



# *Contemplation* IN ISLAM

Osman Nûri Topbaş



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# CONTEMPLATION IN ISLAM

OSMAN NÛRÎ TOPBAŞ



## FOREWORD

*“There is no worship  
like contemplation.”*

(Hadith, Bayhaki, Shuab, IV, 157)

An everlasting praise and thanks to our Lord, the eternally Benevolent and Munificent, who has opened for us a path to know Him, by endowing us with the ability to contemplate and be spiritually sensitive (*tahassus*) of Him.<sup>1</sup>

An everlasting salute to our Beloved Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- as well as his family and Companions, who contemplated the universe, humanity and the Holy Quran in the profoundest, most beautiful and feeling manner and taught his followers to read all of these with the eye of the heart.

Among all creation, only humans and to a certain extent *jinn* have been given the ability by the Almighty to derive their share of wisdom from the

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<sup>1</sup> *Tahassus* is to become delicate and sensitive and for the heart to become receptive.



depths of Quran, the universe and humanity, and acquire from their depths the pearls of truth to shed a guiding light on the path of life. The only means to do so, however, lies in contemplation and spiritual sensing.

Contemplating and spiritual sensing are irrefutable conditions for attaining the truth and raising ones heart to the desired level. At every given opportunity from its first verse to its last, the Holy Quran, the unique road map to guidance and happiness, invites us to contemplate and commands us to reflect on the wisdom underlying the creation of man, the splendid order of the universe, the signs of Allah, glory unto Him; to discern the Divine threads of power, manifestations of Divine Majesty and the absolute sovereignty of the Almighty impressed upon the universe throughout.

At every given opportunity in the Holy Quran, the Almighty sends out a word of warning to the Believers, with expressions such as, “Do you not ever contemplate?”, “Do they not ever think?” or “Do they not understand?”<sup>2</sup>

Correlated are the questions:

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2 See, al-Anam, 50; al-Baqara, 219, 266; Muhammad, 24; an-Nisa, 82; Yâsîn, 68...

“Do they not observe the camel?”<sup>3</sup> where the Almighty draws attention to creation;

“Do they not observe the clouds, the rain, the mountains and how greenery dies away in winter only to be resurrected in spring?”<sup>4</sup> which puts emphasis on ecological phenomena;

“Do they not reflect on the doom of bygone nations?”<sup>5</sup> underlining historical events. The Almighty thereby invites us to contemplate the Divine Laws effective throughout the universe and grasp the *adatullah*, or the norms of Allah, glory unto Him, that are the conditions for the manifesting of these laws.

Again, the Almighty states the need for humanity to observe the universe with a perceptive and prudential gaze, not with a fleeting look that is empty

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3 *al-Bari* and *al-Musawwir*, two of the attributes of Allah, glory unto Him, express how the Almighty creates all beings in different shapes and forms and endows them with abilities proper to their environments and the duties they are meant to carry out. Perfect examples of this among the entire animal kingdom are camels. Obligated to live in the harsh desert climate, where food and water are scarce, a camel is able to reserve a sizable stock of water in its humps for weeks and being able to feed even on thorns, can keep its food fresh for an extended period of time. It is furthermore resilient against desert storms and the blistering desert heat. Doubtless, this is just one manifestation of Divine Power and Artwork among innumerable others.

4 See, Qaf, 6; Yunus, 101; al-Ghashiyah, 17-20; an-Nur, 43; al-Hajj, 63; ar-Ra'd, 3; al-Anbiyâ, 31; an-Nahl, 65; ar-Rûm, 50...

5 Muhammad, 10...

and thoughtless. A mention of the gifts bestowed upon humankind in the Quran is capped off by the Almighty referring to the said people as “possessors of prudence and reflection”.<sup>6</sup>

Allah, glory unto Him, persistently urges us to contemplate both ourselves and nature, with a firm command to reflect on the threads of Divine Power and Majesty, there are nearly 150 separate occasions in the Holy Quran, making use of concepts like reasoning (الْتَعَقُّلُ), forethought (الْتَدَبُّرُ), remembrance (الْتَذَكُّرُ) and contemplation (الْتَفَكُّرُ).

The zone in which such concepts reach their peaks in practice so as to become a method in spiritual training is *tasawwuf*. *Tasawwuf* is the name given to the path of maturity and perfection which aims toward guiding one towards reaching the pinnacle of reality, to the degree of one’s spiritual aptitude, and in addition, the blessings provided by Allah, glory unto Him. Therefore, wisdom as expressed in the maxim “He who knows himself knows his Lord” constitutes one of the most vital principles adhered to by Sufis en route to spiritual perfection.

For a person blessed with an open heart, there is no particle in the universe that does not provide a glimpse of his Creator and His artistic power. From the smallest



part of the universe to the arc of creation, every single thing stands as a witness to Divine Majesty.

Creation possesses a way of expression known as *lisan'ul-hal*, a soundless articulation of their states through the way they are, through which every existent thing is active in revelation. For those who are able to properly comprehend what is revealed, the Almighty becomes the *qibla* of their hearts, just as Kabah is the *qibla* of their bodies.

So is stated in the Holy Quran:

“Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You have not created this in vain! Glory be to You; save us then from the punishment of the fire.” (Al-i Imran, 191)

One who is able to duly contemplate the manifestations of Divine Power and Splendor expressed in the universe will first acknowledge his own utter weakness, and then by completely surrendering and obeying, every breath he takes thereafter will be in the nature of *dhikr*. The heart, thereby, becomes filled with the light of *taqwa*, with which contemplation achieves its most consummate blend.

In Divine Sight, the worth of a person is not through his external appearance or through his financial standing in life but rather through the maturity of his heart, his depth of spirit and his spiritual attributes



and capabilities. It is for that reason that the Holy Quran rescues the believers' contemplation from being stuck in the narrow straits of matter and ego, by way of reinforcing it with the feeling of faith, after which it further guides it to the boundless horizons of the spiritual realm. Only then does the contemplation of a believer, who is able to gaze at the Divine displays set up in the universe, gain a spiritual dimension. A deep and comprehensive contemplation of the kind which reaches its pinnacle through the sense of the heart, in turn, is the most beautiful key, faith can provide.

One who on the other hand is unable to perfect his or her spirituality lies trapped amid the lowly appearances of a self-centered life, and squanders the natural ability for contemplation in the whirlpool of fleeting desires. Enslaved by the desires of his ego, a lazy heart of the kind always plunges towards these fleeting displays, instead of turning to the true and the good. Never does he think that the shroud, the final piece of clothing he is bound to wear to the grave, will surely envelope him, and that death will come to stamp its ending seal over all passing desires, allures and glimmers of pleasure and the world's deceit.

While a contemplation reinforced by the depth of spiritual feeling always provides one with peace and harmony, constraining oneself within the dry borders of reason only fuels the flames of greed and selfishness. It weakens the heart, sending it to the pits of ignorance.





Just as fingerprints are forms of identity that discern one person from the other, the quality of a believer's contemplation and spiritual sensing is equivalent to his spiritual identity. A Muslim, who therefore wants to achieve a depth of spirit as befits the honor of humankind and compliant with the reason of existence, is obliged to enter the realm of contemplation as laid down by the Holy Quran. Only through a contemplation of such caliber will he acquire focus in deeds of worship, a refined heart and propriety in social interactions.

Despite the importance Islam places on contemplation and spiritual sensing, owing to the ignorance that comes with prioritizing worldly activities over the things that truly matter, human beings, on the whole, lead a life remote from both. As a consequence, they tend to completely forget death and the fact of that the world is a mere place of testing.

Believers, on the other hand, who lead their lives compliant with the gist of *taqwa* and who are able to engage in contemplating and spiritual sensing –and they are always in the minority- transcend their egos and acquire a maturity in which they are able to acknowledge their human condition and grasp their shortcomings and virtues, in tandem.

In spite of the external life in which they continue to take part, such persons achieve the eternal vivacity of having gained for themselves a profound inner realm. Consequent upon the broadening of their hearts, they



reach a sublime form of comprehension that exceeds the horizons of the physical world, well past the threshold that sees them acquire a perfected faith, a Divine Blessing that is only given at the end of this path.

A believer triumphant in attaining this character no longer perceives this fleeting life as a blessing he feels dependent upon. The days of live, in the eyes of such a Muslim, resemble a loose string continuously flying forth from a reel that could come to an end anytime, who knows when.

Having said that, the asset that is life holds an enormous importance, for it is the only means to gain a life of eternity. A believer who truly comprehends just what this means knows that the end will loom as a tragic remorse unless he is, as the Holy Quran states, “upright as has been commanded”.<sup>7</sup> To avoid becoming inflicted with such remorse, he is never oblivious to the below words of caution sent out by the Almighty, of which he constantly reminds himself:

“And spend out of what We have given you before death comes to one of you, so that he should say: My Lord! Why did You not respite me to a near term, so that I should have given alms and been of the doers of good deeds? And Allah does not respite a soul when its appointed term has come, and Allah is Aware of what you do.” (al-Munafiqun, 10-11)

In short, Allah, glory unto Him, wills for a believer to properly come to terms with Divine Splendor and the mysteries and wisdoms underlying this great order. He wishes for the believer a life of *taqwa*, a safe haven from becoming a victim of arrogance that comes with worldly possessions, and thus become a servant worthy of his place in Paradise.

In this humble work at hand, we will therefore attempt to focus on the importance of contemplating and sensing, a primary legacy of the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace–, their benefits and their proper way of actualization.

I would like to thank Dr. Murat Kaya and M. Akif Günay for the labor they exerted during the preparation of this book and sincerely wish for their efforts to be regarded as a never-ending charity in the sight of the Almighty.

**May our Lord unite all our feelings and thoughts with His Will! May He render all of us triumphant in this passing life by elevating us to the peak of His knowledge and love!**

**Amin!...**

**Osman Nûri Topbaş**

**June 2010**

**Üsküdar**





## CONTEMPLATION IN ISLAM

### The Limits of Reason

An everlasting salute to our Beloved Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- as well as his family and Companions, who contemplated the universe, humanity and the Holy Quran in the profoundest, most beautiful and feeling manner and taught his followers to read all of these with the eye of the heart.

Islam places great importance on reason; so much so that it regards reason as one of the two prime requisites of being held accountable for actions.<sup>1</sup> At every opportunity, it advises one how to utilize reason in a befitting manner. But it also states that the capability

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1 One of the prerequisites of being held accountable in the sight of Allah, glory unto Him, is to have reached puberty, while the other is to be sane, that is to have the rational aptitude developed enough to discern right from wrong. In line with this criterion, children and the insane are not considered by Islam to be liable for their actions.

boasted by reason to comprehend is not unlimited, as Allah, glory unto Him, has not endowed any creation with unlimited powers.

Similarly to how vision and hearing are limited in their exercise, so also is the power of rational comprehension. Just as the existence of countless beings is not exhausted by the fact they elude eyesight, and there are a host of sounds that are inaudible simply because they exceed the power of hearing, there is a myriad of truths that, remaining outside the capacity of reason, transcend reason's attempts of comprehension. Reason therefore does not suffice on its own to grasp reality in its totality.

