was followed by one word, the same word in responding to all the Prophets (May Allah be pleased with them all), "**So We**" (TMQ, 21:88 and TMQ, 21:90). Note that the Holy Qur'an uses the Arabic letter 'fa' meaning 'and' but translated in this context 'so' used with the verb 'to respond' on purpose to show Allah's (*SWT*) quick response to the Prophets' (May Allah be pleased with them all) prayers.

And thus we do deliver the believers

We have to stop for a while at the prayer and supplication of Prophet Yunus (*AS*). Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as "**So We answered his call, and delivered him from the distress. And thus We do deliver the believers (who believe in the Oneness of Allah, abstain from evil and work righteousness).**" (TMQ, 21:88). The Ayah does not only refer to Allah's (*SWT*) response to his prayer, but to Allah's (*SWT*) response to the prayers of all believers as well, "**And thus We do deliver the believers**" (TMQ, 21:88).

Dear Muslim brother, pray to Allah (*SWT*) in a way similar to the faithfulness and sincerity of the Prophets (May Allah be pleased with them all), and Allah (*SWT*) will respond to you immediately if He wills.

An integral whole

The unity of vocabulary in the prayers and supplications of Prophets (May Allah be pleased with them all) proves the unity of their missions and the fact that they are complementary to one another. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, "**Truly! This, your Ummah [Shari'a or religion (Islamic Monotheism)] is one religion, and I am your Lord, therefore worship Me (Alone).**" (TMQ, 21:92). All Prophets

(AS) belong to the same nation, and every Prophet (May Allah be pleased with them all) had a role in setting the bases of religion, until Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), the last Prophet, came to complete that huge building . Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) has said an expressive Hadith to highlight this meaning, “The similitude of mine and that of the Apostles (before me) is that of a person who constructed a building and he built it fine and well and the people went round it saying: Never have we seen a building more imposing than this, but for one brick, and I am that brick (with which you give the finishing touch to the building).”

This is why the Surah focuses on the fact that each Prophet (May Allah be pleased with them all) was sent for his own people, whereas Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was sent to all mankind , Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as **“And We have sent you (O Muhammad SAWS): not but as a mercy for the ‘alamin’ (mankind, jinn and all that exists).”** (TMQ, 21:107). Thus, Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was sent not only to all humanity, but also to other worlds like that of Jinn.

Why don't we take him (SAWS) as a model? Why do you insist on not following him, although he was sent as a mercy from Allah (SWT) to the entire world?

Dramatic ending

As the Surah starts with the serious impact of unawareness, its closing Ayahs are very strong so as to awaken the hearts from this illness. It is as if the Surah says, “If you do not take those Prophets (May Allah be pleased with them all) as an example, you will all get back to Allah (SWT) on a hard day, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as **“when We shall roll up the heaven like a scroll rolled up for books”** (TMQ, 21:104). Try to imagine that horrible day, and the sound of Heaven when being folded like a book. Allah (SWT) confirms this saying in what can be translated as **“As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it. (It is) a promise binding upon Us. Truly, We shall do it.”** (TMQ, 21:104).

The earth is theirs

Those who follow the steps of the Prophets (AS) are the real victorious ones in this life and the winners in the hereafter. Hence, the strong Ayahs describing doomsday are followed by what Allah (SWT) says and can be translated as **“And indeed We have written in Az-Zabur [i.e. all the revealed Holy Books - the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel), the Psalms, the Qur'an,] after (We have already written in) Al-Lauh Al-Mahfuz (the Book that is in the heaven with Allah), that My righteous slaves shall inherit the land (i.e. the land of Paradise).”** (TMQ, 21:105). Those Ayahs want to say to the Prophets' (May Allah be pleased with them all) followers, “Follow the example of Prophets (May Allah be pleased with them all) so as to inherit the earth”. The next Ayah describes the act of taking the Prophets (AS) as models: by worshiping Allah (SWT) as the Prophets (AS) did, Allah (SWT) will reward one with inheritance of the earth. Allah (SWT) describes this saying what can be translated as **“Verily, in this (the Qur'an) there is a plain Message for people who worship Allah (i.e. the true, real believers of Islamic Monotheism who act practically on the Qur'an and the Sunnah - legal ways of the Prophet SAWS).”** (TMQ, 21:106).

After delivering a lot of messages clarifying Allah's (*SWT*) methodology, Surat Al-Anbiya invites you, the reader of the Qur'an, to follow the Prophets (*AS*), especially Prophet Muhammad (*SAWS*), in the way they worshipped Allah (*SWT*), in their devotion to religion, in their defense of it and in the efforts they made to spread it all over the world. You will be worthy of the inheritance of the earth according to the methodology that Allah (*SWT*) has set and will be righteous. Allah (*SWT*) confirms this saying in what can be translated as **“that My righteous slaves shall inherit the land (i.e. the land of Paradise).”** (TMQ, 21:105).

Surat Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage)

Surat Al-Hajj is Madinan, yet, some parts of it are Makkan. It follows Surat An-Nur in the order of revelation, and Surat Al-Anbiya in the order of the Qur'an. It consists of 78 Ayahs.

One of the marvelous Surahs of the Qur'an

Why? Because some of its Ayahs were revealed in Makkah and some in Madinah; some were sent down at night and some during day time; some were sent down in the city and some while traveling. Not only that, but the Surah also has other distinctive features; it is the only Surah named after one of the pillars of Islam. Thus, the importance of Hajj arises, as it is evident that the main focus of this Surah is that vital pillar of Islam.

Pilgrimage is the key word

If we read Surat Al-Hajj from the very beginning, we will find that it tackles the issue of the Day of Judgment. From the first Ayah, focus is made on the Day of Judgment and resurrection. The Ayahs then move to *Jihad* (fighting in the cause of Allah (SWT)), and then worship and servitude to Allah (SWT), as all creatures in sky and on earth prostrate themselves to Allah (SWT). However, what is the relationship between all of these issues? How are they related to pilgrimage?

When a Muslim performs this major form of worship or when he lives with his soul with pilgrims and imagines to be one of them, he understands well Allah's (SWT) intention from this Surah. Pilgrimage is a worship that plays a vital role in setting up the strong bases of the nation. It is as if the Surah is telling the readers to perform Hajj in a right way, just as Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) did, in order to train themselves and thus become used to living according to social and moral principles. Such principles basically guide the nation as a whole including both individuals and social groups.

A practical reminder

The Surah starts with reminding people of the Day of Judgment in a tough way. In the first Ayah, Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“O mankind! Fear your Lord and be dutiful to Him! Verily, the earthquake of the Hour (of Judgment) is a terrible thing”** (TMQ., 22: 1). What is the relationship between Hajj and the Day of Judgment?

Most of the rituals of Hajj remind us of the Day of Judgment. In fact I would like to ask the reader, even if he has not the opportunity yet to perform Hajj, to visualize the moments of Hajj: descending Arafat Mountain, going to Mozdalifa in order to throw the stones while it is too hot, too crowded, and we have to wait for a very long time. Everyone prays to Allah (SWT) submissively, saying “Here we are Allah, at your service; here we are.” The simple white clothes of Hajj remind one of the winding sheets in which the dead are shrouded. All this reminds one of one's nakedness on the Day of Judgment, along with the crowdedness, hot sun and sweat overwhelming people on that day.

Hajj and the scenes of the Day of Judgment

The Ayahs start afterwards to depict the horrors of that day, so you can feel as if you see them in front of your eyes: **“The Day you shall see it, every nursing mother will forget her nursling, and every pregnant one will drop her load, and you shall see mankind as in a drunken state, yet they will not be drunken, but severe will be the Torment of Allah” (TMQ, 22: 2).**

The Ayahs then shift to resurrection and the scene of people getting out of their graves, with dust covering their faces and bodies. Hence, the Ayah reminds us that all people were originally created from dust. **“O mankind! If you are in doubt about the Resurrection, then verily We have created you (i.e. Adam) from dust...” (TMQ, 22: 5).**

After two days of wearing the Hajj clothes, you become covered with dust from tip to toe. What is more important is when you perform the Hajj exactly as the Prophet (SAWS) did. If you decide to spend your night at Mozdalifa, you see most of the people extremely tired, as if they are dead. At dawn people rush out of their place of residence as if they are rising from graves; all of them are wearing white clothes and move towards the place where the ritual of the throwing of stones can be performed. Therefore, the Ayah comes as a reminder of resurrection, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And surely, the Hour is coming, there is no doubt about it; and certainly, Allah will resurrect those who are in the graves” (TMQ, 22: 7).**

Thus, we see the first result of Hajj in educating Ummah (Islamic nation) preparing muslims them for the Day of Judgment, through the experience they live while performing Hajj rituals.

Hajj rituals: the utmost obedience to Allah (SWT):

The Ayahs 26-37 mention the various Hajj rituals, the until reaching the central Ayah comes which can be translated as, **“and whosoever honors the Symbols of Allah, then it is truly from the piety of the hearts” (TMQ, 22: 32).**

What is the Divine wisdom behind these great rituals?

During Hajj, you should carry out strict and specific directives imposed by Allah (SWT) otherwise your hajj is spoilt. A Muslim circumambulates seven times around a stone; goes to and fro seven times between two stones; and throws stones on a place full of stones. He/She performs many rituals may be without knowing the real wisdom lying behind, yet he/she only performs them in obedience to Allah’s (SWT) orders. This is the utmost form of obedience to Allah (SWT). The Muslim is also prepared through such rituals to another religious duty in Islam: *Jihad* (fight for the cause of Allah).

Hajj and Jihad:

The Ayahs about Jihad come immediately after those talking about Hajj. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Truly, Allah defends those who believe” (TMQ,**

Al-Hajj: 38), and says what can be translated as, “Permission to fight (against disbelievers) is given to those (believers) who are fought against, because they have been wronged; and surely, Allah is Able to give them (believers) victory”(TMQ, 22: 39).

It is as if Hajj is a practical exercise preparing for Jihad. In fact, it is a tiresome act: The pilgrim like the Mujahid (fighter in the cause of Allah) keeps moving from a ritual to another, from a place to another without rest. In short, Hajj is one of the most sublime forms of worship, where the Muslim abandons most of his/her habits so as to accustom himself/herself to seriousness and to overcoming hardships.

Hajj and submissiveness to Allah (SWT):

The wonder of Hajj is that it makes you feel that the whole universe is in total submission to Allah (SWT). On the day of Arafa, you feel that you are not the only one who prostrates to Allah (SWT) and prays to Him; but the tent, the mountain, and the whole universe are doing so. You, a helpless human, in turn, join these creatures in their submissiveness to Allah (SWT). This is evident in Ayah 18, in which Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“See you not that whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and Ad-Dawabb [moving (living) creatures, beasts], and many of mankind prostrate themselves to Allah. But there are many (men) on whom the punishment is justified. And whomsoever Allah disgraces, none can honor him. Verily, Allah does what He wills”(TMQ, 22: 18).**

The ummah’s (Nation’s) life between two prostrations:

It is worth mentioning that the first Surah revealed to the Prophet’s (SAWS) at the beginning of his mission, to contain an ayah which demands prostration is Surat Al-Alaq in which Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Nay! (O Muhammad)! Do not obey him (Abu Jahl). Fall prostrate and draw near to Allah!”(TMQ, 96:19)**, whereas the last Surah in which there is an Ayah which demands prostration is Surat Al-Hajj, which was revealed in the last days of the Mission, and in which Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as: **“O you who have believed! Bow down, and prostrate yourselves, and worship your Lord and do good that you may be successful” (TMQ, 22: 77).**

The difference between the two Ayahs and the two prostrations shows the great shift in the nation’s life, from the first order of prostration which was directed only to the Prophet (SAWS) in Surat Al-Alaq, to the last order of prostration which was directed to the whole nation in Surat Al-Hajj. It is a typical shift in a short period of time, from the Prophet (SAWS) alone in Hira’ cave to an entire nation of worshipers and fighters.

Could you please intend Hajj, this great duty or at least intend Umrah, so as to train yourself on the values mentioned in this Surah?. You can also read Surat Al-Hajj with the intention of learning from the lessons of Hajj and the inherent meanings, even if the chance of performing Hajj has not occurred to you yet.

Surat Al-Mu'minun (The Believers)

Surat Al-Mu'minun is Makkan. It follows Surat Al-Anbiya' in the order of revelation, and Surat Al-Hajj in the order of the Holy Book. It consists of 118 Ayahs.

How far do their traits apply to you?

This Surah mentions the most important traits of the believers, and displays in comparison the traits of the disbelievers. It is as if the Surah asks the reader of the Qur'an "How far do the traits of those believers apply to you?" It also draws your attention to a very important meaning, namely the fact that these traits include both manners and worship; the first trait is related to worship, and the next one is related to manners, and so on. Therefore, I invite you to test and evaluate yourself according to these traits by giving scores about your answers for the questions you will be asked.

Faith test

The Surah begins with what can be translated as, "**Successful indeed are the believers**" (TMQ,: 23: 1). Who are they? How can we be among them? Let's try to answer the questions:

"Those who offer their prayers with all solemnity and full submissiveness" (TMQ,: 23: 2). How do you perform your prayers? Do you concentrate while praying? How much score do you give to yourself for this question?

"And those who turn away from dirty, false, evil vain talk, falsehood, and all that Allah has forbidden" (TMQ,: 23: 3). Do you talk in an ill way about other Muslims? Do you move among people with words that cause problems and hatred? Do you hold your tongue from gossiping and useless speech? Do you abstain from attending assemblies where people talk badly about each other?

"And those who guard their chastity" (TMQ,: 23: 5). How much are you preserving your sight from mischievous looks? How are chastity and abstaining from the way that leads to adultery apply to you?

"Those who are faithfully true to their Amanat (all the duties which Allah has ordained, honesty, moral responsibility and trusts) and to their covenants" (TMQ,: 23: 8). How much do you cling to honesty, whether in minor issues, such as the tape or the book you borrowed from your friend, or in the responsibility of spreading religion among people?

"And those who strictly guard their (five compulsory congregational) prayers (at their fixed stated hours)" (TMQ,: 23: 9). Do you pray regularly on time? Are you keen on praying in groups? How much score do you give yourself on keeping prayers?

If you've succeeded the test, I congratulate you

If such traits apply to you with a high percentage, then you should be happy, for Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, "**These are indeed the inheritors; Who shall**

inherit the Firdaus (Paradise). They shall dwell therein forever (TMQ, 23: 10-11). Congratulations – you have won a divine prize, in addition to a divine declaration that enables you to inherit the earth in this life, and enjoy Heaven in the Hereafter.

History of believers – fate of disbelievers

The Ayahs shift to the history of the believers on earth, mentioning the stories of the Prophets, and focusing on the fact that every generation of Prophets inherits the trait of believing in Allah (*SWT*). Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Then, after them, We created another generation” (TMQ, 23: 31), “Then, after them, We created other generations” (TMQ, 23: 42).**

The fate of disbelievers is referred to between these two Ayahs, as if the two Ayahs tell the believers who have done the test before, “Stick to the road of faith; never abandon prayers, so that you would not face the same destiny of disbelievers”. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“So As-Saihah (torment - awful cry) overtook them in truth (with justice), and We made them as rubbish of dead plants. So away with the people who are Zalimun (polytheists, wrong-doers, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allah, disobedient to His Messengers)” (TMQ, 23: 41). “Then We sent Our Messengers in succession. Every time there came to a nation their Messenger, they denied him; so We made them follow one another (to destruction), and We made them as Ahadith (the true stories for mankind to learn a lesson from them). So away with a people who believe not!” (TMQ, 23: 44).**

Do you see how can the deviation from the road of faith lead to damnation?

Better and nobler traits

The Ayahs mention afterwards some other traits of the believers, which are considered as being higher in level than the previous ones. Let’s read together ayahs 56 and 57.

Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Verily those who live in awe for fear of their Lord” (TMQ, 23: 57).** At the beginning of the Surah, submissiveness was required while praying. In this situation, however, there is a higher level of worshipping: to be filled with fear of Allah (*SWT*) in every moment of your life, and while doing any thing.

Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And those who believe in the Ayat (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of their Lord; And those who join not anyone (in worship) as partners with their Lord” (TMQ, 23: 58-59).** They do not seek the satisfaction of anyone but Allah (*SWT*) in their worship, whether by ‘greater’ polytheism (believing in a god other than Allah (*SWT*), or ‘smaller’ polytheism (hypocrisy in worship). You should seek nothing but only the reward and recompense from Allah (*SWT*).

Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And those who give that (their charity) which they give (and also do other good deeds) with their hearts full of fear (whether their alms and charities have been accepted or not), because they**

are sure to return to their Lord (for reckoning)” (TMQ, 23: 60).

These are the most apparent of the believers’ traits: worshiping Allah (*SWT*), carrying out His orders, and then fearing Him. Why? Lest the work (deeds) would be declined. Lady Aisha (*AS*) (Prophet Muhammad’s wife) asked the Prophet (*SAWS*) about the previously mentioned Ayah; she said, “Are these who drink alcoholic drinks and steal?” Allah’s Messenger replied: “No! O the daughter of As-Siddiq, but they are those who fast, pray, and practice charity and they are afraid that (their good) deeds may not be accepted (by Allah) from them.”⁸

A Divine testimony

Having all those traits, the believers deserve another divine testimony. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“It is these who hasten in the good deeds, and they are foremost in them” (TMQ, 23: 61).** They never miss a chance for getting more reward from Allah (*SWT*).

Supplication ...After Work:

Surat Al-Mu’minun closes in a wonderful way: Allah (*SWT*) teaches us a nice supplication which can be translated as, **“And say (O Muhammad): “My Lord! Forgive and have mercy, for You are the Best of those who show mercy!” (TMQ, 23: 118).**

Why did the Surah conclude with this supplication in particular? Because the believers, who have all of the traits mentioned in the Surah might err or fail to keep up with the same level of faith. Consequently, there should be a final Ayah that leads one back to the way of Allah (*SWT*), asking for His forgiveness for the faults committed by a human who is by nature prone to mistakes.

⁸ *Munqati’* (Disconnected) Hadith, narrated by Ibn Hejr, p. 73/5

Surat An-Nur (The Light)

Surat An-Nur is Madinan. It follows Surat Al-Hashr in the order of revelation, and Surat Al-Mu'minun in the order of the Holy Book. It consists of 64 Ayahs.

Houses of light

Surat An-Nur is the Surah of social conventions and manners. It focuses on regulating people's lives at home, seeking to maintain courteous relations between people, reaching a state of harmony and morality in the society; and shows how to purify the community from crimes and sin.

Gossipmongers

Surat An-Nur was revealed in reply to the rumors spread by the hypocrites about Lady Aisha (May Allah be pleased with her); they accused her of committing adultery, although Allah (SWT) Himself proved her innocence in the Qur'an. What happened is that when Lady Aisha went with the Prophet (SAWS) in Al-Mustalaq Conquest, and the army stopped to have some rest, Lady Aisha lost her necklace. While she was searching for it, the men carried her *hawdaj* (a closed tent placed on the camel), not thinking that she was not there, as she had a slim figure. When she came back, she found that the army had left, and she was left alone in the desert.

The Prophet (SAWS) was used to keep somebody in the rear of the army, so as to guide anyone who misses it. At that time, it was Safwan Ibn Al-Mu'attal who found Lady Aisha alone, so he put her on a camel without speaking to her or even looking at her, until they entered Al-Madinah. The hypocrites made use of this incident to their own benefit; they began spreading rumors that Lady Aisha and Safwan – Allah (SWT) forbid – committed adultery. People began to spread these false rumors, even some believers fell into the trap, and they said “No smoke without fire”. Muslims argued about that matter: some were puzzled; some did not believe it at all; and some did. No ayahs were revealed to the Prophet (SAWS) for a whole month, which was a test for the whole society.

A divine declaration of innocence

The Revelation ceased to occur to the Prophet (SAWS) until the whole society releases all latent thoughts and attitudes about that matter. It was a hard test, indeed, which lasted until ayahs from Surat An-Nur were sent down to prove Lady Aisha's innocence? Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Verily those who brought forth the slander (against ‘Aisha the wife of the Prophet) are a group among you. Consider it not a bad thing for you. Nay, it is good for you. Unto every man among them will be paid that which he had earned of the sin, and as for him among them who had the greater share therein, his will be a great torment”** (TMQ, 24: 11).

This Ayah declares, frankly, that Lady Aisha is innocent, and that what happened was flagrant lies and falsehood. Whoever contributed to spreading such lies in the society, mainly Abdullah Ibn Abu Salul, the head of the hypocrites, will have a tremendous torment.

Not an evil

The previous Ayah comments on the slander which spread like hellfire among Muslims. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Consider it not a bad thing for you. Nay, it is good for you” (TMQ, 24: 11)**. How can there be any benefit or good in this?

The whole Islamic society, was to learn from this incident, and we too shall learn from it. Moreover, the set of the social rules mentioned in this Surah are beneficial for all the Muslims in every part of the earth forever, as Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, “Nay, it is good for you”.

They thought highly of themselves

The first comment on the incident was what Allah (*SWT*) said and can be translated as, **“Why then, did not the believers, men and women, when you heard it (the slander), think good of their own people and say: “This (charge) is an obvious lie?” (TMQ, 24: 12)**. This is a great Ayah that teaches us how to act when rumors about others’ honor spread. The situation for which this Ayah was revealed was that Abu-Ayyub Al-Ansari asked his wife had she been in Aisha’s shoes, would she have done as the rumors said? She replied in the negative, so he told her: “And Aisha is better than you.” In turn, she asked him, had he been in Safwan’s shoes, would he have done as the rumors said? He replied in the negative, so she told him: “And Safwan is better than you.” Thus, the Ayah praises their magnificent deed to set them as a good example for all the Muslims. What is nice about the Ayah is that its wording is “the believers, men and women, thought highly of themselves”, although “they thought highly of their companions”, as if it tells the Muslims: “Think highly of each other, exactly as you think of yourselves. You are all believers, so let the hypocrites think of you as they like.” The Ayahs inspire the feeling that one’s ill talk about one’s brother/sister in Islam is considered ill talk about oneself, and that highly thinking of brothers/sisters means defending oneself.

Beware of harming others’ reputations

Beware, O Muslim, of harming others’ reputations, especially women; beware of listening to the devil’s whispers about it; and beware of spreading the news of scandals and rumors, which makes you think wrongly of others, falling into the great sin that the Surah mentions, which is slandering innocent women.

Those who spread the false rumors, as well as those who believed them among the Muslims, had neither witnesses nor evidence. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Why did they not produce four witnesses? Since they (the slanderers) have not produced witnesses! Then with Allah they are the liars” (TMQ, 24: 13)**.

However, Allah’s (*SWT*) mercy always precedes His anger. He (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Had it not been for the Grace of Allah and His Mercy unto you in this world and in the Hereafter, a great torment would have touched you for that whereof you had spoken” (TMQ, 24: 14)**.

You consider it a little thing, while for Allah (SWT) it was very great

The Ayahs shift again to describing the gravity of the situation. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“When you were propagating it with your tongues, and uttering with your mouths that whereof you had no knowledge, you counted it a little thing, while with Allah it was very great; And why did you not, when you heard it, say: “It is not right for us to speak of this. Glory be to You (O Allah)! This is a great lie; Allah forbids you from it and warns you not to repeat the like of it forever, if you are believers” (TMQ, 24: 15-17).**

All these Ayahs are commenting on the aforementioned incident, so this was a warning to the Companions of the Prophet (SAWS), and to the whole Islamic nation, against ill speaking about women’s reputations. Some young men might say a word or make a gesture in this respect; they might even be joking without aiming at harming anybody, but the Ayahs give them a clear serious warning. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“You counted it a little thing, while with Allah it was very great” (TMQ, 24: 15).** The Ayahs then forbid them to repeat such an action, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Allah forbids you from it and warns you not to repeat the like of it forever, if you are believers” (TMQ, 24: 17).**

Thus, we see that this story was beneficial to the society of Madinah and to all Islamic societies. Let’s review together the Ayahs of this Surah and try to realize the meanings intended by Allah (SWT) in this Surah.