While they have promised happiness, rationally inclined philosophers, who have regarded reason as the font of unlimited powers, have only ended up dragging the people they were able influence into a state of distress.<sup>2</sup>

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- 2 An incident reported to have taken place in Ancient Greece is emblematic in displaying the shortcomings of reason. Accordingly, a young man once requested a reputed philosopher to train him in legal matters. As agreed, half the philosopher's wage was to be paid in advance, while the other half after the young man succeeded in his first court case. Triumph in his first court case would supposedly show that he received a perfect legal training, meaning his teacher would rightfully deserve the second installment. At the end of his legal training, however, the young man requested his teacher give up his rights to the second installment, suggesting the payment he had already received in advance was duly sufficient. Because of this dispute, the first court case took place between the



Allah, glory unto Him, who indisputably knows the flaws and shortcomings of His servants infinitely better than the servants can ever hope of knowing in themselves, sent throughout the history of humankind –according to tradition- over 124,000 prophets, all of whom were subjected to Divine Revelation, and reinforced them with scriptures, books and the most potent of aids to guide humankind to the truth and to help them rectify the flaws they cannot by themselves overcome.

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young man and his teacher. So the hearing began. The young man, addressing the panel of judges, said:

“Whether I win or lose this case, I should not be paying the second installment regardless.”

“Why is that?” asked the high judge, upon which the youth replied:

“If I win, I will not be paying due to your ruling. If I lose, I will not be held liable with the payment according to our prior agreement with the claimant.”

In response, his teacher, the philosopher, spoke with a similar tone.

“Whether I win or lose”, he said, “I should be taking the second installment of my payment.”

“Why?” asked the high judge, once more.

“If I win, I will be receiving the payment due to your ruling. If I lose, I will be receiving it according to our prior agreement with the young man.”

Evidently, both cases are sound and logical, which goes to show that reason and logic can, time and again, become imprisoned between walls they themselves erect and become stranded in a dead end road. For reason, which miserably breaks down even when trying to find a solution for many a human predicament, it is impossible to grasp the infinite Divine truths in all their aspects. The deliverance of reason from these dead ends therefore lies in coming under the training of Revelation and recognizing the need to spiritually surrender to truths that surpass its limits of comprehension.



It is therefore imperative for reason to undergo training under *wahy*, Divine revelation. Reason untouched by the guidance of Divine revelation is like a wild, untamed horse that not only does not comply with his rider in his hope of reaching his destination, but flings him over the edge of a cliff to perish. Just as the best way to tame a horse is to bridle it and train it, it is necessary to subject reason to the spiritual training of *wahy* and its clarification, the *Sunnah* of the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace-, and thereby set reason right. Until this is done, reason is like a weapon; it may strike for the better, but also and detrimentally, for the worse...

### **The Role of the Heart**

In Islam, *iman*, that is faith, takes place through the affirmation of the heart and pronouncement of the tongue. What that means is that the true precinct where faith becomes manifest is not reason, but the heart, the center of spiritual sensing and feeling. This point is very important, for faith is a sublime feeling, whereas reason, in contrast, consists in providing means to overcome certain initial phases of understanding to reach that feeling of faith.

True faith is not accomplished unless the Divine truths accepted by reason receive their affirmation in the heart. A faith not entrenched in the heart does not





transform into deeds and provide a direction to ones behavior. A faith as such carries no worth in the sight of the Almighty, who condemned the past scholars of the people of Israel for not practicing what they studied and learned of the Divine truths due to not having digested those truths in their hearts, comparing them with donkeys burdened with volumes of books.<sup>3</sup>

Knowing Divine truths, therefore, does not mean stashing them in the mind. To know is to decipher, through contemplating and sensing, the mystery of the tremendous order in the universe and in life and acting accordingly. And only a heart enlightened with the light of faith can live up to that.

What reason reaps through contemplating man, the universe and the Holy Quran, is comparable to raw minerals acquired from the earth. Processing these minerals into things of value, on the other hand, is part and parcel of the heart.

The heart is the center of spiritual sensing, of feeling. The function of the heart, also indicated by the terms intuition and inspiration, is to unify the proofs presented by reason and thereby enable a perfect comprehension of the truth, a process comparable to bringing the pieces of a broken vase together and revealing its true shape and pattern.

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3 See, al-Juma, 5.

It is thus clear that the most perfect manner to reach the true and the good requires reason to be trained under revelation and a heart with a maturity of faith to step in and make amends for its inadequacy.

The value of contemplation, too, depends on it being reinforced with spiritual sense. Simply put, it rests upon a harmonious and balanced exertion of both the heart and reason. A balance swinging heavily in the way of reason may make someone a good man of the world, a self-seeking person. But in order to be a refined Muslim, it is imperative for the heart, the center of feeling and sensing, to receive spiritual training and act as a guide to reason; for the heart gives direction to thinking, while thinking provides direction to willpower. This effectively means that deeds of intent have their primary incentive in the heart; in effect, they are nothing but feelings embedded therein. Rectifying the heart in accordance with Divine commands is therefore of greater importance than setting other parts of the body in proper balance.

A kind of pseudo contemplation, based on desires egotistic in nature, vulnerable to spiritual diseases like pride and conceit and devoid of the guidance of the heart, digresses from its natural course, misleading man to devilish transgressions and depravity.



*“Had Lucifer’s love been as immense as his reason, he would not have been the Satan he is today.”*

It is therefore clear that reason alone holds no value. To take the helms of reason and give it an unswerving direction, it is vital to spiritually refine the feelings embedded in the heart.

To be concise, true contemplation begins at the point where a revelation inspired reason meets with a spiritually matured heart. Our use of the concept ‘contemplation’ throughout this book should therefore strictly be taken in its most perfected form: contemplation trained under Divine truths and reinforced with the sense of the heart.

Contemplation (التَفَكُّرُ) means to derive a lesson from any given thing or experience and focus on it, so as to gain a depth of understanding.

Deliberation (التَّأَمُّلُ) means to stop and think and to further the investigation by virtue of persisting in contemplation. It denotes a process of delicate thought conducted on the universe and surrounding events, with the aim of deriving a lesson and thereby reaching the core of the given matter.

Forethought (التَّدَبُّرُ) is to reflect on the pending consequences of a given event.



## The Importance of Contemplation

Both the Book of Allah, glory unto Him, and the sayings of the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- emphatically command and encourage investigating, contemplating and deriving lessons from one's surroundings. In just two verses from among hundreds of others mentioned in the Holy Quran in this regard, the Almighty states:

“Do they not reflect within themselves: Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them two but with truth, and (for) an appointed term? And most surely most of the people are deniers of the meeting of their Lord.” (ar-Rum, 8)

“Say: I exhort you only to one thing, that rise up for Allah's sake in twos and singly, then ponder: there is no madness in your companion; he is only a warner to you before a severe chastisement.” (as-Saba', 46)

In the above, humans are enjoined to serve the Almighty, both individually and communally, and contemplate and focus on reality.<sup>4</sup> Those who do this are promised salvation even if this be the only command they adhere to.

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4 Opinions held by society or the majority can tend to exert their influence on personal opinion, Relief from this influence and finding a pathway to the truth lies in requesting the guidance of the experts of that path and spending time alone with the heart so as to enter the domain of contemplation. Each person must therefore voice his own opinion and critically assess the accuracy of general opinion.

## **The Prophet of Allah was in a Constant State of Contemplation**

The Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- loved silence and contemplation. In the times just prior to his prophethood, he had grown even a more intense desire to retreat. He would remain for days on end in the Cave of Hira, approximately around 5 kilometers away from Mecca. His worship in these times of retreat was comprised of contemplation, gazing at the Kabah and reflecting on the treasures of the heavens and earth in the footsteps of his great ancestor Ibrahim –upon him peace-.<sup>5</sup> Through this manner, the Almighty was preparing him for his sacred mission.

The contemplation of the universe, its Creator and creation in which the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- immersed himself during those days, did not cease for the remainder of his life.

Hind ibn Abi Hala –Allah be well-pleased with him- explains:

“The Messenger of Allah was in a continuous state of sorrow and thought. Comfort for him was irrelevant. He never spoke in vain. His silence was longer than his speech. He would always begin and

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5 Aynî, *Umdatul-Qari*, Beirut, I, 61; XXIV, 128.



end his talk by mentioning the name of Allah...” (Ibn Sa’d, I, 422-423)

To encourage Muslims to embark upon contemplation, The Prophet of Allah –upon him blessings and peace- has said:

*“My Lord has commanded my silence to be of contemplation.”* (İbrahim Canan, *Hadis Ansiklopedisi*, XVI, 252/5838)

*“There is no worship like contemplation.”* (Bayhakî, *Shuab*, IV, 157; Ali al-Muttaqî, XVI, 121)

*“Be like wayfarers on this earth! Adopt mosques as homes! Accustom your hearts to sensitivity! Contemplate and cry in lots! Let not your desires of the ego change you!”* (Ebû Nuaym, *Hilye*, I, 358)

The Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- again narrates from the ten leaves of Revelation given to Ibrahim –upon him peace-:

*“An intelligent man ought to have certain hours: A portion of those hours ought to be spared for praying to and seeking from the Lord, another portion for contemplating the sublime art and power of the Almighty, another portion to reflect on what has been committed in the past and planning what to do in the future and another for earning a living in a manner permissible.”*

(Ebû Nuaym, *Hilye*, I, 167; İbn-i Esîr, *el-Kâmil*, I, 124)

Luqman –upon him peace- used to love sitting by himself in a secluded place to contemplate, something he frequently did. Upon being asked, “You keep to your self most of the time. Would not it be better if you mixed in with people and spoke with them?” Luqman –upon him peace- gave the following response:

“Remaining alone for long period of time is more suitable for contemplation. And remaining in contemplation for a long period of time is a guide that leads one to Paradise.”<sup>6</sup>

Abu’d-Darda –Allah be well-pleased with him- used to say:

“An hour of contemplation is superior to forty nights of supererogatory worship.” (Deylemî, II, 70-71, no: 2397, 2400)

Said ibn Musayyab, a prominent scholar of the Tabiun generation, was once asked which deed of worship held greater virtue.

“Contemplating the creation of Allah”, he replied, “and growing insightful into His religion.” (Bursevî, Rûhu’l-Bayân, [an-Nûr, 44])

6 Imam Ghazzali, *Ihya-u Ulumi’d-Din*, Beirut 1990, Daru’l-Khayr, VI, 45. The place inside a historical mosque in Tarsus where Luqman –upon him peace- retreated to itiqaf to contemplate is still visited today.



Bishr ibn Khafiy used to emphasize the significance of contemplation in the following words:

“Had human beings properly contemplated the majesty of Allah, they would not have been able to rebel against him and commit sins.” (Ibn Kathir, I, 448, [Âl-i Ĩmrân, 190])

As explained earlier, contemplation that leads one to an understanding of the majesty of Allah, glory unto Him, is an activity of reason. But it is the heart that culminates this activity in a perfect result. Since the heart is the noblest part of the body, it is only natural for its deeds to stand in greater worth than those carried out by other parts. The heart, after all, is the precinct of Divine Sight.