Grave crime - strong beginning

How does the Surah begin? In an unconventional way. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“(This is) a Surah which We have sent down and which We have enjoined, (ordained its laws)” (TMQ, 24: 1),** which is a strong beginning for a Surah. However, all the Surahs of the Qur’an were revealed and enjoined, so why does this Surah begin in this style? It is as if the Surah wants to powerfully protect the society, so the means of protection should be so influential so as to draw attention to the importance of the coming rules.

Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“(This is) a Surah which We have sent down and which We have enjoined, (ordained its laws); and in it We have revealed manifest Ayat (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations - lawful and unlawful things, and set boundaries of Islamic Religion), that you may remember” (TMQ, 24: 1).**

What is the first of these rules?

Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“The fornicatress and the fornicator, flog each of them with a hundred stripes. Let not pity withhold you in their case, in a punishment prescribed by Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a party of the believers witness their punishment” (TMQ, 24: 2).**

Although the basis of our religion is mercy and compassion, Allah (SWT) states in the Ayah what can be translated as, **“Let not pity withhold you in their case, in a punishment prescribed by Allah”.**

Although our religion commands not to expose each others' faults, as Allah (*SWT*) is The Protector who likes to protect everyone, as far as adultery is concerned Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And let a party of the believers witness their punishment”**. (TMQ, 24: 2).

Replying to suspicion

The enemies of Islam begin to attack this religion, describing it as a merciless, barbarian one in applying laws. Unfortunately, some Muslims are embarrassed to reply to these insinuations; sometimes they even believe them. I would like to say to such persons: “Don't judge Islam until you have read Surat An-Nur as a whole, so that you would realize the greatness of Islam in solving the social problems.”

Means of protection

The reason for the strong start of the Surah is that it sets definite guarantees to prevent committing adultery. If one commits it ignoring all such set of laws and rules, this means that one's nature is badly distorted, so there must be a deterring penalty.

The Surah contains seven means of safety that protect the Muslim, as well as the society, against committing adultery. They also keep the society pure, virtuous and incorruptible. In this Surah, one reads about the rules of asking for permission before entering others' houses, helping young people to get married, prohibiting fornication, lowering one's gaze, women's Hijab, and abstaining from ill talking about others' reputation without witnesses. Then, there comes the penalty in the right timing, so that it would be a mercy for the society and a restraint to those deviants who are extremely lustful and corrupt. What are these means?

Society-enlightening ethics

1. Asking Permission:

No man shall enter a woman's house while she is alone, especially if he is an in-law; no man shall sit alone with a woman whom he could marry and children should not enter their parents' rooms at anytime without permission and this applies to servants too who should abide by the same rule. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“O you who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and greeted those in them; that is better for you, in order that you may remember; And if you find no one therein, still, enter not until permission has been given. And if you are asked to go back, go back, for it is purer for you. And Allah is All-Knower of what you do”** (TMQ, 24: 27-28).

Then, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“O you who believe! Let your slaves and slave-girls, and those among you who have not come to the age of puberty ask your permission (before they come to your presence) on three occasions”** (TMQ, 24: 58). These Ayahs are the regulations of life inside the Muslim house, to be applied for both children and servants. Listen to the regulations that Allah (*SWT*) sets, and that can be

translated as, **“before *Fajr* prayer, and while you put off your clothes for the noonday (rest), and after the ‘*Isha*’ (late-night) prayer. (These) three times are of privacy for you; other than these times there is no sin on you or on them to move about, attending to each other” (TMQ, 24: 58).** These are the times when one gets undressed, either to sleep or to change clothes.

The Ayahs continue as Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And when the children among you come to puberty, then let them (also) ask for permission, as those senior to them (in age). Thus Allah makes clear His *Ayat* (Commandments and legal obligations) for you. And Allah is All-Knowing, All Wise” (TMQ, 24: 59).**

What a great religion that penetrates inside one’s home in order to regulate it, insuring happiness and protection against evils and vices.

2. Lowering one’s gaze:

In order to keep the society away from the road to sin, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts). That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is All-Aware of what they do” (TMQ, 24: 30).**

The order of lowering one’s gaze and keeping chastity is not directed only to men, but also to women with the same wording. **“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things)” (TMQ, 24: 31).**

3. Helping young people get married:

The adultery penalty could not be applied if young people cannot afford to get married. Therefore, one of the most important rules given in the Surah is encouraging the well-to-do to help young people to get married. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And marry those among you who are single (i.e. a man who has no wife and the woman who has no husband) and (also marry) the *Salihun* (pious, fit and capable ones) of your (male) slaves and maid servants (female slaves). If they be poor, Allah will enrich them out of His Bounty. And Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures’ needs, All-Knowing (about the state of the people)” (TMQ, 24: 32).** Thus, young people who cannot afford marriage are protected from falling into sin. One should help them, keeping in mind that the reward is from Allah (*SWT*).

4. Prohibiting fornication:

The Ayahs also warned parents (and societies) who force their daughters to commit adultery as a means to gain financial profits. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“And force not your maids to prostitution, if they desire chastity, in order that you may make a gain in the (perishable) goods of this worldly life. But if anyone compels them (to prostitution),**

then after such compulsion, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful (to those women, i.e. He will forgive them because they have been forced to do this evil act unwillingly)” (TMQ, 24: 33).

The Surah, with all its strict rules, protects women and warns against using their womanly attractions as a commodity, as this does injustice to them, and consequently leads to corrupting the whole society.

5. Hijab for women:

After the orders of taking permission,, lowering one’s gaze, helping young people to get married, and prohibiting fornication, there comes the command to make women wear hijab. This is one of the most important means of protecting men, whether bachelors or married, from committing adultery, as a result of the obscene scenes they set eyes on whether in the street, in newspapers, in satellite channels and the mass media. Hijab, on the one hand, and lowering one’s gaze, on the other hand, are considered as guarantees for the protection and purity of the society. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent (like both eyes for necessity to see the way, or outer palms of hands or one eye or dress like veil, gloves, head-cover, apron, etc.), and to draw their veils all over *Juyubihinna* (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms)” (TMQ, 24: 31).**

By repeating **“not to show off their adornment”** twice in the same Ayah, it has been made clear that the whole body of the woman is adornment, so she is not allowed to reveal any part of her body except the face and the hands, as the Prophet (SAWS) told us.

The Ayahs not only command women to wear the *hijab*, but it also describes it in detail. The shape of the proper *hijab* is thoroughly described as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“to draw their veils all over *Juyubihinna* (i.e. their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms)”**; the hijab should cover the chest and the neck. The Ayah also determines for the Muslim woman those to whom she may reveal her adornment, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband’s fathers” (TMQ, 24:31).**

Such detailed description, having been made, how can one say that wearing the hijab is not a duty in Islam? The Ayahs in this Surah, as well as in Surat Al-Ahzab, discussed this issue in a detailed way and unquestionable statements.

6. Prohibiting the spread of vices:

Islam has forbidden people to spread vices in the society, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Verily, those who like that (the crime of) illegal**

sexual intercourse should be propagated among those who believe, they will have a painful torment in this world and in the Hereafter. And Allah knows and you know not”(TMQ, 24: 19).

I would like to say to all the mass media which spread vices and nudity in the society; to all those who spread the news of scandals and distort the reputation of others, listen to these Ayahs and beware of Allah’s (SWT) punishment.

Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Verily, those who accuse chaste women, who never even think of anything touching their chastity and are good believers are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter, and for them will be a great torment; On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their legs (or feet) will bear witness against them as to what they used to do.”(TMQ, 24: 23-24).**

There must be four witnesses

Thus, it is clear that Islam calls for the application of all these guarantees so as to insure that the society is free of all the causes and stimuli of committing adultery. If one can afford to get married, women wear hijab, people abide by lowering their gaze, ads vanish, fornication is prohibited and then someone commits adultery, does he really deserve the adultery penalty? Of course not, because there must be four trustworthy witnesses or he must confess, so that he can be whipped or flung. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“And those who accuse chaste women, and produce not four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes, and reject their testimony forever. They indeed are the *Fasiqun* (liars, rebellious, disobedient to Allah); except those who repent thereafter and do righteous deeds; (for such) verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” (TMQ, 24: 4-5).**

That is why he deserves penalty

As the Ayahs reveal that there must be four witnesses in order to apply the penalty, a very tough condition is being put. This is a form of Allah’s (SWT) mercy. That penalty is applied only to whoever transgresses all the rules laid down in the Surah and commits adultery. Not only this, but he also commits it in front of four people, which means that he has done it in public! Who acts in this manner deserves really no mercy; he should be treated cruelly. This explains the strong start of the Surah, as Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Let not pity withhold you in their case, in a punishment prescribed by Allah”, (TMQ, 24:2)** as a person who commits such an act tries to ruin the whole society.

The greatness of Islam is revealed in the fact that if there were only three witnesses, or if one of the four witnesses drew back his testimony, the three witnesses are the ones who will be whipped, as protecting others’ reputation is the most important thing and the basic issue in this respect in Islam.

There is no thirst for punishment in Islam

The aforesaid statements reveal that Islam is not thirsty for setting punishments. The Companions of the Prophet (SAWS) are a good example for us to follow in applying the rules of Islam. When Omar Ibn Al-Khattab was the Emir of the Believers

(Caliph), he saw an act of adultery, but with no other witnesses. He turned angry and told the Muslims “I saw and heard by myself; I’m going to penalize them.” Ali Ibn Abu-Taleb asked him, “Do you have other witnesses?” Omar replied “No, but I’m the Commander of the Believers, and I saw and heard.” Ali replied, “You must bring four witnesses, otherwise you will be yourself whipped instead!!” Who can one claim, after all this, that Islam is blood-thirsty?

Repentance

All the penalties stated at the beginning of the Surah are the final remedy after all the rules that guarantee the protection of the society from committing sins. If a young man or girl commits adultery, and their country does not apply Allah’s (SWT) regulations, or if such regulations are incomplete in the society (such as the difficulty of marriage, spreading of sins, and the absence of hijab), what can he or she do?

The answer is of course: strictly nothing. Nothing can be done immediately. They should repent to Allah. The greatness of this Surah lies in the fact that after every part which speaks about Allah’s (SWT) rules, there is another part which speaks about His mercy and opens the door for repentance. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as, **“Except those who repent thereafter and do righteous deeds” (TMQ, 24: 5).**

“And had it not been for the Grace of Allah and His Mercy on you (He would have hastened the punishment upon you)! And that Allah is the One Who forgives and accepts repentance, the All-Wise” (TMQ, 24: 10).

“And had it not been for the Grace of Allah and His Mercy on you, (Allah would have hastened the punishment upon you). And that Allah is full of Kindness, Most Merciful” (TMQ, 24: 20).

“And all of you beg Allah to forgive you all, O believers, that you may be successful” (TMQ, 24: 31).

Repentance is the way to safety of the societies where there is shortage in the guarantees of protection against sins, or those where Allah’s (SWT) laws are not applied for a reason or another.

Towards Light

An important question poses itself: why is this Surah called “An-Nur”? Some might reply “Because Allah (SWT) says in this Surah what can be translated as, **“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth” (TMQ, 24: 35).** This is crystal clear, but what is the relation between this Ayah and the social rules of conduct abundant in the Surah? Why was not the Surah named the Surah of social rules or something anything of the sort?

The significance of this is that applying those instructions and rules enlightens the society; Allah’s (SWT) laws are the illuminating light of the society and the alternative opposite is confusion and chaos; which applies to most of the societies in our present time. Many houses are living in darkness (ignorance) and many societies miss the light because their people have not read Surat An-Nur. When these societies

reject Allah's (*SWT*) laws, sins prevail and troubles increase. For all these reasons, the Surah was called "An-Nur", being the light which protects people, purifies them from lusts, and keeps their reputations safe from ill talk, and illuminates the road to Allah (*SWT*).