It remains an incontestable fact that a contemplation exerted by a reason trained under revelation is the first glimmer of the rays that enlighten the heart. It is the first and only means on the path that leads one to prudence and wisdom. Again, a contemplation of such caliber is a means to purge the heart from everything except for the Almighty (*masiwallah*) and thereby attain Divine Love.

The most beneficial of all contemplation is to reflect on Divine Majesty, Splendor and Sovereignty, by which one begins to think of ways of setting his or her life right and leaving all things detrimental to her or his eternal happiness.





Contemplating the blessings, commands, prohibitions, names and attributes of Allah, glory unto Him, flourishes love and wisdom in the heart and begins to elevate one spiritually. The thought of the Hereafter, its honor and eternity compared to the stage of test that is the life of the world increases desire for the life after and enables one to value the world only as much as is merited. One then realizes that the life of the world is but a sprint race from the mother's womb to the grave. Grasping the fact that life is a precious asset for earning the bliss of eternity, allows the person to increase his solemnity and effort to render life more meaningful. He treats the time he has in his hands like treasure, making sure to make the most of it through good and beneficial deeds.

Abu'l-Hasan Harakani says it beautifully:

“At any given time, it is necessary for at least one limb of a Believer to be preoccupied with the remembrance of the Almighty. A Muslim ought to remember Allah either with the heart or the tongue, or see something the Almighty would like him to see, or do deeds of generosity with the hand, or visit people with his feet, or put his mind to service of fellow Muslims, or offer a prayer with an unwavering faith, or contemplate so as to attain wisdom, or do a sincere deed, or warn people of the adversities of Judgment Day.



Such a person will surely enter Paradise the moment he raises his head from the grave, dragging his shroud from behind him; of that I am his guarantor!”<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> Abu'l-Hasan Harakânî, *Seyr ü Sülûk Risâlesi*, prepared by Sadık Yalsızuçanlar, p. 107, Sufi Kitap, Istanbul, 2006.





## CONTEMPLATION IN THE UNIVERSE

*How amazing it is that man becomes infatuated upon seeing an ostentatious, embellished palace. The sight never leaves his mind, as he keeps on spreading the news of its beauty to others for the rest of his life. Yet, in spite of constantly seeing the grand Divine masterpiece of art that is the universe, he shrinks back from thoroughly reflecting on it and shies away from making an adequate mention of it. He takes no notice of it and carries on, as if it is an ordinary thing. Little is he aware that the palace he admires so much is but a tiny particle of Earth, which in turn is one of the smallest specks of the grand universe...*



## CONTEMPLATION IN THE UNIVERSE

From the smallest particle to the grandest planet, everything in the universe is a Divine masterpiece of art. With countless manifestations of wisdom presented to the appreciation of the human mind, the universe is an exhibition of Divine Majesty.

For the thinking mind, the universe provides an evocative display of creative order and harmony. Countless verses in the Holy Quran give expression to this. To mention only a couple:

“Do they not then look up to heaven above them how We have made it and adorned it and it has no gaps? And the earth, We have made it plain and cast in it mountains and We have made to grow therein of all beautiful kinds. To give sight and as a reminder to every servant who turns frequently (to Allah).” (Kaf, 6-8)

“Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the cloud, then makes it go along in the earth in



springs, then brings forth therewith herbage of various colors, then it withers so that you see it becoming yellow, then He makes it a thing crushed and broken into pieces? Most surely there is a reminder in this for the men of understanding.” (az-Zumar, 21)

Water that remains on the earth’s surface serves humans; it is consumed, used for cleaning and various other needs. It is thus prone to become polluted from time to time. But through a magnificent circular process, the Almighty continuously purifies it and serves it up again to serve human need.

Urging us to contemplate the water’s journey of transformation, Mawlana Rumi says:

*“When divested of its purity, muddied and murky, water becomes disturbed and astounded, just like us, for having been dirtied on earth...It begins to cry from its depths and beseech the Almighty. Thereupon, the Almighty vaporizes the water and elevates it to the skies. Steering it to a variety of paths, He purifies it from top to bottom. Then He pours it back on Earth, sometimes as rain, sometimes as snow, and at times, as hail. Finally, He paves its path to the vast ocean.”*

Narrating in a compelling style a natural phenomenon we get to witness during every season of the year, Rumi then adds the following:

*“Approach the Almighty and purify your heart from all dirt, just like the water! Become thereby a rain; pour down abundance and mercy!”*



The harmonious journey the universe has been setting out on since its creation, its sublime order entwined with a profound wisdom and mystery, is, in any case, more than enough reason for one to acknowledge that it is all the work of One, Eternal Force.

### Contemplating the Skies

One proof of the power and majesty of the Almighty lies in the Divine Sovereignty displayed on earth, in the skies and in the stars. Failing to contemplate the marvels of the skies deprives human understanding from a splendid exhibition of wisdom.

Compared to the skies, the Earth is like a drop in an ocean, even smaller. There is almost no chapter in the Holy Quran in which the grandeur of the skies is not given mention to. There are even many oaths made in the name of the skies:

“By the heaven, holding mansions of the stars”  
(al-Buruj, 1)

“But nay! I swear by the falling of stars. And most surely it is a very great oath if you only knew...”  
(al-Waqiah, 75-76)<sup>8</sup>

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8 Also see, ad-Dhâriyât, 7; an-Najm, 1; at-Takwîr, 15; at-Tariq, 1; as-Shams, 1-2, 5.

The immensity of the universe, the separate motions of its objects and the distances separating them are given in gigantic figures that exceed the wildest imagination and the most penetrating comprehension. Scientists have even felt compelled to admit:

“The universe is more terrifying, startling and greater than we can possibly imagine, for the objects in space are distancing themselves from one another at frightening speed.”<sup>9</sup>

Scientists estimate the radius of the universe as 14 trillion light years. The speed of light, as known, is approximately 300,000 km (186,411 mph) per hour.

## The Galaxies

There are some hundred billion galaxies in the universe visible to state-of-the-art telescopes. That makes the galaxy a colossal community of spatial bodies that each harbors well nigh a billion stars, including their raw material and residues.<sup>10</sup> The Milky Way, which is home to the solar system, is simply one galaxy among these.

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9 Yûsuf al-Hajj, *Mawsûatu'l-I'cazi'l-Ilmi*, p. 413.

10 <http://www.biltek.tubitak.gov.tr>, Evren/Evrenin Yapıtaşları Gökadalar, (Accessed, 06.12.2005).





Communities of hundreds or thousand galaxies are called clusters. In turn, communities made up of galaxy groups are called galaxy super-clusters.<sup>11</sup>

Our Milky Way galaxy and the some 30 galaxies near us constitute the local galaxy cluster. The Virgo Cluster, a near cluster which stands at a distance of approximately 65 million light years, includes an estimated 2000 galaxies. A single super-cluster, it should be known, lies amid tens of galaxy clusters, boasting a circumference of a 100 million light years.<sup>12</sup>

Another aspect exhibiting Divine Splendor throughout space is the collision of galaxies. Galaxies collide on a frequent basis. If their orbits cross paths or if they have gained enough proximity their mass gravity attracts them closer to each other. No matter how many billions of stars galaxies may have, owing to the enormous distance separating them, stars pass by each other during the collision without coming into contact. The impact of the collision, however, causes the gases and dust, from which stars are made of, to converge in certain spots, stimulating the formation of stars. Observed, for that reason, is an escalation in the formation of new stars in galaxies that have undergone a collision. According to estimations, a col-

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11 <http://www.biltek.tubitak.gov.tr>, Evren/Gökbilim Sözlüğü, (Accessed, 06.12.2005).

12 <http://www.biltek.tubitak.gov.tr>, Evren/Evrenin Yapıtaşları/Gökadalar/Gökada Kümeleri, (Accessed, 06.12.2005).



lision of a similar kind looms between the Milky Way and her neighbor Andromeda.<sup>13</sup> The two galaxies are approaching one another at a speed of nearly 500,000 km's (310,685 mph) per hour. Remembering they are separated by a distance of 2.2 million light years, a collision is imminent in around 3 billion years.<sup>14</sup>

There are approximately 200 billion stars in the Milky Way, just one of which is the Sun. The Milky Way has a circumference of 100,000 light years. Orbiting at a pace of 630 km per second (391 mps), it proceeds at a speed of 900,000 kph (559234 mph) towards the Star Vega.

The Hercules Cluster is made up of 100 small galaxies and lies at a distance of 650 million light years from Earth.

## The Solar System

Lying amid the Milky Way, the Solar System has a circumference of 12 billion km (7,566,454,306 miles). The sun, located at a distance of 30,000 light years from the center of the Milky Way, is believed to be around 4.5 to 5 billion years old.

13 <http://www.biltek.tubitak.gov.tr>, Evren/Evrenin Yapıtaşları/Gökadalar/Çarpışan Gökadalar, (Accessed, 15.12.2005); <http://www.biltek.tubitak.gov.tr/haberler/gokbilim/99-08-4.pdf>

14 <http://www.newsandevents.utoronto.ca/bin/000414b.asp>; <http://www.biltek.tubitak.gov.tr/haberler/gokbilim/2000-05-3.pdf>

The Sun transforms 564 million tons of hydrogen to 560 million tons of helium at each second. In the process, 4 million tons of gas radiates forth as rays of energy. In terms of lost mass, the Sun loses 4 million tons of mass per second and 240 million tons per minute. Considering the sun has been consistently consuming energy at this speed for the past 3 billion years, it means that until now, it has lost 400 billion  $\times$  million of mass. Still, even a massive amount like that is equivalent only to about 1/5000 of the Sun's current mass.

The temperature of the Sun's surface is 6000 degrees C° (10,832 F ). The heat of its core, on the other hand, reaches 20 million degrees C°. While the Sun's temperature increases constantly, so does its circumference. It is therefore considered a possibility that the ever-growing the Sun could one day explode and spell an end to the planets closest to it, in Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars.

Exactly 324,529 times greater than Earth, the Sun has a mass of  $2 \times 10^{27}$  tons, that is a billion times a billion times a billion, multiplied twice, and a gigantic radius of 700,000 km, or 434.969 miles.<sup>15</sup>

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15 See, [http://www.physics.metu.edu.tr/~ecevit/bilinen\\_evren\\_gercekleri.ppt](http://www.physics.metu.edu.tr/~ecevit/bilinen_evren_gercekleri.ppt), (Accessed: 21. 06. 2007); <http://gokyuzu.org> (Accessed: 21.06.2007); <http://www.ozaltin.8k.com/NN/2.htm>. (Accessed: 16.10.2004); Yûsuf al-Hajj, *Mawsûatu'l-İ'câzi'l-İlmi*, p. 413-417; Akram Ahmed İdris, *al-Falak wa't-Tibb Amama Azameti'l-Qur'ân*, 19-112; Prof. Dr. Osman Çakmak, *Bir Çekirdekti Kâinat*, p. 66.