Allah (*SWT*) is the Light of the heavens and the Earth

What is the source of this light? It is Allah (*SWT*). He (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth"** (TMQ, 24: 35). Allah's (*SWT*) light is represented in His laws and guidance.

Where does this light descend? Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **"In houses (mosques), which Allah has ordered to be raised (to be cleaned, and to be honored), in them His Name is remembered"** (TMQ, 24: 36).

On whom does this light befall? Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **"Men whom neither trade nor sale (business) diverts from the Remembrance of Allah"** (TMQ, 24: 37).

As to those who deviate from this light, Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **"As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one thinks it to be water"** (TMQ, 24: 39), as they did not follow Allah's (*SWT*) light and preferred to live in chaos. Allah (*SWT*) also says what can be translated as, **"Or [the state of a disbeliever] is like the darkness in a vast deep sea, overwhelmed with waves topped by waves, topped by dark clouds, (layers of) darkness upon darkness: if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it! And he for whom Allah has not appointed light, for him there is no light"** (TMQ, 24: 40).

Do you see the consequences of giving up divine guidance? Do you see how unveiling and spreading scandals make individuals, societies and even the whole world wandering in the darkness of sins?

Divine Light Prerequisites

Listen again to the central Ayah, where Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The parable of His Light is as (if there were) a niche and within it a lamp: the lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east (i.e. neither it gets sun-rays only in the morning) nor of the west (i.e. nor it gets sun-rays only in the afternoon, but it is exposed to the sun all day long), whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself), though no fire touched it. Light upon Light! Allah guides to His Light whom He wills. And Allah sets forth parables for mankind, and Allah is All-Knower of everything"** (TMQ, 24: 35). The niche is an opening in the wall which surrounds the lamp and protects it. In order to keep the light, there should be a bottle to protect it. It is as if this great Ayah tells Muslims, "If you apply Allah's (*SWT*) laws (the light of society) and protect it, and make your hearts like the bottle which encompasses the light, you shall guarantee that it remains illuminated throughout your life."

This light requires a source of illumination, which is, in this case, your work and positiveness as believers. It is as if the Ayahs tell you to find the source of light so as to illuminate the whole society. This is why the beginning of the Surah was a strong one. Allah (*SWT*) says what can be translated as, **“(This is) a Surah which We have sent down and which We have enjoined” (TMQ, 24: 1)**, as it calls for acting positively and illuminating the society by Allah’s (*SWT*) light.

Clarifying ayahs

Amongst the creative points in the Qur’an, is that it stresses the word “light” to refer to Allah’s (*SWT*) laws. What are then the most distinguished features of light? They can be summed up in three words: guidance, manifestation and revelation.

As light reveals truths, the words “manifest” and “plain Ayahs” are repeated in the Surah nine times. The Surah begins with Allah’s (*SWT*) saying what can be translated as, **“and in it We have revealed manifest Ayahs” (TMQ, 24: 1)**. After speaking about every set of social rules, there comes Allah’s words that can be translated as, **“And Allah makes the Ayahs plain to you” (TMQ, 24: 18)**, or his words that can be translated as, **“And indeed We have sent down for you Ayahs (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) that make things plain” (TMQ, 24: 34)**. These laws are the guide of believers to the right path.

This is also the reason why Lady Aisha’s innocence was revealed in this Surah, as light reveals truths.

That’s also why the Surah puts the condition of bringing four witnesses, a fact which in itself provides the evidence before the adultery penalty can be applied. This evidence is the revealer and the light.

Please let this Surah, as well as the rules of social conduct included in it, be a guiding light to you and your family. You should also hang on to Allah’s (*SWT*) laws so as to enlighten your society with it and lead all the people to spread light in the whole world.

Surat Al-Furqan (The Criterion)

Surat Al-Furqan is Makkan. It was revealed after Surat Ya-Seen, and it comes after Surat An-Nur in the order of the Qur'an. It consists of 77 ayahs.

The objective of Surat Al-Furqan

This Surah speaks about the unpleasant fate of those who disbelieve in Allah, His apostle and His book. Hence, we find in it three main ideas:

- The kinds of disbelief that the Prophet (SAWS) faced.
- Warning against the unpleasant fate of disbelief.
- Support for the Prophet (SAWS) and his companions.

All the ayahs of this Surah clearly focus on these three ideas. It is called Al-Furqan because it shows through the above-mentioned three ideas how religion and the Qur'an set a clear borderline between right and wrong.

Disbelief and support

This holy Surah was revealed in a time when the polytheists were going too far in mocking the Prophet (SAWS). Therefore, its ayahs came to support the Prophet (SAWS) and his companions and to refute those who disbelieved him.

In this respect, Allah (SWT) says in the beginning of the Surah what can be translated as, **“Those who disbelieve say: “This (the Qur'an) is nothing but a lie that he (Muhammad SAWS) has invented, and others have helped him at it. In fact they have produced an unjust wrong (thing) and a lie. And they say: “Tales of the ancients, which he has written down: and they are dictated to him morning and afternoon.” (TMQ, 25:4-5).**

Disbelief takes different forms : From denying the Qur'an and describing it as **“Tales of the ancients,”** to denying the Prophet (SAWS): **“And they say: “Why does this Messenger (Muhammad SAWS) eat food, and walk about in the markets (as we). Why is not an angel sent down to him to be a warner with him? Or (why) has not a treasure been granted to him, or why has he not a garden whereof he may eat?”** And the Zalimun (polytheists and wrong-doers) say: **“You follow none but a man bewitched. See how they coin similitudes for you, so they have gone astray, and they cannot find a (Right) Path.”(TMQ, 25:7-9).**

After disbelief comes a wonderful support for the Prophet (SAWS) **“Blessed be He Who, if He wills will assign you better than (all) that - Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise) and will assign you palaces (i.e. in Paradise)”, (TMQ, 25:10).**

The ayahs that follow show the fate of the disbelievers **“Nay, they deny the Hour (the Day of Resurrection), and for those who deny the Hour, We have prepared a flaming Fire (i.e. Hell). When it (Hell) sees them from a far place, they will hear its raging and its roaring. And when they shall be thrown into a narrow place**

thereof, chained together, they will exclaim therein for destruction. Exclaim not today for one destruction, but exclaim for many destructions.” (TMQ, 25:11-14).

Being deserted by devils of mankind and Jinn

The ayahs then show an uglier form of disbelief, **“And those who expect not a Meeting with Us (i.e. those who deny the Day of Resurrection and the life of the Hereafter) said: “Why are not the angels sent down to us, or why do we not see our Lord?” Indeed they think too highly of themselves, and are scornful with great pride.”** (TMQ, 25:21).

What will be their fate? **“And (remember) the Day when the Zalim (wrong-doer, oppressor, polytheist) will bite at his hands, he will say: “Oh! Would that I had taken a path with the Messenger (Muhammad SAWS). Ah! Woe to me! Would that I had never taken so-and-so as a Khalil (an intimate friend)! He indeed led me astray from the Reminder (this Qur’an) after it had come to me. And Shaitan (Satan) is to man ever a deserter in the hour of need.”** (TMQ, 25:27-29). Sure, their bad friends deserted them, and Satan who used to stimulate them, actually abandoned them.

Between the ayahs describing the disbelievers and those talking about their fate lies a calming ayah, **“The dwellers of Paradise (i.e. those who deserved it through their Islamic Monotheistic Faith and their deeds of righteousness) will, on that Day, have the best abode, and have the fairest of places for repose.”** (TMQ, 25:24).

Beware of deserting the Qur’an

Then there is a serious complaint against whoever deserts the Qur’an: **“ And the Messenger (Muhammad SAWS) will say: “O my Lord! Verily, my people deserted this Qur’an (neither listened to it, nor acted on its laws and teachings)”** (TMQ, 25:30). Beware of deserting the Qur’an, because it is your way to differentiate between right and wrong, between darkness and light and between belief and disbelief.

The disbelief of the polytheist has no limits. They search for any possible reason to proceed in the way they do. They refute the gradual revelation of the Qur’an,” **And those who disbelieve say: “Why is not the Qur’an revealed to him all at once?”** (TMQ, 25:32). But Allah (SWT) answers them in the most magnificent way: **“Thus (it is sent down in parts), that We may strengthen your heart thereby. And We have revealed it to you gradually, in stages. (It was revealed to the Prophet SAWS in 23 years.)”** (TMQ, 25:32). So this ayah answers the disbelievers’ pretension, and strengthens the Prophet’s heart at the same time.

The ayahs go on in the same pattern we explained before: Mentioning one kind of disbelief, and then mentioning its fate and meanwhile calming the Prophet (SAWS). One of the kinds of disbelief is shown in the following ayah: **“And when they see you (O Muhammad SAWS), they treat you only in mockery (saying): “Is this the one whom Allah has sent as a Messenger?”** (TMQ, 25:41). Consequently, the ayahs support the Prophet (SAWS) and present Allah’s promise to assist him, **“And no example or similitude do they bring (to oppose or to find fault in you or**

in this Qur'an), but We reveal to you the truth (against that similitude or example), and the better explanation thereof.” (TMQ, 25:33). The ayahs, afterwards, warn against the fate of disbelievers, **“Those who will be gathered to Hell (prone) on their faces, such will be in an evil state, and most astray from the (Straight) Path.” (TMQ, 25:34).**

The main reason for disbelief

Some people may wonder why is all this disbelief and fabrication? The answer is provided in ayah 43. This central ayah states that the reason for disbelief is following one's desires: he who follows his desires always says that it is the fault of others, never his **“Have you (O Muhammad SAWS) seen him who has taken as his ilah (god) his own vain desire? Would you then be a Wakil (a disposer of his affairs or a watcher) over him?” (TMQ, 25:43).** What can you do for this kind of person who has worshipped his own desires instead of Allah (SWT)? Such acts nullify his mind and spoil his nature. Would you then be a Wakil (supporter or defender) over him?

Have you not seen how your Lord spread the shadow?

The Surah continues with the same rhythm: showing the types of polytheists' disbelief, indicating their fates, then calming and supporting the Prophet (SAWS). It then manifests the signs of Allah (SWT) in the universe. What is magnificent in the Qur'an is that if the Surah speaks about the signs of Allah (SWT) in the universe, the ayahs will not be dispersed. On the contrary, they will suit the general theme of the Surah. In the same way, and as we've mentioned before, the Prophets' stories come in a Surah to serve its objective.

What do we see in Surat Al-Furqan? The dominant theme of the Surah is disbelieving the Prophet (SAWS), while its purpose is supporting and calming the Prophet. Here comes a wonderful sign in the universe to serve this purpose: **“Have you not seen how your Lord spread the shadow. If He willed, He could have made it still”(TMQ, 25:45).** This ayah connotes that He who spreads the shadow as a mercy for His worshippers, is able to shade them with His mercy, and save them from the harm that results from the disbelievers' denial. The spread of shadow provides tranquility and peace to the hearts of the believers because the Creator who has created perfectly these signs backs them up.

Night of mercy

After that, Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as: **“And it is He Who makes the night a covering for you, and the sleep (as) a repose, and makes the day Nushur (i.e. getting up and going about here and there for daily work, after one's sleep at night, or like resurrection after one's death)”(TMQ, 25:47).** The choice of the night is done on purpose: it indeed throws shadows of tranquility and mercy. Then Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as: **“And it is He Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy (rain); and We send down pure water from the sky. That We may give life thereby to a dead land.”(TMQ, 25:48-49).** We see here that Allah's (SWT) signs in the universe: wind and rain promise

believers of Allah's (*SWT*) mercy, purifies them and enlivens their hearts. This attenuates the contempt and denial they are suffering from.