The Holy Quran reminds:

“Blessed is He Who made the constellations in the heavens and made therein a lamp and a shining moon.” (al-Furqan, 61)

### The Skies are Constantly Expanding

Allah, glory unto Him, states that He constantly expands the flawlessly created skies. The verse declares:

“And the heaven, We raised it high with power, and most surely We are the makers of things ample.” (ad-Dharyat, 47)

In 1929, scientists discovered that nebula<sup>16</sup> constantly travel further away from our galaxy, a finding later used as a basis for the theory that space is undergoing constant expansion.<sup>17</sup> According to this theory, doubtless one of the most significant turning points in 20th century space research, galaxies are increasingly moving away from each other in proportion with the accumulated distance.<sup>18</sup>

Applying this theory to the objects in space in 1950, scientists proceeded to calculate the speed with

16 Nebulas are the massive white spots, apart from stars, found in space, given the name due their resemblance of whitish clouds.

17 Celâl Kırca, *Kur’ân-ı Kerim’de Fen Bilimleri*, p. 165; an-Najjâr, *as-Samâ*, p. 82-93; Faruk Yılmaz, *Kâinâtın Yaratılışı*, p. 64-67, 255-258.

18 Şakir Kocabaş, *Kur’ân’da Yaratılış*, Istanbul 2004, p. 19.

which galaxies travel away from each other. While a galaxy 10 million light years away from our own cuts loose at a speed of 250 km's per second, the breakaway speed of a galaxy 10 billion light years away is 250,000 km's per second.<sup>19</sup>

That the universe, the enormity of which is spoken of here, is ever-growing in dimension without ever remaining the same, goes to show the impossibility of perfectly comprehending the splendor of the Almighty.

Beautifully expressed is the feeling of awe that envelops one upon contemplation of these countless exhibitions of Divine Majesty:

*Grand You are Lord, grand, so grand,  
Greatness itself to You is a strand!*

(Ali Haydar Bey)

Constantly expanding this colossal universe, Allah, glory onto Him, will eventually roll it up, just like a scribe rolls up a piece of paper.<sup>20</sup> Again, when the time comes, He will transform Earth to an earth of another kind, and the skies to skies of another sort.<sup>21</sup> This entails the creation of a new universe, signaling the beginning of a new life.<sup>22</sup>

19 Prof. Dr. Osman Çakmak, *Bir Çekirdekteki Kâinat*, p. 28.

20 al-Anbiya, 104.

21 Ibrâhîm, 48.

22 See, an-Najjâr, as-Samâ, p. 82, 105-106, 187-194; <http://www.biltek.tubitak.gov.tr>, Evren/Evrenin Kaderi/Kapalı Evren.

## The Seven Heavens

In the Holy Quran, the Almighty also makes mention of seven heavens or levels of skies. Presuming what has been mentioned up until now pertains to the first level, how are human reason and comprehension expected to bear the mysteries of the others?

Allah, glory unto Him, asserts:

“Who created the seven heavens one above another; you see no incongruity in the creation of the Beneficent Allah; then look again, can you see any disorder? Then turn back the eye again and again; your look shall come back to you confused while it is fatigued. And certainly We have adorned this lower heaven with lamps and We have made these missiles for the devils, and We have prepared for them the chastisement of burning.” (al-Mulk, 3-5)

Now, lift your head and turn your gaze to the skies! Reflect on the innumerable objects in space, faltering not even for a split second in their orbit amid this grand order, each loaded with an underlying mystery and wisdom in its movement.

If the Earth did not rotate on its axis, one side of it would constantly be bright, while the other side doomed to perpetual darkness. There would have been no way of separating the hours of work from the hours of rest.



There is also inherent wisdom in the fact that it takes 24 hours for Earth to rotate once around its axis. Were it to take longer, Earth would have been something like Mercury, where the difference between daily and nightly warmth exceeds 1000 C° (1,832 F). Excess heat would have scorched the Earth in those long days, leaving only for a menacing cold come the evening, freezing everything in its wake.

With these in mind, take note of how the Almighty has blanketed the day with night and rendered the former a time to work, while the latter a time to rest. Think of the manifestations of Divine Power and Mercy in their relentless pursuit of each other!

Again, had the Earth not rotated around the Sun with a tilt of 23 degrees and 27 minutes, there would not have been the four seasons so vital for life. Furthermore, had the Earth not been given this tilt, water evaporating from the oceans would have surged north and south, turning continents into daunting icebergs.

If the moon, say, was 50,000 miles further away from where it is now, the tides would have been so enormous that the continents would have been deluged twice on a daily basis. Even the mighty mountains would have eroded to utter annihilation, in almost the blink of an eye.<sup>23</sup>

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23 See, *İlim-Ahlâk-İman*, prepared by, M. Rahmi Balaban, Diyanet Publishing, Ankara, p. 187.

So therefore, do not be stuck in awe of the sky simply for the sake of its immensity and the myriad of stars it boasts. Instead, proceed to reflect on its Creator and how He has fashioned and ordered it all! How is it that the Almighty holds those massive stars together without a visible pillar or peg?

Just think of the Sun and the Moon; do they ever breakdown? Is there ever a time when they are sent to repair? While traveling in their predestined orbits do any of the countless objects in space step out of their Divine course and have accidents?

### **It is a Grave Sin to Abandon Contemplation**

How amazing it is that man is infatuated upon seeing an ostentatious, embellished palace. The sight never leaves his mind, as he keeps on spreading the news of its beauty for the rest of his life. But in spite of constantly seeing the grand Divine masterpiece of art that is the universe, he shrinks back from thoroughly reflecting on it and shies away from making an adequate mention of it. He takes no notice of it and carries on, like it is an ordinary thing. Little is he aware that the palace he admires so much is but a tiny particle of Earth, which in turn is one of the smallest specks of the grand universe...



A person oblivious to contemplating Divine Power resembles the ant in the below parable:

An ant builds a nest in a king's palace, which is surrounded by high walls, built on a solid foundation, decorated by the most exquisite furniture and swarming with servants. When encountering its friends upon making its way out of its nest, the ant speaks to them about nothing but its nest, the crumbs it gathers and how it stocks them for the morrow. The ant is utterly and almost hopelessly remote from the thought of the magnificent palace in which it roams and the power, splendor and sovereignty of the king. Its ignorance is all the more compounded by the fact that he is completely unmindful of those who live there.

An ignorant man is also unmindful of the Almighty's divine masterpieces of art, the angels and the righteous person living in His dominion.

There is no way that an ant can become aware of a palace and the beauties it boasts. But through contemplation and imagination, we humans can journey through many realms. In a humble return for the countless blessings the Almighty has endowed him with, a person can come to terms with his nothingness and vulnerability, and prostrate in gratitude. Only a 'human' can do this; or in other words, only those who do this can carry the honor of humanness. Indeed, humanity has a natural predisposition and ability for



contemplation. Gradually laying waste to this potential by not putting it to use is to betray Divine trust and to bid farewell to one of man's most defining attributes.

The great Mawlana Rumi provides the following parable to describe those who roam on the display of eternal mysteries and wisdom that is Earth with an idle heart and respond to the glaring Divine messages radiating forth from creation with so little as a dim-witted expression.

*“An ox one day came to Baghdad and strolled around town from tip to toe. But amid all the beautiful sights, tastes and masterpieces, only some melon and watermelon peels dumped on the side of the road caught its attention. After all, befitting the gaze of an ox or a donkey is either hay scattered on a road, or weed and grass growing from its fringes.”* (Mathnawi, v.4, couplet: 2377-2329)

It is said that a certain man during the time of Musa –upon him peace- had worshiped persistently for thirty years; such that a cloud had even begun to shade him during his times of worship, owing to his piety. But there came a day when the cloud did not make its appearance, leaving the man to worship in the sun. He went to his mother to see if she might know the reason.

“You must have committed a sin”, she commented.

“No”, he responded. “I do not believe I have!”



“Did you not gaze at the skies, the flowers? Were you kept back from contemplating the splendor of Allah despite seeing them?” she asked.

“Yes”, the man then confessed. “I failed to contemplate in spite of seeing the wonders around me.”

“Are you looking for a greater sin than that?” his mother then said. “You must repent immediately!”

A believer of right mind must therefore never neglect the duty to contemplate.

The more a person learns of the magnificence of the Almighty’s art and the more he contemplates it, the more his wisdom of the Almighty’s Glory and Majesty and his proximity to the Truth will be.

Ali –Allah be well-pleased with him- has said, “Expanding knowledge of the Quran with some knowledge of astronomy enables one to grow in faith and certainty”, after which he quoted the following verse:

“Most surely in the variation of the night and the day, and what Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, there are signs for a people who guard (against evil).” (Yunus, 6)

Every single being created by the Almighty, serves a specific purpose within the Divine order. Until now, mankind has been able to gain acquaintance with only



a few of these purposes. Wisdom unseen and as yet not comprehended are multitudes infinitely greater in number than compared to those thought to have been understood.

If we know what sound is, it is because we have receptive organs like ears. If we know what color is, it is all thanks to our eyes. Who knows of the many Divine manifestations in this infinite realm of being of which we have absolutely no clue, simply because we are deprived of the receptive organs to sense them.<sup>24</sup>

Restrained by a limited power of reason, how can man be able to perfectly comprehend Allah, glory unto Him, when he cannot even completely grasp the entire creatures and their specific characteristics? Muslim scholars, who were able come to terms with just an infinitesimal glimpse of the Almighty's Splendor and the manifestations of His attributes, felt compelled to admit, in awe and dazzle:

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24 The universe, according to Muslim scholars, consists of substances and accidents. Substances are material entities. Accidents, on the other hand, are the perceptible qualities of a material entity. Color and smell, for instance, are accidents perceptible only through the subsistence of a material being. As mentioned above, color would not have been perceived had there been no such thing as eyesight, and smell it were not for smelling. As we are to begin a life of a unique character in the Hereafter, presuming we will then begin perceive accidents of an entirely distinct nature is as conceivable as considering many other accidents to exist, here on Earth, that lie beyond our perception.



***“To understand Him is to understand He cannot be comprehended.”***

This is because created beings contain no reflection or manifestation of the Almighty’s essential reality. Everything created by Allah, glory unto Him, is constituted by the combinations of Divine attributes. The fact that there has not been created a single space that can endure an essential manifestation of the Almighty is proven by the Divine response “لَنْ تَرَانِي / You can never see Me”<sup>25</sup> given to Musa –upon him peace- upon his adamant request to see the Almighty, as a consequence of which he ended up passing out. It is for that very reason that, let alone seeing the Almighty’s essential reality, man is limited by an insufficiency to even comprehend the reality of His attributes.

Elegantly depicting this is the late Necip Fâzıl:  
The atoms in revel, bedecked, festive,  
And a light all around, a light all around,  
An architecture entwined, the self entwined,  
I identify you Lord, the Famous Unidentified!

## **The Atmosphere**

The air that envelops the Earth holds many secrets and is underlain with numerous wisdoms. The clouds

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25 al-Arâf, 143.



that suddenly appear in the sky, the wind that breezes through the air, sometimes light sometimes in a burst, lightings that emit a tremendous sound, the pelting rain, the falling snow; each is a fabulous manifestation that occurs in line with a magnificent measure.

The Holy Quran summons man to contemplate such manifestations rampant between the Earth and the sky and to behold the proofs that verify the Power of the Almighty, stating:

“Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which profits men, and the water that Allah sends down from the cloud, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between the heaven and the earth, there are signs for a people who understand.” (al-Baqara, 164)

The atmosphere, which compassionately embraces our Earth, is one of the most splendid orders of the Almighty in alluding to His boundless mercy for human beings. It is made up of 77% nitrogen, 21% oxygen and 1% of a combination of carbon dioxide, argon and other gases. So easily flammable is oxygen that it is estimated that each increase of a hundredth of oxygen in excess of the 21% spoken of, would increase the probability of a lighting strike induced bushfire by around 70%. An



oxygen ratio in excess of 25%, on the other hand, would be more than enough to turn an overwhelming majority of the vegetables we consume to ash.

On another note, despite the constant use of oxygen and carbon dioxide, their ratios in the air are maintained. If it only were humans and animals that inhabited the Earth, they would have used up all the oxygen in the air and turned it into carbon dioxide, and in swift time, they would have been poisoned through inhaling carbon dioxide, which would have increased in an inverse proportion to the decreasing oxygen. But the Power who created the universe also created vegetation. And by giving it an ability to process carbon dioxide and turn it into oxygen, He has endowed the universe with a magnificent balance and a life that never ceases.

The Earth's crust has been set with such a delicate measure that had it been just a little thicker, it would have absorbed all carbon dioxide and oxygen, leading to the end of all vegetation.<sup>26</sup>

Oxygen is a vital need for the biochemical functions our bodies constantly perform at every moment. We ceaselessly inhale air through our lungs and then exhale the very same air. That an appropriate density of oxygen in the atmosphere is needed to accom-

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26 See, *İlim-Ahlâk-İman*, prepared by: M. Rahmi Balaban, p. 187.

moderate this process of inhaling-exhaling shows that coincidence can not play a hand in maintaining this delicate ratio. Allah, glory unto Him, who has created our bodies in a way that requires a constant need for oxygen, has abundantly blessed us with our most vital, primary need. Not only has He made oxygen easily accessible, He has also placed it in the air in the most perfect ratio. Each simple breath we take is in fact a complex and meaningful exercise and an enormous Divine gift.

When aboard a state-of-the-art airplane, we hear an announcement right before it takes flight, advising us to “Wear the oxygen masks that will automatically deploy in case of a drop in pressure in high altitude.”

But in everyday life, none of us carry the slightest apprehension that, the amount of oxygen in the air will rise to, say, 25% or plummet to 18% by tomorrow and anxiously rush to buy an oxygen mask. A believer or not, every single person leads a life of utmost dependence on the Divine Order. Life would have been unbearable if one was aware of each and every life threatening factor surrounding him.

The air is also like a mirror enlightening our surroundings. Light cannot radiate forth without making contact with matter. A light that crashes into a particle spreads itself around, like a firecracker, in the forms of heat and light. As there are no particles like





molecules or atoms in the void of space outside of the atmosphere, they remain in darkness, despite them receiving the light of the Sun just the same.

The Moon, for instance, deprived of an atmosphere, has no layer of gas that can disperse the incoming light of the Sun and enlighten its surroundings. For that reason, whereas the surface of the Moon is bright, the surface above always remains in the dark despite it being inundated by a rain of light.

These wonderful manifestations are clear proofs that the Earth has been created in a way to accommodate human life and according to an all-important purpose. Together with being a grand blessing of the Almighty to His servants, this delicate balance which makes life possible is at the same time a proof of His existence and endless power. That each being in the universe moves in accordance with a set Divine program and that everything we encounter discloses an inner plan, measure and order necessitates the existence of a Power who plans, orders and measures this tremendous balance.

This makes the atheist claim that life and the universe for that matter have come to be and exist through sheer coincidence, a ridiculous nonsense.

İsmail Fennî Ertuğrul (1855-1946) illustrates this fact by way of the following analogy:



“Stumbling upon a measure and order at any given place, reason necessarily infers the existence of an ordering and measuring power.

Suppose you have a garden. You had the gardener consecutively plant many saplings around it. You turn up there one day to see that some of the saplings have been knocked down here and there, haphazardly. You ask the gardener for an explanation and he tells you that they were knocked down by a sudden storm. You will accept that answer. But you turn up there another day and this time see that the saplings have been knocked down in a pattern; you see, for instance, the fifth sapling in each line knocked to the ground while the previous four have been left in tact and you observe this pattern all around the garden. You, again, ask for an explanation and the gardener tells you, once again, that the storm is to blame. Will you believe that? Certainly, you will not. You will instead blame it on someone’s malicious intent. Even though the first case could be explained through coincidence, the second can not; for this time both measure and calculation have come into the picture.”<sup>27</sup>

No person of their right mind could dispute the fact that the universe maintains its existence through meticulous calculation and a most delicate balance.

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27 *İman Hakikatleri Etrafında Suallere Cevaplar*, p. 21-22, Sebil Publishing, Istanbul, 1978.



Below are just some instances of this Divine balance:

### **Air Pressure**

The gases that comprise the atmosphere apply a pressure of approximately 1 kg to a 1 cm square area, or 14.22 pounds per square inch. That is to say, the human body is under the constant pressure of 15 tons of weight. But Allah, glory unto Him, has balanced that out magnificently, too. Whatever amount of pressure there may be outside, our bodies contain the same amount of outward moving pressure. This drastic difference in air pressure is the very reason behind the illnesses and nasal bleeding experienced by some who ascend to higher elevation. Astronauts, who traverse beyond the atmosphere, on the other hand, can only travel wearing uniforms with inbuilt air pressure.

### **The Cold-Heat Harmony**

With their capacity to retain high heat, carbon dioxide and vapor molecules adequately dispersed in the air enable the maintenance of a perfect harmony. Absorbing some of the rays of sunlight that come during the day, these molecules prevent an excess increase of heat. When night falls and the Sun withdraws its rays, the heat absorbed during the day is withheld by



these molecules in the air, just like a hothouse, and is not released into the void of space. Because it does not have a protective roof of this kind, the Moon, for instance, is scorched by excess heat during the day and is under the grip of a blistering cold at night.

## The Winds

In terms of its purposes with regard to heat, pressure, level of moisture and many other activities that take place therein, the atmosphere is divided into different layers. The troposphere, the first of these layers, is through which rain, snow and winds occur. The layer extends to almost 16 km's (10 miles) to the sky from above ground level and its temperature gradually decreases all the way to  $-56^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-74^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). Founded in this layer of the atmosphere is a flawless cyclical system.

As the Earth's axis is a fraction tilted, it is not only the equatorial region that receives the rays of the Sun in a straight trajectory. This enables the distribution of heat to tropical regions. Consequent upon higher temperatures in these regions, a high amount of heat is stored; and the storage of this heat enables the maintenance of the required force and energy for winds.

Millions of tons of water vaporized from the seas and oceans mount the gentle air. From there, they are delivered by winds to lands in need of water. As a result



of this cyclical motion, rainfall is not reserved only for wet regions, but, through a perfectly executed plan, each and every region receives its due share of rainfall.

The immaculate motion of the atmosphere enables the transfer of heat. With help from the north to south motion of the low and high pressure systems and the strong currents, the cold air of the northern latitudes makes its way down south, while the southern heat makes its way up north.

That the Sun provides different parts of Earth with various intensities of heat enables the masses of air in the atmosphere to heat up in different levels. Hot air, compliant with the Divine command it is given, rises immediately. Constituted that way are active sources of air, known as low pressure centers in warm climates and as high pressure centers in cool climates. As a result, the tiny particles of air begin to move in the form of a wind, through which moisture, heat, intensity and energy found in the atmosphere, as well as pollens that reproduce plants, are shifted to their required places.

The Holy Quran declares:

“And We send the winds fertilizing, then send down water from the cloud so We give it to you to drink of, nor is it you who store it up.” (al-Hijr, 22)

Winds, just like the rest of creation in the universe, comply, in absolute obedience, with the Almighty’s

sovereignty. It is a means of mercy when our Lord commands it to be so, yet also a manifestation of a destructive wrath when, again, our Lord decrees.

A vivid illustration of this fact is the below verse, depicting how the Ad Tribe was annihilated by a vigorous gale:

“For We sent against them a furious wind, on a Day of violent Disaster. Plucking out men as if they were roots of palm-trees torn up (from the ground)”  
(al-Qamar, 19-20)

### **The Other Benefits of Air**

As well as carrying on its gentle shoulders millions of tons of water, the air also lifts airplanes boarded with hundreds of passengers. It distributes light and heat. It also brings, to our hearing, sounds of hundreds of different wavelengths, of which mobile phones are perhaps the most noteworthy example.

On the other hand, air presents our sense of smell with various types of fragrances without mixing them together. If it were not for the atmosphere, neither would we have been able to make ourselves audible to the person right by our side, nor flick on the light switch with the hope of seeing what lies in front of us. Circulating through our lungs, air moreover performs a vital task. By all these, it reminds believers with a



knack for contemplation of the infinite glory, power and mercy of Allah, glory unto Him.

### **A Divine Filter**

The layer above the troposphere that reaches a height of 50 km (31 miles) from ground level is called the stratosphere. The stratosphere blocks out dangerous rays of excess energy from the Earth. Found here is the ozone layer. An oxygen molecule consisting of a triad of atoms, the ozone filters the harmful aspects of the Sun's rays.

Ultraviolet rays emitted by the Sun decrease growth in plants, cause skin cancer human beings, damage the eye and increase the risk of catching a number of contagious diseases. What the stratosphere does is that it catches the ultraviolet rays that come from the Sun and reflects them back, and at once, turns oxygen to ozone through a superbly balanced chemical reaction.

In fact, so dangerous a gas is ozone that inhaling 1/200 grams of it is enough to kill a person. But just look at the mercy of the Almighty that He has made a filter out of such a layer of poison and put it to use in maintaining the climactic balance and in preventing a harm that would have had fatal consequences for human beings.



## The Guarded Canopy

The layer that extends to 80 km, (49.7 miles) above ground level and which is considered the middle layer of the atmosphere is the mesosphere, serving firm as a shield against pelting meteors.

Passing the obstacles of Jupiter, Saturn and the Moon, meteors come under the force of the Earth's gravity and enter the atmosphere at an incredible speed. What is commonly referred to as a shooting star is actually a meteor which comes into contact with the atmosphere and is burned to dust in the mesosphere. Had there not been a protective layer of the kind enveloping Earth, or if the current layer was a fraction thinner, millions of meteors would have fallen on Earth and wreaked destruction, punching countless holes on its surface just like that of the Moon. But the boundless mercy of Allah, glory unto Him, turns these giant cannons bound for Earth into dust before they ever make contact with its surface. Then, each particle of this dust turns into the nucleus of a tiny raindrop.

The formation of clouds requires fine particles that are a combination of both earth and space. On top of that, these particles are required to reach the highest atmospheric level. The moist winds that breeze their way into there apply an intensity on the nuclei and form a cloud particle. According to a physical





and mathematical plan, the cloud particles, in turn, become tiny drops of rain, which will then fall once again on earth.