The apex of disbelief

After the disbelievers' denial of the Prophet (*SAWS*) and the Qur'an, the ayahs take us before the end of this Surah to an extreme kind of disbelief. They disbelieve in Allah The Most Gracious **"And when it is said to them: "Prostrate yourselves to the Most Gracious (Allah)! They say: "And what is the Most Gracious? Shall we fall down in prostration to that which you (O Muhammad *SAWS*) command us?" And it increases in them only aversion. "(TMQ, 25:60).** This is the top of impoliteness towards Allah (*SWT*) and the ayahs answer them in a very wonderful manner; not by telling them who is The Most Gracious, but by describing his slaves: **"And the (faithful) slaves of the Most Gracious (Allah)".** This is to let them know The Most Gracious through the qualities of the believers. This is an honour and a support from Allah (*SWT*) to the believers, as if He is saying to those obstinate disbelievers: Ask them about The Most Gracious.

The believers honored by Allah

Answering the polytheists in this manner is the greatest honor for The Most Gracious's slaves. Their qualities represent a grace from the Most Gracious. Allah says in what can be translated as : **"And the (faithful) slaves of the Most Gracious (Allah) are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness, and when the foolish address them (with bad words) they reply back with mild words of gentleness. And those who spend the night in worship of their Lord, prostrate and standing. And those who say: "Our Lord! Avert from us the torment of Hell. Verily its torment is ever an inseparable, permanent punishment. Evil indeed it (Hell) is as an abode and as a place to rest in. And those who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but hold a medium (way) between those (extremes). And those who invoke not any other *ilah* (god) along with Allah, nor kill such person as Allah has forbidden, except for just cause, nor commit illegal sexual intercourse - and whoever does this shall receive the punishment. The torment will be doubled to him on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein in disgrace. Except those who repent and believe (in Islamic Monotheism), and do righteous deeds; for those, Allah will change their sins into good deeds, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And whosoever repents and does righteous good deeds; then verily, he repents towards Allah with true repentance. And those who do not bear witness to falsehood, and if they pass by some evil play or evil talk, they pass by it with dignity. And those who, when they are reminded of the Ayat (proofs, evidence, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of their Lord, fall not deaf and blind thereat. And those who say: "Our Lord! Bestow on us from our wives and our offspring the comfort of our eyes, and make us leaders of the Mutaqueen (the pious). "(TMQ, 25:63-74).** The Ayah **"and make us leaders of the Mutaqueen (the pious)"** signifies that the Muslim's wish to be a leader is a requested good thing (without loving headship or greed for life) in order to be an *imam* (leader) for believers and one who helps them achieve piety. One of the splendors of the previous ayah is that it equally relates to the slaves' excellence in worship and in good manners. You see a clear sequence: the characteristics related to worship, then those related to manners. This connotation is

made throughout the Surah to assert that those who deserve the title: **“slaves of The Most Gracious”** do not separate between acts of worship and good manners.

As for you, who denied The Most Gracious, I would like to invite you to listen to what Allah (*SWT*) says at the end of the Surah: **“Say (O Muhammad SAWS to the disbelievers): “My Lord pays attention to you only because of your invocation to Him. But now you have indeed denied (Him). So the torment will be yours for ever (inseparable, permanent punishment).”(TMQ, 25:77).** Hence, we find that the ayahs of Surat Al-Furqan always sets a clear borderline between right and wrong, while referring to members of each party. They differentiate between the believers’ bliss with Allah’s (*SWT*) support for them, and the hell of the disbelievers who are threatened with severe torment.

Surat Ash-Shu'ara (The Poets)

This Surah is Makkan. It was revealed after Surat Al-Waqi-ah, and it comes after Surat Al-Furqan in the order of the Qur'an. The number of its Ayahs is 227.

Narrate on my behalf even one ayah

Surat Ash-Shu'ara is about the importance of conveying the message to people through the best effective means. In the time of Prophet *Musa* (Moses), the means was magic, and at the age of Prophet Mohammad (*SAWS*), it was poetry and poets (hence comes the name of the Surah).

This Surah was revealed in a time when the Muslims needed to learn the methods of information and communication. The beginning of the public preaching of the message of Islam had then begun. The Prophet (*SAWS*) stood on Al-Safa Mountain and announced that the call to Islam had to be done publicly for the first time in Makkah. In this way, the Surah shows clearly the importance of the means of communication and information in the process of Da'wa (Calling to Allah and Islam).

The danger of audible speech

Media is a double-edged sword. It is used either to mislead people or to guide them. For this reason, Allah (*SWT*) ended the Surah saying what can be translated as: **“As for the poets, the erring ones follow them, See you not that they speak about every subject (praising people - right or wrong) in their poetry? And that they say what they do not do. Except those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah - Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous deeds, and remember Allah much, and vindicate themselves after they have been wronged (by replying back in poetry to the unjust poetry (which the pagan poets utter against the Muslims)). And those who do wrong will come to know by what overturning they will be overturned”**(TMQ, 26:224-227).

Poets in the time of Prophet (*SAWS*) or Media in our current time may mislead people and prevent them from worshipping Allah (*SWT*). On the other hand, they may give people the right information about religion and hence guide them to righteousness. Therefore, preachers to Allah's (*SWT*) way should use these means, the role of which grows in our age.

Keys of the hearts

As we have seen before, the Prophets' (*SAWS*) stories come in a Surah to serve its objective. When the Surah spoke about Prophet *Musa* (*AS*), it stated how he had feared his words might not produce the desired impact on his people. He said **“And my breast straitens, and my tongue expresses not well. So send for Harun (Aaron) (to come along with me)”**. (TMQ, 26:13). All Prophets (*SAWS*) stories that came in the Surah were focusing on the dialogue of the Prophet (*SAWS*) with his people. This is what we find in the stories of *Musa* (*AS*), *Ibrahim* (Abraham) (*AS*), *Noah* (*AS*), *Hud* (*AS*), *Saleh* (*AS*), *Loot* (*AS*) and *Shu'aib* (*AS*). We find the focus on “he said and they said”. The style of the dialogues in the Surah is wonderful. It prepares the Prophet (*SAWS*) to begin the stage of public preaching, which was

declared clearly in Ayah 214 **“And warn your tribe (O Muhammad SAWS) of near kindred”**.

Masterpieces of media dialogues

For example, the dialogue of Prophet Musa (SAWS) with *Firaawn* is a wonderful style of dialogue, **“And go both of you to Fir’aun (Pharaoh), and say: ‘We are the Messengers of the Lord of the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists), so allow the Children of Israel to go with us. (Fir’aun (Pharaoh)) said (to Musa): ‘Did we not bring you up among us as a child? And you did dwell many years of your life with us. And you did your deed, which you did (i.e. the crime of killing a man) while you were one of the ingrates’”(TMQ, 26:16-19)**. A great accusation made by *Fir’aun* against Musa (SAWS). What should be the answers of preachers to Allah’s (SWT) way in such a situation? **“Musa said: ‘I did it then, when I was ignorant (as regards my Lord and His Message). So I fled from you when I feared you. But my Lord has granted me Hukm (i.e. religious knowledge, right judgment of the affairs and Prophet hood), and made me one of the Messengers’”(TMQ, 26:20-21)**. He no longer cares about the accusation made in the past as he moves from defense to attack saying: **“And this is the past favor with which you reproach me: that you have enslaved the Children of Israel”. (TMQ, 26:22)**.

Here the exchange of accusations comes to an end, and a preaching dialogue starts. Listen with me to these Ayahs, **“Fir’aun (Pharaoh) said: ‘And what is the Lord of the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)? (Musa) said: ‘The Lord of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, if you seek to be convinced with certainty.’”(TMQ, 26:23-24)**. **“Fir’aun (Pharaoh) said to those around: ‘Do you not hear (what he says)? (Musa) said: ‘Your Lord and the Lord of your ancient fathers!’”(TMQ, 26:25-26)**.

“(Fir’aun (Pharaoh)) said: ‘Verily, your Messenger who has been sent to you is a madman!’” (Musa) said: ‘Lord of the east and the west, and all that is between them, if you did but understand!’”(TMQ, 26:27-28).

We see that Prophet Musa (AS) lengthens his answer to the question **“And what is the Lord of the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)?”(TMQ, 26:23)** in order to affect the audience without giving much attention to the absurd attitudes of *Fir’aun* after the first question.

The role of media in the story of Musa (AS)

In the same story, we notice Prophet Musa’s (AS) desire to affect people in the best possible way, where he says to *Fir’aun*, **“(Musa) said: ‘Even if I bring you something manifest (and convincing)?”(TMQ, 26:30)**. What does that mean? It was magic, which was the best means to affect people in the time of Prophet Musa (AS) as we have said (exactly as the role of poets in the time of Prophet (SAWS) or the role of media personnel in our time).

Also we see how the ‘party of the Wrong’ (*Fir’aun* and his soldiers) also focuses on feeding public opinion. Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as **“They said: ‘Put**

him off and his brother (for a while), and send callers to the cities”. (TMQ, 26:36). They want this confrontation to be public “ And it was said to the people: “Are you (too) going to assemble?”(TMQ, 26:39).

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and the preaching dialogue

In Prophet Ibrahim’s (SAWS) story, we find another style of dialogue, which the Surah teaches us. He starts with a rational dialogue in confronting them saying: “**He said: “Do they hear you, when you call on (them)? Or do they benefit you or do they harm (you)?”**(TMQ, 26:72-73). Because their reply was weak, he says: “**He said: “Do you observe that which you have been worshipping - You and your ancient fathers? Verily they are enemies to me, save the Lord of the ‘Alamin (mankind, jinn and all that exists)”**(TMQ, 26:75-77).

When Prophet Ibrahim (SAWS) mentions Allah the Great and Almighty, he elaborates by mentioning the attributes of Allah (SWT) “**Who has created me, and it is He Who guides me. And it is He Who feeds me and gives me to drink. And when I am ill, it is He who cures me. And Who will cause me to die, and then will bring me to life (again). And Who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the Day of Recompense, (the Day of Resurrection)”**. (TMQ, 26:78-82).

Because the Qur’an is the core of the Prophet’s (SAWS) preaching, we find that the Ayahs that spoke about the Qur’an in the Surah, show how it considerably affect people. At the very the beginning, we read Allah (SWT) saying what can be translated as “**These are the Verses of the manifest Book (this Qur’an)**.”(TMQ, 26:2).

At the end of the Surah, and after the stories of the Prophets (Peace be upon them all), Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as: “**In the plain Arabic language”**. (TMQ, Surat Ash-Shuara 195). The language and rhetoric used should be suitable for the context in which the people lived. Hence, Allah (SWT) says what can be translated as: “**And if We had revealed it (this Qur’an) unto any of the non-Arabs, and he had recited it unto them, they would not have believed in it”**. (TMQ, 26:198-199).

The Ayahs of the Surah are very clear in guiding Muslims and callers to the way of Allah (SWT) to use the best and clearest means for preaching in any given time and place.

Media devoted for the cause of Allah (SWT)

Dear Muslim brother, when you read Surat Ash-Shu’ara, always remember that media should be one of the means used in preaching, it should not be used to promote sins, temptations and fornication; this is the Surah’s first message for mass media. The second one is addressed to the whole *Ummah* (Nation), especially callers to the way of Allah (SWT): that is by using the more influential ways in their address to people, taking as a model the distinguished dialogue of Allah’s (SWT) apostles with their people within the Surah.

The Surah was called Ash-Shu’ara, in order to use the best means in performing *Da’wa* (Call to Allah). In addition, the Surah cautions against using double-edged means (media being one of them) in disobeying Allah (SWT). Instead, they should be

used to obey Him. Let the Prophets Ibrahim (AS), Musa (AS), and Mohammad (SAWS) be our examples in the way their distinguished and influential dialogues guide people.