Long before anything about the atmosphere had been discovered, the Almighty, the Owner of the Earth and skies, had said:

“And We have made the skies a guarded canopy and (yet) they turn aside from its signs.” (al-Anbiya, 32)

### **Radio Waves**

The atmospheric layer that begins from 500 km (310 miles) above ground level and reaches an elevation of 1000 km is called the ionosphere. There, the atoms and molecules are not uncharged but ionized, that is either by receiving or emitting electrons, they are charged with electricity. As a result of these atoms becoming ionized through absorbing the high energy rays of the Sun, the heat in the layer can at times reach 2000°C. For the atmosphere, the ionosphere is like a mirror made up of ions. Virtually hitting this mirror are the electromagnetic waves of radio and wireless transmitters that rise to space, some of which are then reflected back on Earth. The reflected waves then reach every single corner of Earth, making it possible to follow radio and wireless broadcasts everywhere with relative ease.



As can be seen, Allah, glory unto Him, has rendered Earth, a massive body sailing at a rapid speed in the dark void of space, a home abounding in life, set moreover to an ideal heat. Dominated by a pleasantly warm climate, not even a single waft breezing through Earth is without wisdom; not even a single leaf drops of its own accord, without reason.

Each created thing, from the smallest to the largest, is a portrait of the pattern of lessons and a Divine masterpiece.

The Almighty says:

“Do you not see that Allah has made what is in the heavens and what is in the earth subservient to you, and made complete to you His favors outwardly and inwardly? And among men is he who disputes in respect of Allah though having no knowledge nor guidance, nor a book giving light.” (Luqman, 20) <sup>28</sup>

How blissful it is for those who can read the wisdom and truth laden lines of the book of universe, understand them and plumb to the depths of contemplation!<sup>29</sup>

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28 Also see, al-Jathiya, 13.

29 See, Prof. Dr. Osman Çakmak, *Bir Çekirdekten Kâinat*, İstanbul 2005, p. 118-131.



## Clouds, Rain and Snow

Just think of the clouds, giant vessels sailing in the skies. One of the functions of clouds is to prevent the Earth from being exposed to excess heat. When temperatures rise, water becomes vaporized at a faster rate, generating more clouds. The rays of the Sun are then mirrored back towards the direction whence they came, preserving the balance of heat on Earth.

Allah, the Most Compassionate, sends the winds as harbingers of rain. The winds then, with Divine Command, move the mountain like clouds and steer them to their destined places. The Almighty, who distributes clouds in the skies as He wishes and clusters them around one another, then extracts raindrops from out of them, through which He enables the growth of various fruits on Earth. He reminds us that this will be the manner in which the dead will be resurrected, wanting human beings to take note of this grand portrait of wisdom.<sup>30</sup>

The Almighty showers His mercy upon whom He wills. Delighted especially upon the glimpse of rain are those hit by a severe drought. Their despair immediately turns to hope.<sup>31</sup> For the Almighty is He “...who sends down the rain after they have despaired,

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30 See, al-Arâf, 57; Fâtîr, 9.

31 See, ar-Rûm, 48.



and He unfolds His mercy; and He is the Guardian, the Praised One.” (as-Shura, 28)

The Almighty at times turns drought and at others rain or hail into means of punishment, penalizing His rebellious servants, striking whom He wills and protecting whom He spares.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, the Almighty aligns the relation between the skies and Earth in line with human behavior and their own inner world.

Rain is sent down by the Almighty in drops so that each remains separate in its own course without mingling with one another. Each drop of rain falls in its destined trajectory, without swaying the slightest bit. It neither comes late, nor does the raindrop next in line rush and overtake the drop beneath it. If entire humans and *jinn* were to join forces in making a single drop of rain or if they were simply to attempt to count the number of raindrops that fell in a single village at just one instant, they would not be able to. Only their Creator knows their exact number.

There is also an immeasurable wisdom in the icy, frozen drops of hail and in the snowflakes which fall like fine cotton, both of which are made up of fine water.

Who raises the drops of rain and snow that fall onto the ground to the highest branches of trees?



Indeed, water is distributed around every single inch of a leaf but it is unseen. Through their capillary veins, each speck of the leaf and concurrently the whole tree receives its fair share of water.

How is it that water, which is supposed to flow on a downward course, able to make its way all the way up to the top?<sup>33</sup>

If raindrops were to fall in compliance with the law of gravity, each drop would have struck Earth at the speed of a flying bullet. And that would have meant living beings would have suffered instant death at the hands of these bullet-like drops. Yet, each raindrops falls onto the ground at a consistent speed, slowly, without causing the least hurt or harm.

Shaped according to a specified measure, water then takes the shape of tiny raindrops. Then through the lifting force of the air and the fluidity of the drops themselves, the force of gravity is balanced out, enabling the drops to hit the ground at a constant speed.

These truths alone would suffice for those who gaze with wisdom to appreciate just how magnificent the Divine order and harmony, effective throughout Earth in which we live, is. No less clearly would they

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33 See, Imam Ghazzali, *Ihyâ*, VI, 67-68.

see the infinite knowledge, power and wisdom of the Almighty by such observation.

## Contemplating the Ground

Pious servants are steeped in contemplation. They become acquainted with the language of blooming flowers, chirping birds and trees that yield fruit. They mirror onto their spiritual lives the elegance and beauty they see. They gain an elegance of spirit like flowers and generosity like trees abounding in fruits. These are the lucky people Allah, glory unto Him, praises in the Holy Quran.

The Almighty has decked out the Earth's surface in the best manner imaginable and has made it hospitable to human existence. Placing paths and passages thereon, He has made the ground suitable and mild to travel on.

The Holy Quran states:

“Who made the earth a resting place for you and the sky a canopy and (Who) sends down rain from the cloud then brings forth with it subsistence for you of the fruits; therefore do not set up rivals to Allah while you know.” (al-Baqara, 22)

“Have We not made the earth as a wide expanse,  
And the mountains as pegs?” (an-Naba, 6-7)



“He it is Who made the earth smooth for you, therefore go about in the spacious sides thereof, and eat of His sustenance, and to Him is the return after death.” (al-Mulk, 15)

Allah, glory unto Him, has spoken of the ground in His Sacred Book so that humans could delicately reflect on the wisdom underlying it.

Above ground is for the living, while below ground is for the dead. The Almighty says:

“Have We not made the earth to draw together to itself, the living and the dead...” (al-Mursalat, 25-26)

Now, look carefully at the ground when parched; it looks all but dead! Yet, once met with water from the skies, it vibrantly comes to life and regains its green. It grows multicolored plants. From the depths of its bosom emerge various forms of life. Then take note of how the Almighty has reinforced the ground with colossal mountains! Just look at how He has stored reserves of water underneath them? How does He then burst out springs from these and form vast rivers on Earth? Just how does He raise sweet and pure water forth from dry rock and murky mud? How is it that this water gives life to all things? Through water, how has Allah, glory unto Him, raised from the ground wheat, grapes, clovers, olives, dates, pomegranates and countless others? Each has a different shape, color,



taste and aroma; to each a distinct beauty, a distinct pleasure...Some are superior to others in terms of nutrition. But all are watered by the very same water and emerge from the very same soil.<sup>34</sup>

## Plants

Once a seed falls to the ground and is touched by the soil's moisture, it begins to develop, as a result of which its lower and upper parts crack open. From its upper part emerges the tree, which develops higher above the ground, while from its lower part comes the root, regally spread out deep under the soil. This is an amazing spectacle; for although the seed is of a single nature and is under the affect of a single influence, it brings forth one distinct part that grows upward and another that becomes entrenched further beneath the ground. It is astounding that a single entity can give birth to two opposing elements. This, we know, must be through the will and governing of One Creator, who exudes wisdom in all His acts.

One part of the tree that springs forth from this seed becomes wood, and another leaves. Further, another part smiles in the form of flowers which then further develop to yield fruits, generating certain vitamins of benefit to the human body.





Again, a single fruit possesses numerous characteristics. For instance, whereas the seed of a grape is cold and dry, its fleshy part is warm and juicy. That a fruit develops various characteristics from a single seed, despite each of these being exposed to the same influences, is undoubtedly the working of an infinitely powerful and wise Creator.

Furthermore, Allah, glory unto Him, has rendered flora a natural pharmacy for the healing of many diseases. Some plants are cures, sources of nutrition; they reinvigorate the body. While some revive, others, being poisonous, kill. Once consumed, a plant mutates to become another element. Many plants purify the blood. Many others give life and energy. Others provide calm and put one to sleep...

What a cause of wonder it is that through plants water and carbonic acids are transformed to sugar and wood and that oxygen is released for organisms to breathe.

There is hence not a single leaf or weed that buds out from the ground that does not carry loads of benefit for human beings; such that man does not even have the power to grasp them all at their core.

An assortment of colors, scents, tastes and leaves of distinct shapes which the seemingly ordinary weeds manage to garner from the depth of earth, are absolute wonders no chemist could manage to replicate.



The harmony and order prevalent during the growth of plants is a distinct manifestation of Divine Majesty. A plane tree, for instance, produces millions of seeds each year. To allow them to scatter to their surroundings, these seeds have transparent parachutes of feather; and with the aid of blowing winds they are ushered to places extremely remote. If each seed given off by a single plane tree was to end up developing into a tree, the whole world would have come under a plane tree invasion. In other words, the vast Earth would have been too small for only a single species of tree. This example can be extended to other beings as well.

In fact, years ago in Australia, they began using a species of kakitos to build hedges. But because there was no native insect in Australia hostile to the kakitos, the plant began to spread infectiously. A rapid growth that sent the locals to despair saw the kakitos end up covering an area as big as England, in length and width. Wreaking destruction on their lands and settlement, it eventually forced the local townspeople out of their homes, who gradually left a trail of ghost towns in their wake.

After rummaging the Earth from head to toe, scientists discovered a species of insect that lived only off the kakitos and consumed nothing else; an insect that developed in rapid speed and moreover had no



known faunal or floral enemies in Australia. As anticipated, the insect overpowered the entire kakitos in short time. Today, the kakitos are reserved to only a small area and are far from posing a threat. As for the hoards of insects imported to tackle the destructive plant, there remains only enough to keep the pressure on what now is a scarce amount of kakitos.<sup>35</sup>

This goes to show the existence of a somewhat mystifying and almost inexplicable yet at the same time a harmonious ecological balance effective throughout the universe. No sound mind could therefore challenge the existence of a Power who prevents some species of plants and animals from increasing in excess and plaguing the Earth.

Again, what cause for wonder it is that millions of distinct plants and fruits emerge from the compound of soil! Our Lord, the *Razzaq*, the Absolute Provider, prepares different feasts for beings of different species...

A human being, for instance, cannot consume a majority of what a sheep eats, and vice-versa. Provisions are therefore distributed among creation according to a delicate balance. The below verse, displaying the Divine Power behind providing and distributing provisions to creation, is thought-provoking indeed:

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35 *İlim-Ahlâk-İman*, prepared by, M. Rahmi Balaban, p. 190.



“And how many a living creature that does not carry its sustenance: Allah sustains it and yourselves; and He is the Hearing, the Knowing.” (al-Ankabut, 60)

When one thinks of it, how great a manifestation of Divine Mercy it is that living beings provide mutual means for each others’ survival, to the point where a bird feeds another injured bird by carrying morsels to its beak.

There exists a profound lesson in the fact that countless Divine feasts have been held since the beginning of the world without break and without neglecting to feed a single living being, and that this still continues as we speak. If we pause here for a moment and think... Three-quarters of Earth’s surface is covered with water. A majority of the remaining quarter is comprised by deserts or rocky areas unsuited for the growth of plants. Only a portion of what remains is soil. But just how mighty the power of Allah, glory unto Him, is that through a ceaseless metamorphosis, He renders soil the source of nourishment for all living beings on the land!

### **The Vast Seas**

Water covers three-thirds of Earth’s surface entire. Because of this, neither can the freezing colds of the North and South Poles nor the scorching tropical heat can take Earth in their grip. The Earth’s surface,



warmed up by the rays of the Sun during the day, distributes this heat all around, like a radiator. As for the seas, despite receiving millions of calories of heat from the Sun, they can warm up only to a certain degree; but once warmed up they do not lose their heat easily. So, the Earth's seas regulate climates and act as a thermostat moderating against excessive heat or cold; hence the reason why they are of greater mass compared to land. By virtue of vaporization, they moreover satisfy the need lands stand in for water. Lesser seas would have meant lesser vaporization and that would have resulted in a drought fierce enough to turn the entire land on Earth to desert.

No less are the characteristics of maritime beings to those of land. Pearls, corals and other adornments and especially the fresh seafood acquired from the depths of seas are of particular importance to human beings.

## Water

The survival of all beings on Earth depends on water. A person, unable to find water despite desperately needing to, would doubtless not blink an eye in surrendering all the treasures of Earth just to have one precious sip. Again, he would not think twice about relinquishing all of Earth's treasures just to release the consumed water from his body, if he was unable to. Man is cause for wonder! Just how does he make



such a big deal of gold and silver while remaining oblivious to the enormity of the blessings placed by the Almighty within just a single sip of water?<sup>36</sup>

It would not take long for a person, who contemplates these underlying wisdoms as is worthy of their nature, to realize that all beings on Earth depend on the protection and aid of a Creator of infinite knowledge and power just to survive. He would come to terms with the fact that he lives under miraculously perfect conditions, in a virtual wonderland, he herself would have been unable to maintain. Neither reason nor conscience would then be blind enough to have the nerve to rebel against Allah, glory unto Him, the Creator and the Regulator of the Universe.

### **Underlying Wisdoms in the Animal Kingdom**

One ought to look carefully at the birds fluttering in the skies, animals both domesticated and wild and the tiny, barely visible insects; for they possess such peculiarities that it is impossible not to stand in awe of the splendor, power and wisdom of the Almighty.

Just how has the Creator placed such incredible appendages on those tiny, hardly perceptible insects? And how to they flawlessly carry out their functions without faltering? Even a complete insight into the features they simply possess stands beyond the capability of human comprehension.

If man was to gaze carefully at animals, their diverse shapes and appearances and then reflect on what they provide of their skin, fur, meat and milk for man's comfort, he would no doubt become aware of the boundless blessings and mercy of the Almighty. Allah, glory unto Him, has given each of them a distinct skin to protect them from the cold, thick nails to safeguard their feet and has covered for all the needs they may have in the best, most aesthetic manner conceivable.

For example, parading in bodies adorned with the most beautiful, exquisite of patterns despite having a lifespan of a mere fortnight, butterflies reveal many mysteries through their body language; just one of the infinite Divine wonders presented to the gazing eye, the comprehending mind and especially the sensitive heart...

The Holy Quran summons us to observe the camel and reflect on how it has been created:

“Will they not then consider the camels, how they are created? And the heaven, how it is reared aloft? And



the mountains, how they are firmly fixed? And the earth, how it is made a vast expanse? Therefore do remind, for you are only a reminder.” (al-Ghashiya, 17-21)

That means that manifestations of Divine splendor beckon in an observation of the structure of animals and other organisms.

The Almighty has endowed all living beings with such characteristics that they produce different products despite feeding off the same food. For instance, if a cattle or sheep were to eat the green leaves of a mulberry, they would produce meat, milk and skin or wool. A silkworm on the other hand, a tiny bug, weaves silk from the very same leaves. Similarly, the ability of a bee to generate honey from pollen is absolutely beyond human power.

While a single animal is able to turn grass into meat and milk, human beings, the most perfect of creation, cannot emulate this feat even using tons of grass just in hope of producing a mere drop of milk, even if they were to set up the most state-of-the-art laboratories for the purpose.

The Almighty declares:

“And most surely there is a lesson for you in the cattle: We give you to drink of what is in their bellies, from between the feces and the blood, pure milk, easy and agreeable to swallow for those who drink.” (an-





## The Honeybee

Allah, glory unto Him, states:

“And your Lord revealed to the bee saying: Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build: Then eat of all the fruits and walk in the ways of your Lord submissively. There comes forth from within it a beverage of many colors, in which there is healing for men; most surely there is a sign in this for a people who reflect.” (an-Nahl, 68-69)

The Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- has said:

*“A Believer is like a honeybee. He eats what is clean, he produces what is clean, he settles on clean places and he neither breaks nor harms where he settles.”*  
(Ahmed, II, 199; Hakim, I, 147)

Mentioning the traits of a Believer, the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace-, at the same time, hints at the beauties of a honeybee and its underlying wisdom.

Huseyin Kashifi comments:

“Contemplative believers know that Allah, the Omniscient and Omnipotent, has created the frail honeybee upon numerous underlying wisdom.

The honeybee obeys and never strays of the path.



It eats the sweet and sour fruits it comes across and gives sweet honey in return.

It is so pious that it does not eat anything but what is pure.

It is so obedient that it never leaves the Almighty's command.

It is so loyal that it travels to places remote only to return to its home of origin.

It is so clean that it does not perch upon and eat what is dirty.

It is such a craftsman that even if the entire architects and engineers were to join forces, they would not be able to imitate what it produces.

There...just as there are curative properties in the honey they produce for diseases of the body, there is, in contemplating their states a cure for ignorance, the disease of the heart.”

### **The Marvel of Instinct**

In the following, İsmail Fennî Ertuğrul highlights how animals lead their lives within a Divine program called the subconscious mind or instinct:

“Animals know through instinct without ever being taught of the essentials needed to maintain



their survival, the continuation of their offspring and the food that is good for them. Birds build wonderful nests. Migrant birds come together on a specific day before setting out. Before dying, instead of killing the other bugs that are to become food for its babies waiting to hatch out of their eggs, some insects injure their glands so as to make them unable to crawl and then place the injured bugs by the side of the eggs. Yet, how amazing it is that once developed these very insects begin to live off foods of other kinds. Bees possess the ability to determine the gender of larvae by changing their foods. In this way the bees can make a queen out of a larva should the hive lose its leader through an accident of some sort...”<sup>37</sup>

Again, how astounding it is that once a hornet overpowers a grasshopper, it digs a hole in the ground. It then stings the grasshopper in such a spot that the grasshopper does not die though it loses consciousness. Placed in the hole in the ground, the grasshopper is henceforth like conserved meat. Soon after this, the hornet lays her eggs by the side of the hole and the newborns find the fresh meat they need to consume by their side the moment they enter the world. As for the hornet, she flies to a remote place, away from the newborns, to die. There is no way that such mysterious behavior can be explained through terms like adapta-

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37 İman Hakikatleri Etrafında Suallere Cevaplar, p. 58-59.



tion and learning. They have been given this instinctual knowledge by the Almighty.<sup>38</sup>

After spending years in the sea, a salmon returns to its native waters, the river. What's more, it comes back to the very place it was born, the shore where the stream flows into the river.

Who has endowed the salmon with the instinct to return to its place of birth? If you were to put a salmon in another stream that flows into the same river, immediately realizing that it is in the wrong place, it would turn back and make its way back to its stream of origin, swimming against the flow to get to its place of birth.

It is even more difficult to make out the mystery of the eel. When about to hatch, these amazing creatures come from all the lakes and rivers across the world and make their way towards pits located near the Bermuda Islands<sup>39</sup>, where they lay their eggs and die. The eels of Europe, too, traverse a distance of thousands of miles across the vast ocean and arrive at the same place. Without further ado, the newborn eels, which supposedly do not know anything other than that they have opened their eyes in boundless waters, set out from those pits and swim relentlessly, up until

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38 See, *İlim-Ahlâk-İman*, prepared by: M. Rahmi Balaban, p. 189.

39 The Bermudas are a chain of islands in the Atlantic, off the north coast of the Caribbean, east of the United States.



they ultimately reach the shores where their parents had once come from. The eels do not stop there; they proceed to reach the river or lake where their parents had dwelled in. Up until now, there has never been a sighting of an American eel in European waters, and vice-versa. What's more, owing to the greater distance they are required to travel compared to other species of eels, Allah, glory unto Him, has extended the lifespan of the European eel by about a year!

Now, what is the origin of such a strong feeling of direction?<sup>40</sup>

These amazing traits of animals show that neither their lives nor their behavior are based on sheer coincidence and that, much rather, they all take place within a plan and program sketched out by the Power who has created them.

It stands as one of the clearest proofs of the existence, power, splendor and sovereignty of Our Lord that even animals are governed by a higher consciousness. By exhibiting such proofs to the judgment of mankind, Our Lord exposes those who are ready to acknowledge the Truth and submit to it, as opposed to those who will stubbornly turn a blind eye on the miraculous manifestations staring at him in the face. The verse indeed declares:

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40 *İlim-Ahlâk-İman*, prepared by: M. Rahmi Balaban, p. 188-189.

“Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable- (that of) a gnat or any thing above that; then as for those who believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord, and as for those who disbelieve, they say: What is it that Allah means by this parable: He causes many to err by it and many He leads aright by it! But He does not cause to err by it (any) except the transgressors” (al-Baqara, 26)

### **Creation in Pairs**

Reserving singleness to Himself alone, Allah, glory unto Him, has created all beings in twos. The Holy Quran reveals:

“And of everything We have created pairs that you may be mindful.” (ad-Dhariyat, 49)

“He created the heavens without pillars as you see them, and put mountains upon the earth lest it might convulse with you, and He spread in it animals of every kind; and We sent down water from the cloud, then caused to grow therein (vegetation) of every noble kind.” (Luqman, 10)

Dual creation, of which science has only recently become aware, was informed by the verse of the Quran revealed 14 centuries ago, presented humankind as a gift of insight.



Delicately prepared beyond the most innovative thoughts and wildest imaginations of human beings, like the most exquisite bride's chamber, our universe has been subjected to a specific and incredible marital law, according to the particular characteristics of each and every element, from the cells of plants and animals to the mysterious protons and electrons of atoms that dwell harmoniously in matter. And this opens up for us a magnificent horizon for contemplation.

### **Contemplating the Blessings of the Almighty**

The greatest favor Allah, glory unto Him, has bestowed upon us is that, among the entire possible range of creation, we have been created as human beings and have come into the world in a Muslim environment. Of even further greatness is that we have been subjected to the Holy Quran and have been made members of the followers of the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace-.

For us, the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- is the most perfect example of the Holy Quran personified. Teaching us the Book and wisdom, he makes our inner worlds crystal-clear. Fully comprehending just these favors alone would be enough make us fall prostrate in gratitude, without lifting our heads for even a mere second.