Surat An-Naml (The Ant)

Surat An-Naml is a Makkan. It comes after Surat Ash-Shu'ara both in the order of revelation and in the order of the Qur'an. It consists of 93 ayahs

Surah of civilization excellence

Surat An-Naml talks about the civilization excellence : it evokes the idea that Muslims should own a powerful civilization through science, technology, military and material power in order to defend and protect Allah's (SWT) religion. The Surah addresses those who believe that Islam is only about praying, shedding tears (symbolizing submission to and fear from Allah) and reciting Qur'an. These acts are important, yet they should be associated with the means that enable Muslims to lead the world and manage it in accordance with Allah's (SWT) methodology. Moreover, Muslims' civilization excellence, scientific and technological progress help in Da'wa (call to Allah) (by encouraging people to embrace Islam). Da'wa produces much more impact on people than if the Muslims were in a situation of failure. In brief, the Surah tells the *Ummah* (nation) of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), you will not gain the respect of other nations nor will you play a leading role unless you have civilization excellence and catch up with state-of-the-art-technology.

Thus, we notice that every Qur'anic Surah conveys a clear message to Muslims, completing the Qur'anic Surahs exhibition of Allah's (SWT) Method and showing us how the Qur'an Surahs are connected to one another to form an integral structure. After Surat Ash-Shu'ara, which highlights the pivotal role that media plays, comes Surat An-Naml, which underlines the importance of civilization excellence. Both serve the same goal, which is the importance of civilization excellence and the use of all the means in this world (material or technological) for the Muslims to reach supremacy and to be influential in relation to other civilizations.

The successful establishment

The symbol of civilization excellence in this Surah is Solaiman (AS) (Solomon) and his kingdom, which combined faith and success in life. Such establishment corresponds to what is known today as a multinational company, it employs different types of creatures: people, Jinn, birds, ants and animals. Let us then consider the details of civilization excellence in Solaiman's (AS) kingdom and how the story, in its exacting detail treat the different aspects and dimensions of civilization excellence and success in life:

1. Underlining the importance of knowledge

“And indeed We already brought Dawud (David) and Solaiman (Solomon) knowledge...” (TMQ, 27:15). There is no superiority without science. A Muslim student cannot serve Islam unless he/she was successful in his studies at school and university because this is the essence of Islam. **“And they (both) said, “Praise be to Allah, Who has graced us over many of His believing bondmen.” (TMQ, 27:15).** Favored them with what? With knowledge of course and He also gave them another favor, which is recognizing the value of the grace of knowledge and thanking Allah (SWT) for it. The nation whose students cheat

in order to pass the exams and obtain degrees and certificates do not appreciate the value of knowledge, it can never be revived or compete with other nations.

2. Passing on to successive generations

“And Solaiman was Dawud’s heir.” (TMQ, 27: 16) so that success would not be restricted to a certain generation. It should rather be inherited and preserved by successive generations to guarantee the persistence of superiority and the compiling of experiences within the establishment.

3. Mastering languages

“...he said, “O you mankind, we have been taught the language (Literally: the manner of pronunciation) of (the) birds,” (TMQ, 27: 16). Mastering foreign languages facilitates communication and interaction with others from other civilizations.

4. Abundance of potentials

“...and we have been brought (much) of everything; surely this is indeed the evident Grace.” (TMQ, 27:16). Solaiman’s (AS) kingdom had been granted human and natural resources and it did its best to preserve and develop them.

5. Clever administration right management

“And his hosts were mustered to Solaiman,” (TMQ, 27: 17) Sulaiman’s (AS) great kingdom was rather a multinational company or say a “multi-creature” company. All creatures are there **“of the jinn and humankind and birds. So they were duly dispensed.” (TMQ, 27: 17).** It was composed of humans, jinns, birds, animals, and many other creatures. The word ‘marshaled’, denotes the huge number and the variety of such soldiers. Accurate organization and job description is clear in Allah’s (SWT) words in what can be translated as, **“So they were duly dispensed.” (TMQ, 27:17).** All creatures play their roles in accordance with their skills and potentials.

6. Training

“Till, when they came up to the Valley of Ants,” (TMQ, 27:19) what is the relationship between this journey to the ant’s valley and Solaiman (AS), his soldiers and the order of his kingdom? Such a company trains its staff; Solaiman (AS) trains them takes them to different places. The holy ayah describes part of their training. During their tour, they reached the valley of the ants, where a dialogue between the ant and its companions took place, **“... an ant said, “O you ants, enter your dwellings so that Solaiman and his hosts would not definitely crush you, (while) they are not aware.” (TMQ, 27: 18).**

7. Strictness and determination

The Surah depicts strictness and determination in dealing with members in Solaiman’s (AS) institution. The call is made before each meeting. The ayah can be translated as, **“And he reviewed the birds; then he said, “What is it with me that I do not see the hoopoe? Or is he among the absent? Indeed I will definitely**

torment him with a strict torment or indeed I will definitely slay him, or indeed he should definitely come up to me with an evident, all-binding authority.” (TMQ, 27: 20, 21). Solaiman (AS) not only asked where the hoopoe was but asked also for the reason for his absence which, in fact, shows how orderly was the kingdom. The hoopoe is a tiny soldier; his absence doesn't really affect the army's power but violates the discipline in Solaiman's kingdom and should thus be strictly reprimanded.

Members devotion to the mission

Solaiman's (AS) story reveals that the kingdom members are not less devoted to their mission than their king. The hoopoe flew from Palestine to Yemen to gather information about a kingdom that worshipped the sun instead of Allah (SWT), he stood before the king in boldness and said what can be translated as, **“I have encompassed that which you have not encompassed,”** (TMQ, 27: 22) he had studied the situation very well and brought accurate and true information, **“and I have come to thee from Saba to you with a tiding of certitude.”** (TMQ, 27: 22) then he continues his speech about the kingdom he saw: **“Surely I found a woman ruling over them, (Literally: a wife possessing them) and she has been brought (much) of everything, and she has a magnificent throne. I found her and her people prostrating to the sun, apart from Allah; and Ash-Shaytan (The ever-vicious, i.e., the Devil) has adorned (i.e., made attractive) their deeds to them, so has barred them from the way, so that they are not guided,** (TMQ, 27: 23, 24). He does not behave as a normal employee; rather he felt that he was responsible for the company's mission, its affairs and its goal. He wondered in agony and jealousy, **“So that they do not prostrate (themselves) to Allah, Who brings out what is hidden in the heavens and the earth. And He knows whatever you conceal and whatever you make public.”** (TMQ, 27: 25).

Then he remembered that he had said about the queen in what can be translated as, **“she has a magnificent throne”** so he quickly add what can be translated as, **“Allah, there is no god except He, The Lord of the Magnificent Throne.”** (TMQ, 27: 26). If only we had in the nation of Mohammad (SAWS) a thousand hoopoes like Solaiman's (AS). A hoopoe, positive in his actions, devoted to his nation and feeling responsibility towards it.

Accuracy in conveying information

The ayahs continue to display the pleasant dialogue between the hoopoe and Solaiman (AS) **“(Solaiman) said, “We will soon look whether you have (spoken) sincerely or whether you are among the liars.”** (TMQ, 27: 27). This means that the information brought was analyzed and examined although the hoopoe told Solaiman (AS) before, **“...and I have come from Sabato to you with a tiding of certitude.”** (TMQ, 27: 22) but the successful company must scrutinize and check the information validity before any decision-making. **“Go with this book (i.e., letter) of mine, then cast it to them; thereafter turn away from them, (and) so look what (answer) they return.”** (TMQ, 27: 28). Thus Solaiman (AS) examined the people of that kingdom. Muslims should learn from Solaiman's (AS) kingdom what success, organization and knowledge really means.

Shoorah (consultation) is the pivot of success

On the other hand, there is another example of success in the kingdom of Sheba. The reason behind its success is the queen's consultation of the people; she does not take any decision without consulting them. This ayah can be translated as, **"She said, "O you chiefs, pronounce to me concerning my command; in no way have I affirmed (Literally: cutting) a command until you bear witness." (TMQ, 27: 32).** Although the queen did not embrace the right religion of Allah (*SWT*), she used an important element in the fields of administration and management which is consultation. Their response was in what can be translated as, **"They said, "We are endowed with power, and we are endowed with strict violence, (i.e., we are strong and able to fight) and the command (rests) with you; so look into what you command (us)." (TMQ, 27:33).** Unlike the determined hoopoe who was precise in his judgment and decision concerning the case he is dedicated for, Sheba's army was indecisive. Compare that to an army within which a member says what can be translated as, **"I have encompassed that which you have not encompassed," (TMQ, 27: 22)** which is the essence of consultation and victory, and an army within which a member says what can be translated as, **"...and the command (rests) with you; so look into what you command (us)." (TMQ, 27: 33).**

Divine civilization

The Queen of Sheba wanted to examine the real intentions of Solaiman (*AS*) in what can be translated as, **"And surely I am sending to them a present, so I am waiting to look into what the emissaries return with." (TMQ, 27: 35).** However Solaiman (*AS*) became angry and said what can be translated as, **"Would you supply me with wealth? Then what Allah has brought me is more charitable (i.e., better) than what He has brought you. No indeed, (but) you exult with your present." (TMQ, 27: 36).** He undertakes a divine mission and he does not seek to accumulate riches. He did not use the means of success and civilization excellence to oppress nations and rob wealth but he wished to use it to convey Allah's (*SWT*) message to all people.

Technological excellence

Solaiman's kingdom had an unequal military power in what can be translated as, **"Return to them. So indeed we will definitely come up against them with hosts they cannot withstand (Literally: of no withstanding). Indeed, we will definitely drive them out there from humiliated, and they will be (utterly) belittled." (TMQ, 27: 37).** The ayah reflects the elements of civilization excellence that Solaiman's (*AS*) kingdom excelled in, such as : efficient management and strong military power. There is also another important element, which lead to the astonishment of the Queen of Sheba and her embracing Islam.

Her throne arrived before her

As soon as Solaiman (*AS*) knew that the queen was coming to negotiate with him he asked his soldiers to bring him her throne, as stated in the ayah that can be translated as, **"He said, "O you chiefs, whichever one of you will come up to me with (i.e., bring) her throne before they come up to me as Muslims?" (Or: in surrender). (TMQ, 27:38).** A jinn and a man of knowledge competed to bring the throne as

quickly as possible. Such a religious kingdom controlled and the whole earth and attained supremacy.

When the Queen arrived she was asked what can be translated as, **“Is your throne just like this?”** (TMQ, 27: 42) **“She said, “ (It is) as though it were the (very) one.”** (TMQ, 27:42). She replied in a diplomatic and ambiguous way so that she would not seem not to recognize her throne, which was looking slightly different, and not to take the risk to say it’s hers and thus be considered as a liar. Wonders strongly affected her heart and rendered her ready to accept Islam.

The power of science led her to embrace Islam

Ayah (44) comes at the end of Solaiman’s story to sum its core and its objective. One should actually listen to it by feeling it with one’s heart and mind. This is made clear in what can be translated as, **“Enter the tower.” Then as soon as she saw it, she reckoned it a pool, and she uncovered both her shanks.”** (TMQ, 27: 44) She did so because the palace was built on water and its entrance was covered with glass so she tucked up her skirt, as she was afraid of getting wet. **“He said, “Surely it is a tower smoothed of crystal.”“** (TMQ, 27:44). Thanks to Solaiman’s kingdom full grasp of technology of that age his palace was steady on the surface of the water and its reception was covered with transparent glass. So pure was the glass that the Queen pulled up her dress lest it should get wet. Amazed by such outstanding capabilities and civilization excellence, the Queen embraced Islam. as stated in what can be translated as, **“She said, “Lord! Surely I have done injustice to myself, and I (now) surrender (i.e., I am a Muslim) with Solaiman to Allah, The Lord of the worlds.”**(TMQ, 27: 44).

Pharaoh and the civilization excellence

Just before the story of Solaiman (AS), the Surah briefly depicted, along seven ayahs, how Pharaoh and his people rejected Musa’s (AS) message because Musa (AS) did not possess such aspects of civilization that Solaiman (AS) had. This is revealed in the ayah which can be translated as, **“Then as soon as Our signs came to them, a beholding, (i.e., as a proof from Allah) they said, “This is evident sorcery.”** (TMQ, 27: 13). This is to stress the influential power of development and science and that people follow whosoever possesses knowledge and technology.

Elements of Civilization Excellence

The Sublime Target

It is clearly manifested in Solaiman’s (AS) words, **“Lord! Dispense me to thank (You) for Your favor wherewith You have favored me and (both) my parents, and to do righteousness that satisfies You, and cause me to enter by Your mercy, among Your righteous bondmen.”** (TMQ, 27: 19). And in his words, **“This is of the Grace of my Lord that He may try me, whether I thank (Him) or be ungrateful”** (TMQ, 27: 40). He thanked Allah (SWT) for such blessings by using them to spread faith on earth.

Knowledge

“And indeed We already brought Dawud (David) and Solaiman (Solomon) knowledge” (TMQ, 27: 15). As there is no civilization without knowledge and scientific excellence and what is more important is their perception of the value of knowledge.

State- of-the-Art Technology

“It was said to her, “Enter the tower.” Then as soon as she saw it, she reckoned it a pool, and she uncovered both her shanks.” (TMQ, 27: 44).

Strong Military Power

“Return to them. So indeed we will definitely come up against them with hosts they cannot withstand” (TMQ, 27: 37).

Feeling of responsibility

The hoopoe’s journey to the kingdom of Sheba for the sake of *Da’wa* (missionary activity) is a perfect example.

Looking back at the previous elements, how many of them do our Islamic nation possess? I would like to ask the readers of the Qur’an: what have you done to build up a successful nation like that of Solaiman (AS)?

Allah’s might and power is always superior

The brilliance of the Qur’an, in its presenting of the elements of civilization excellence is quite obvious in Surat An-Naml. Although the Surah focuses on substantial means and elements of success, it uses miracles as examples: A fluently speaking hoopoe and a wise ant that advises its companions. Moreover there are Solaiman’s (AS) words in what can be translated as, **“we have been taught the language of birds,” (TMQ, 27: 16).** By the end of the Surah Allah (SWT) the Almighty says what can be translated as, **“And when the Saying befalls them, We will bring out for them from the earth a beast that will speak to them that mankind had no certitude in Our signs.” (TMQ, 27: 82).** Miracles are mentioned abundantly in the Surah so that people may not be utterly materialistic in adopting means of progress and civilization excellence. The Surah seems to be warning man against being completely taken away by civilization, forgetting that only Allah (SWT) grants such success and that there are other reasons for development linked to faith and the unseen other than what came in the Surah.

Can there be another god besides Allah (SWT)?

The Surah then shifts from talking about civilization excellence to displaying Allah’s (SWT) power in the universe so that man may not be lured by civilization, forgets his God and live a materialistic life, void of soul as in the western civilization. We find wonderful Ayahs that warmly address the heart and awaken it from its slumber to get acquainted with his Lord.

Say, **“Praise be to Allah, and peace be on His bondmen whom He has elected.” Is Allah Most Charitable, or whatever they associate (with Him)? (TMQ, 27:59) .**

“Is not He the (Most Charitable) Who created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you from the heaven water? So We caused to grow therewith-enclosed orchards, full (Literally: owing, comprising) of delight. In no way can you germinate its trees. Is there a god with Allah? No indeed, (but) they are a people who (unjustly) set up equals to Him.” (TMQ, 27: 60).

The beauty and order in the world’s creation surpasses any civilization excellence **“Is not He (Most Charitable) Who made the earth a residence, and made amidst it rivers, and made for it anchorages, (i.e., firm mountains) and made a partition between the two seas? Is there a god with Allah? No indeed, (but) most of them do not know.” (TMQ, 27: 61).**

Don’t be proud of your power and strength, Man: **Is not He (Most Charitable) Who answers the constrained person when he invokes Him, and lifts off odious (happenings) and makes you successors of the earth? Is there a god with Allah? Little is that of which you are mindful. (TMQ, 27: 62).**

Is not He (Most Charitable) Who guides you in the darkness’s of the land and the sea and Who sends the winds, bearing good tidings before (Literally: between the two Hands of) His mercy? Is there a god with Allah? Supremely Exalted be Allah above whatever they associate (with Him). Is not He (Most Charitable) Who begins creation, (and) thereafter He brings it back again, and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth? Is there a god with Allah? Say, “Offer your proof, in case you are sincere.” (TMQ, 27: 63-64).

Thus, balance is established between civilization excellence and faith in Allah (SWT), the Owner of the universe who has indeed power and authority over everything.

Why call it “the ants”?

Although the ants were mentioned in only one ayah, the Surah, which tackles civilization excellence, was called An-Naml (ants), why? The ants’ kingdom give an example of civilization excellence in a nation of insects, which possesses all means of development: building storehouses, organizing their armies, as well as exits and entrances. They even use centralized air conditioning systems in their dwellings. It is an organized nation, which has surpassed other nations through science and technology and became worthy of being mentioned in the Qur’an as a model of civilization excellence.

People usually belittle ants, so Allah (SWT) chose them as an example and ordered us to imitate them. Every time one reads the Surah, one may be reminded of how this tiny weak insect could achieve such progress and over stepped many insects while you Muslim left other civilizations to over step you?

The ant’s wisdom and positiveness

Amazingly, the core ayah of the Surah (the ayah where the ant addresses its fellow ants) contained marvelous notes about civilization to be learned from a small ant in what can be translated as, **“Till, when they came up to the Valley of Ants, an ant said, “O you ants, enter your dwellings so that Solaiman and his hosts would not definitely crush you, (while) they are not aware.” (TMQ, 27:18).**

The ant positively addressed its companions and did not flee although it risked dying under the feet of Solaiman’s (AS) soldiers. Its care for its companions exceeded its fear for her life. Moreover, its speech contained marvelous hints at the qualities of leadership and management. It told them what to do before warning them against the danger so that they may not panic (**get into your habitations**), then she expressed the problem and type of danger they are facing lest Solaiman (AS) and his hosts crush you (under foot). People in times of danger don’t think and this causes lot of damages. Thus, the efficient leader had to give the solution before describing the problem so that the people would grasp his directives while being in a calm state of mind to accept orders and carry them out.

It also knew Solaiman’s (AS) reputation, it assured its companions that Solaiman (AS) and his soldiers could never intentionally harm them in what can be translated as, **“without knowing it.” (TMQ, 27:18).** This was why Solaiman (AS) smiled when he heard it. This little ant is a good example of leadership in emergencies, which marks civilization excellence.

Surat Al-Qasas (The Narrative)

This Surah is Makkan, yet some of its ayahs were revealed during hijra (Prophet Muhammad's (SAWS) emigration from Makkah to Madinah). It comes after Surat An-Naml both in the order of the Qur'an and that of revelation. It consists of 88 ayahs.

Serious moments

Some of the ayahs of the Surah were revealed when Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was migrating from Makkah to Madinah with tears in his eyes for leaving it and saying: "Allah knows that you are the most beloved country to my heart, had it not been that your people expelled me, I wouldn't have ever left you".

In such difficult circumstances, Surat Al-Qasas was revealed to give the Prophet (SAWS) and the believers' important guidelines on Da'wa.

A Prophet's experience

The main topic of Surat Al-Qasas is the story of Musa (AS) focusing on certain aspects of his story: His birth, being thrown in the river, being raised in Pharaoh's palace, leaving Egypt to Madyan, his marriage to Shu'aib's (Jethro) (AS) daughter, his return to his homeland after ten years, his victory over Pharaoh. The whole Surah is a comment on all those stories and another story which is that of Qaroon (Korah).

It is noteworthy that Surat Al-Qasas, unlike the other Surahs, is the only one in the Qur'an which focuses on Musa's (AS) life away from the Children of Israel. Thus, what is the aim of the Surah? And what is the link between the events of Musa's (AS) story and Prophet Muhammad's (SAWS) hijra?

For We shall restore him to thee...will bring thee, back to the place of return

The Surah addresses Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) while leaving Mecca assuring him that he will return to it victoriously after leaving it secretly. There is an analogy between Allah's (SWT) promise to Musa's (AS) mother in the ayah which can be translated as, "**For We shall restore him to thee, and We shall make him one of Our Messengers**" (TMQ, 28: 7) and Allah's (SWT) promise to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) in what can be translated as, "**Verily He Who ordained the Qur'an for thee, will bring thee, back to the Place of Return. Say: "My Lord knows best who it is that brings true guidance, and who is in manifest error."**" (TMQ, 28: 85). The story of Musa (AS) starts from ayah 7 with Allah's (SWT) promise for Musa's (AS) mother, which was fulfilled by the end of the story. Then came the promise to the Prophet (SAWS) that Allah will bring him back to Makkah victorious although he left it secretly and Allah (SWT) used the same word (bring back) in the promise as if He wants to say: That He who has fulfilled his promise to Musa and his mother will bring you back to Makkah victorious.

The objective of the Surah, hence, is to trust Allah's (SWT) promise and to be cocksure that it will come true no doubt no matter how long it takes or how difficult circumstances are.

A promise

On the one hand, Musa (AS) had left Egypt for eight years and added two years as she got married with Shu 'aib's daughter. Shu'aib then told him what can be translated as, **"I intended to wed one of these my daughters to thee, on condition that thou serve me for eight years; but if thou complete ten years, it will be (grace) from thee. But I intend not to place thee under a difficulty: thou wilt find me, indeed, if Allah wills, one of the righteous."** (TMQ, 28: 27). Consequently, he then returned to Egypt after ten years. Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), on the other hand, victoriously conquered Makkah eight years after hijra and the Mission of Islam was completed in the tenth year. Both promises are the same and were fulfilled in exactly the same interval of time and under the same difficult conditions. Musa (AS) fearfully left Egypt as he was warned in what can be translated as, **"the Chiefs are taking counsel together about thee, to slay thee so get thee away, for I do give thee sincere advice"** (TMQ, 28: 20). Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) secretly left Makkah by night after the disbelievers had conspired to kill him.

Such similar incidents raise a question : Are we really confident about Allah's (SWT) victory? Allah (SWT) promised us that He will grant us victory in what can be translated as, **"Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion, the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: `They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me.' If any do reject Faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked."** (TMQ, 24: 55). It is a promise among many of Allah's promises (SWT) like this one which can be translated as, **"for We shall restore him to thee"** (TMQ, 28: 7) and that one which can be translated as **"and Verily He Who ordained the Qur'an for thee, will bring thee, back to the Place of Return."** (TMQ, 28: 85) It is a promise made by Allah (SWT) and will be fulfilled just like the above cited ones (even if it takes eight or ten years or even more). After reading Surat Al-Qasas, do we really have faith that Allah (SWT) will grant us victory?

The cost of Da'wa

The fulfillment of Allah's (SWT) promise requires many sacrifices and self-struggle on the side of the *Da'ia* (the one who makes Da'wa). That is why the Surah pointed out the change in the place of Da'wa as in the story of Musa (AS) and the Prophet (SAWS) which is clear in the ayah which can be translated as, **"They say: `If we were to follow the guidance with thee, we should be snatched away from our land.'"** (TMQ, 28: 57). The road of da'wa is not an easy one because it is full of sacrifices and leaving the homeland

But at its end there is glory and victory.

The will of Allah (SWT) the will of falsehood

One may learn from Surat Al-Qasas how to trust Allah's (*SWT*) promise. In the third ayah only the believers were addressed because they are the ones who believe in Allah's (*SWT*) promise in what can be translated as, **"We rehearse to thee some of the story of Musa and Fir'aun in Truth, for people who believe"** (TMQ, 28: 3). In the fourth ayah we find out that Musa (*AS*) and the believers with him were in a difficult situation just like Prophet Muhammad (*SAWS*) in what can be translated as, **"Truly Fir'aun elated himself in the land and broke up its people into sections, depressing a small group among them: their sons he slew, but he kept alive their females: for he was indeed a maker of mischief."** (TMQ, 28: 4).

Few words portraying Pharaoh's power and the Children's of Israel's weakness. However, the fifth ayah brings Allah's (*SWT*) promise in what can be translated as, precaution **"And We wished to be gracious to those who were being depressed on the land, to make them leaders (in faith) and make them heirs" and another greater promise of power "To establish a firm place for them in the land, and to show Fir'aun, Haman, and their hosts, at their hands, the very things against which they were wary."** (TMQ, 28: 5,6). Such was Pharaoh's will and Allah's (*SWT*) will. Will Allah's (*SWT*) will come true?

Musa's (*AS*) mother

After the ayahs which portray Pharaoh's oppression and the ayahs of Allah's (*SWT*) promised victory, the seventh ayah says what can be translated as, **"So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Musa: "Suckle (thy child),"** (TMQ, 28: 7) as if this verse marks the beginning of promise's fulfillment, how?

After referring to Pharaoh's power and oppression and hinting at the necessity for change, the Surah moves to completely a different situation : a mother feeding her child, so what is the link? This states that victory starts from mothers who feed their children, with the milk, adhering to religion and trust in Allah's (*SWT*) promise. What is wonderful about such an ayah is that it did not tell Musa's (*AS*) mother: (when thou hast fears about him, hide him) or (embrace him) but it said what can be translated as, **"but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river,"** (TMQ, 28: 7) it is meant to tell her 'throw him into the river and have trust in Allah (*SWT*), why? Because He says what can be translated as, **"for We shall restore him to thee, and We shall make him one of Our Messengers."** (TMQ, 28: 7). It is the story a nation's birth, which started with a child thrown into the river and a mother's trust in Allah's (*SWT*) promise.

Women's role in the defense of religion

Surat Al-Qasas highlights women's role in bringing victory to religion. The main leading figures in the Surah who helped Musa (*AS*) carrying out his role were four women: the first was Musa's (*AS*) mother in what can be translated as, **"So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Musa"** (TMQ, 28: 7) who protected Musa (*AS*) through her behavior which resulted from her deep faith in Allah's (*SWT*) promise. Then was his sister in what can be translated as, **"And she said to the sister of (Musa), "Follow him," so she (the sister) watched him in the character of a stranger, and they knew not. Thus did We restore him to his mother, that her eye might be comforted, that she might not grieve, and that she might know that**

the promise of Allah is true; but most of them do not understand.” (TMQ, 28: 11, 13). She was the sister who brought Musa (AS) back to his mother. The third was Pharaoh’s wife in what can be translated as, **“The wife of Fir’aun said: “(Here is) a joy of the eye, for me and for thee: Slay him not. It may be that he will be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son.”“ (TMQ, 28: 9).** The fourth was Shu ‘aib’s daughter whom he married in what can be translated as, **“She said: “My father invites thee that he may reward thee for having watered (our flocks) for us.”“ (TMQ, 28: 25).** She was even the one who suggested this idea to her father in what can be translated as, **““O my (dear) father! Engage him on wages: truly the best of men for thee to employ is the (man) who is strong and trusty.”“ (TMQ, 28: 26).** Those four women played a pivotal role in Musa’s (AS) life with the help of Allah the Almighty.

Similarly in the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) women played a very significant role such as: Khadijah (RA) who supported Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) with her money and love; Umm Salama, Aisha (RA) and the rest of the Mothers of the believers, not to mention Somaiya, the first martyr in Islam, Fatima, Prophet Muhammad’s (SAWS) daughter and the mistress of all women. Hence, it is clear how the lives of both Prophets are quite similar. Some incidents are even close to today’s events. This all conveys the same meaning: “Muslims have faith in Allah’s (SWT) promise.”

The fulfillment of the promise

Surat Al-Qasas contains seven promises made by Allah (SWT) as follows: Allah says in what can be translated as, **“So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Musa: “Suckle (thy child), but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river, but fear not nor grieve: for We shall restore him to thee, and We shall make him one of Our Messengers.”“ (TMQ, 28: 7)** which contains two promises; (We shall restore him to thee) and (We shall make him one of Our Messengers). The first was fulfilled as the ayah says what can be translated as, **“Thus did We restore him to his mother, that her eye might be comforted, that she might not grieve, and that she might know that the promise of Allah is true; but most of them do not understand.” (TMQ, 28: 13).** This to assure Musa’s (AS) mother, Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), you, me and the whole nation of Islam that Allah (SWT) never fails to fulfill His promises and that His religion will be always victorious no doubt. But where are those who will sacrifice and move like Musa’s (AS) mother and the Prophet (SAWS) to bring victory to this religion?

The second promise (**We shall make him one of Our Messengers**) was fulfilled as mentioned in ayah number 30 in what can be translated as, **“But when he came to the (Fire), a voice was heard from the right bank of the valley, from a tree in hallowed ground: “O Musa! Verily I am Allah, the Lord of the Worlds....” (TMQ, 28: 30).** Allah (SWT) also gives a guarantee when he says what can be translated as, **“they shall not be able to touch you” (TMQ, 28: 35)** and His promise was fulfilled in what can be translated as, **“So We seized him and his hosts, and We flung them into the sea: now behold what was the End of those who did wrong!” (TMQ, 28: 40),**

We notice that there is always a long or a short span of time between the promise and its fulfillment : may be ten or forty years according to the will of Allah (*SWT*).

The Adhan (call for prayers) of sovereignty on the day of conquering Makkah

Allah (*SWT*) promised Prophet Muhammad (*SAWS*) that he will conquer Makkah and fulfilled His promise and Prophet Muhammad (*SAWS*) returned to Makkah. Bilal (*RA*) called for prayers (Azan), the idols were destroyed and the companions kept repeating Allah's (*SWT*) words in what can be translated as, **“And say: “Truth has (now) arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish.”“** (TMQ, 17: 81) and what can be translated as, **“Verily We have granted thee a manifest Victory”** (TMQ, 48: 1).

Allah's (*SWT*) promise about defeating Persians and Romans was fulfilled as in His words that can be translated as, **“Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion, the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: `They will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me.”** (TMQ, 24: 55).

Amaar Ibn-Yassir

The Divine promise was fulfilled in the fifth ayah in what can be translated as, **“And We wished to be gracious to those who were being depressed on the land, to make them leaders (in faith) and make them heirs,”** (TMQ, 28: 5) not only for the children of Israel but also fulfilled to a great companion that is Amaar Ibn- Yassir (*RA*). When Omar Ibn- Al-Khattab (*RA*) appointed Amaar Ibn-Yassir (*RA*) to be ruler of Iraq and sent with him an assistant. Although Amaar (*RA*) was unqualified for this post, he assumed it for a whole month then Omar (*RA*) brought him back to Madinah. When asked why he chose Amaar Omar replied, “In Allah's book I found regarding all of Allah's promises have been fulfilled for us and the whole nation of Muhammad (*SAWS*) and I read Allah's promise”, **“And We wished to be gracious to those who were being depressed on the land, to make them leaders (in faith) and make them heirs,”** (TMQ, 28: 5) and you Amaar are one of those weak people and I wanted people to see Allah's promise being fulfilled; so go I have appointed you a ruler of Iraq for a month so that people might watch Allah's promise coming true”

Soraqa Ibn-Malik and Chosroes' bracelets

Prophet Muhammad's (*SAWS*) trust in Allah's (*SWT*) promise was also very obvious during Hijra. When Prophet Muhammad (*SAWS*) was being chased and Soraqa followed him to either kill or capture him to win the award from Quraysh (100 camels). However, every time he tried to approach Prophet Muhammad (*SAWS*) he would fall off his horse even though he was a brilliant knight. Soraqa says, “I then knew that he was a protected man”, means that there was something hindering him. He asked for peace and said, “ I wanted to arrest you Muhammad but I couldn't and I wanted to win the award so give me something (that may compensate him for losing

the award). Prophet Muhammad (*SAWS*) promised Soraqa that he would, one day be given Chosroes' Bracelets and asked Abu-Bakr (*RA*) to write to Soraqa a note guaranteeing his right. Why didn't he promise him to give him a dates harvest or some money? Why Chosroes' bracelets? It is Prophet Muhammad's (*SAWS*) confidence in Allah's (*SWT*) promise.

Soraqa kept the note until the time of Omar Ibnul-Khattab's (*RA*) Caliphate. Persia then was conquered and Muslims took the treasures of Chosroes and brought them to the mosque. Omar (*RA*) ascended the pulpit and said, "Where is Soraqa?" and there he came an old man and said, "Yes Oh prince of the believers", so Omar (*RA*) said, "Here you are, these are Chosroes' bracelets your promise which the Prophet (*SAWS*) has promised you when he was alive." The whole mosque burst into tears and turned their eyes to the Prophet's (*SAWS*) house who was true in what he promised. May peace and blessings be upon Muhammad. So Muslims trust in Allah's (*SWT*) promise like your Prophet (*SAWS*) did.

Allah Showed Me the Earth

Just as he promised Soraqa with Chosroes' bracelets he has promised us and said that Allah showed him the earth and that he could see that the sovereignty of his Ummah will reign. Surat Al-Qasas tells us how to realize this in what can be translated as, **"That House of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth: and the End is (best) for the righteous"** (TMQ, 28: 83). Those who deserve to reign the world and lead humanity are those who do not seek high-handedness or mischief. "The end is best for the righteous" means that victory is only for righteous.

Qaroon was high-handed

The ayah that can be translated as, **"That House of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth: and the End is (best) for the righteous."** (TMQ, 28: 83) came to comment on the story of Qaroon who to show that Qaroon's power and superiority resulted in his high-handedness and mischief so his end was that he was swallowed by earth in what can be translated as, **"Then We caused the earth to swallow him up and his house; and he had not (the least little) party to help him against Allah, nor could he defend himself."** (TMQ, 28: 81).

Thus the Surah talks about the fulfillment of Allah's (*SWT*) promise for the true believers (the children of Israel, Musa's mother and Musa (*AS*)) **"those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth"** (TMQ, 28: 83), that is why Qaroon's story came as example about those who do not intend high-handedness or mischief on earth and to warn us from them.

The name of the Surah

Why was the Surah given this name? The word 'qasas' in language means following up something until the end as in Allah's (*SWT*) words that can be translated as, **"And she said to the sister of (Musa), "Follow him,""** (TMQ, 28: 11), which means follow up news about him and in the ayah that can be translated as, **"So when he**

came to him and narrated the story,” (TMQ, 28: 25) which means he narrated the story from A to Z.

The Surah was so called to show us that if we follow up events till the end we would find that all of them ended with the fulfillment of Allah's (*SWT*) promises and that the end was best for the righteous. The problem with some people is that they do not follow up the story they only see one chain in the struggle between good and evil that is the defeat of the good and think that Allah's (*SWT*) promise will not be fulfilled. Thus, from now on every time you come across the word “Qasas” remember the end of the stories of this holy Surah and remember that Allah's (*SWT*) promise of victory will come true no doubt no matter how long it will take.

Musa (AS) in Surat Al-Qasas and Surat Al-Kahf

There is an analogy between the story of Musa (*AS*) in Surat Al-Qasas, and in Surat Al-Kahf. In Surat Al Kahf, Musa (*AS*) was bewildered by what Al-Khidr did when he drowned the ship, killed the boy and showing generosity to the people who refused to host them.

Nevertheless, those three incidents happened to Musa (*AS*) as Surat Al-Qasas says; his mother threw him into the river, he unintentionally killed one of Pharaoh's soldiers, and the father of the two ladies hosted him for ten years.

Thus, what Allah (*SWT*) promised happened in both Surahs in spite of all the hard circumstances because Allah (*SWT*) does as He wishes. Sometimes incidents repeat themselves and what was surprising for you one day may happen to you on another day as explained in the ayah which says what can be translated as, **“Thy Lord does create and choose as He pleases” (TMQ, 28: 68).**

Be sure that Allah (*SWT*) has power over all things and that He is the Owner of the whole universe and runs it the way He wants as explained in this ayah which can be translated as, **“And Allah hath full power and control over His affairs; but most among mankind know it not.” (TMQ, 12: 21).**