Of course, the Almighty's favors are not limited to these. Like a virtual cloudburst, many of His blessings pour down upon us, His servants, at each moment. The Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- states:

*“Allah has said, ‘Provide, so that I provide for you’. The treasures of Allah are vast. What He provides for entire creation does not reduce His treasure in any way. He provides ceaselessly, day and night. Think of what Allah has provided since the day He created the heavens and earth! They have not reduced anything from His Sovereignty.”* (Bukhari, Tafsir, 11/2, Tawhid, 22)

Required by these blessings are their contemplation and inferring through them the existence of their Creator, conducive to a thankfulness for His Power and Generosity.

Omar ibn Abdulaziz –may Allah have mercy on him- remarks:

“There is beauty in remembering Allah in conversation. But contemplating the blessings of Allah, now that is the most virtuous of deeds.” (Abu Nuaym, Hilya, V, 314; Imam Ghazzali, Ihya, VI, 45)

Ingratitude or a lack of due appreciation is to neglect giving thanks for these blessings and to squander the lavishly, in a manner dictated by the ego. This state of mind distances one from the Almighty, their ultimate source.



Thankfulness is threefold:

1. Thankfulness of the heart: To think about the blessing.

2. Thankfulness of the tongue: To utter praises of the Allah, glory unto Him, over the blessing.

3. Thankfulness of the limbs: To give the blessing's due in proportion, at least, with the enjoyment acquired.

It has been said on the other hand that 'to each blessing, a thanks of its kind'; that is, whatever it may be that the Almighty has blessed us with, we ought to extend it those in need. So states the verse:

"And seek by means of what Allah has given you the future abode, and do not neglect your portion of this world, and do good (to others) as Allah has done good to you, and do not seek to make mischief in the land, surely Allah does not love the mischief-makers."  
(al-Qasas, 77)

### **Contemplating at Every Opportunity**

Ziya Pasha writes:

*A wisdom of a thousand lessons read in every page,  
Of the universe, o Lord, how beautiful a stage!*



In what could be taken as an elucidation of the above couplet, the great Muslim scholar Sufyan ibn Uyayna –may Allah have mercy on him- used to frequently repeat the below saying, originally belonging to a poet:

“If contemplative, man takes a lesson from everything.” (Imam Ghazzali, *Ihya*, VI, 45)

This must be the logic behind the Arabic proverb, “So many things to take a lesson from, yet so few are those who do.”

### **Each Particle Explains the Almighty**

Once one is able to learn how to read the book of universe through contemplation, every single particle around him begins to instill in him the majesty of Allah, glory unto Him, and bring him closer to His knowledge. Fuzuli articulates this beautifully:

If a wise is able to grasp the revelation Divine,  
*Each particle for him becomes a Jibril come-to-life*  
Allah, glory unto Him, declares:

“But nay! I swear by that which you see, and that which you do not see. Most surely, it is the Word brought by an honored Messenger.” (al-Haqq, 38-40)

One of the wisdoms underlying the vows taken in the Holy Quran is to draw attention to a particular lesson, benefit of and insight into the object on which

the vow has been taken. The servant is thereby summoned to gain a depth of spiritual feeling through an understanding of that splendor.

Thus all beings, both visible and invisible, evidence the power and lordship of Allah, glory unto Him. Countless wisdoms beckon in their thought and reflection.

The wisdom acquired and mysteries solved as a result of the strengthening of our ability to contemplate and sense through the verve of the Quran will be just as magnificent as the grandeur a tiny plane seed gains through becoming a grand tree in fertile soil.

The Almighty declares:

“Most surely in the heavens and the earth there are signs for the believers. And in your (own) creation and in what He spreads abroad of animals there are signs for a people that are sure. And (in) the variation of the night and the day, and (in) what Allah sends down of sustenance from the cloud, then gives life thereby to the earth after its death, and (in) the changing of the winds, there are signs for a people who understand.” (al-Jathiya, 3-5)

Getting hearts and minds to focus on such material for contemplation alluded to by the Holy Quran will deliver one to the climes of *taqwa*. Just as flowers depend on water, air, soil and light to exist, granting



contemplation a desired level depends on attaching it to piety.

The Almighty desires His servants to be people of delicate thought; inquiring human beings of understanding. Each Muslim should therefore turn to contemplation, at every given opportunity, with an ardent feeling of worship. The words of Rabia –may Allah have mercy on her soul-, the wife of Ahmed ibn Hawari, provide splendid examples in relation:

“Whenever I hear the *adhan*, I am reminded of the crier of Judgment Day...

“Whenever I see snowfall, it is like I see books of deeds drifting about in the sky...

“I am reminded of Resurrection the moment I see a pack of swarming grasshoppers...”

It is reported that Caliph Harun ar-Rashid once went to a bath, where the bath attendant accidentally poured boiling water over him. Suffering major burns on his scalded body and in agonizing pain, the Caliph rushed outside and gave away thousands in charity, commenting:

“I cannot stand the heat of hot water today... How will I be if I am destined for hellfire in the Hereafter?”



The Prophet –upon him blessings and peace-, taking a lesson from everything he witnessed, used to turn to the Lord in thanks and seek His refuge. We, too, ought to perceive Divine splendor in everything we see and seek to acquire the spiritual food to sustain the inner world of our hearts and minds. Wherever a Muslim may look, be it the Sun, the Moon, the atmosphere, his own creation, his ancestors or children, he must read the Divine messages communicated through them with the eye of the heart. By virtue of reflecting on his origin and destination, on how he is able to survive, by whom he is given a particular shape and form, a specific brand and span of life; and through acknowledging that neither life itself nor the universe is ever detached wisdom, that nothing has been created in vain and most importantly that man himself has not been left unaided and alone, he must constantly be aware of Divine power and majesty.

Why has the Almighty created the Universe?

Allah, glory unto Him, says:

“And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in vain. We did not create them both but with the truth, but most of them do not know.” (ad-Dukhan, 38-39)

Contemplating the universe must grant one an appreciation of the will of the Almighty and of the fact



that everything, presented to the use of man, has been created with a purpose. Through this, one must reflect on his responsibilities towards the Creator and not neglect his duties of servanthood. Remaining insensitive and ingrate to the enormous favors and blessings of the Almighty, is a undoubtedly a woeful ignorance that does not, in any way, befit the honor and dignity of being human.

Man must not forget he will be called into account for all the blessings received; so states the Almighty:

“Then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the joy you indulged in!” (at-Takathur, 8)

We are therefore eternally indebted to our Lord for all the blessings that surround us, both for those of which we are aware and unaware. How wonderful are those hearts of wisdom which, fully conscious of this debt, strive to put deeds of gratitude into practice!





## CONTEMPLATION OF MAN

Just to think that the ground which we walk is filled with the bodies of billions of deceased human beings to have lived until now; bodies now completely turned to dust, like billions of shadows piled upon one another...Tomorrow, we too are bound to glide into this dense shadow. From there, an eternal life will begin; a journey to the never-ending. In that case, let's stop awhile and think: What wise mind would trade a moment for eternity?





# CONTEMPLATION OF MAN

## The Magnificent Subtleties of Creation

Allah, glory unto Him, states:

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ  
وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

“And in the earth there are signs for those who are sure; and in your own souls (too); will you not then see?” (ad-Dhariyat, 20-21)

So magnificently has the Almighty created man, that even the lauded science and technology of our age, despite its numerous discoveries, has fallen short of comprehensively making out the wonderful mystery that is the human being. The Quran states:

“O man ! What has beguiled you from your Lord, the Gracious one, Who created you, then made you



complete, then made you proportionate? Into whatever form He pleased He constituted you...” (al-Infitar, 6-8)

Reminding him of their past, Allah, glory unto Him, urges human beings to reflect on their creation; such that although made the most honorable among entire creation owing to an exceptional design, they were created in the first place from a somewhat unappealing and unsightly, watery substance.<sup>41</sup> How absurd it is then for man to take confidence from a temporary, vulnerable existence that is in fact tantamount to nothing, and rebel against his Lord, the eternally Powerful and Wise, who made a magnificent being from a tiny drop of liquid!

The stages of human creation, of which medicine has only recently become aware, are depicted in the Quran in the following:<sup>42</sup>

41 See, Abasa, 17-22; ar-Rûm, 20; al-Qiyâmah, 36-38; al-Mursalât, 20-22; Yâsîn, 77; al-Insân, 2.

42 The Quran has been reinforced with each scientific discovery over the past 1400 years. That a Book, presented to humankind through an unlettered Prophet, should touch upon laws effective throughout the universe and thousands of phenomena, the reflections of these laws, and not be disproven by as little as a single discovery, stands as an incontestable proof of its Divine origin. Simply put, the Quran is always at the forefront of science and scientific discoveries always support it, following in its wake.

Many Western intellectuals, prudent enough to lay anti-Islamic prejudice aside, have been able to draw a connection between discoveries made only recently in our times and their references in the *ayat* of the Holy Quran revealed some 1400 years ago, and have subsequently opted for the path of guidance, in utter admiration and

“And certainly We created man of an extract of clay, Then We made him a small seed in a firm resting-place. Then We made the seed a clot, then We made the clot a lump of flesh, then We made (in) the lump of flesh bones, then We clothed the bones with flesh, then We caused it to grow into another creation, so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators. Then after that you will most surely die. Then surely on the day of resurrection you shall be raised.” (al-Muminun, 12-16)

Just like his creation, man's organs also invite him to contemplation through a language of their own. As vast objects for our contemplation, our eyes, ears, hands, feet, brains, hearts and in short our entire organs virtually call out to us, urging:

Look carefully at how the Almighty has regulated the limbs, made up of muscles, nerves and veins, and put them all together to form an incredible, harmonious system! He has made the head round and opened up thereon ears, eyes, a mouth, a nose and other inlets...He has created the hands and feet long, divided their tips into fingers and toes and them into phalanges. As for the internal organs such as the heart,

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awe. One of them is the French embryologist Prof. Maurice Bucaille, who became Muslim following a similar thread. Of particular importance are his *The Bible, the Quran and Science* and *Moses and the Pharaoh*, which we encourage our readers to pick up.



stomach, lung, liver, intestines, spleen and womb, He has fashioned them in the most perfect way imaginable. Not one of them is futile and detached from the rest; each serves a crucial function, created in a manner most suitable to carry its specific function out. What's more, each organ is divided into internal components. The eye, for instance, has layers, each of which has a distinct quality and shape. Should any one of those layers break down or lose one of its qualities, the eye loses its entire power of vision.

### **The Bones**

The formation of bones is awe-inspiring. How is that they have been made so hard and resilient by the Almighty when created from a mere drop of sperm? How are they then, as the skeleton, turned into the buttress of the body, so balanced and sturdy? And how are they then measured into distinct shapes, in a host of sizes and varying densities?

Neither is man made up of a single piece of bone. Bones are attached to one another through flexible joints, each with a shape compliant with the movement it is meant to make. So wonderful is the greasing mechanism of these joints that attempts to explain it through the three recognized types of mechanical greasing have proven fruitless.



Let's consider for a moment the difficulties we would encounter in life if a single joint in our body was to break down!

Had Allah, glory unto Him, created a bone more in our bodies than the amount there already is, that bone would have been a cause for agonizing discomfort, something needing to be surgically removed. In contrast, had there been a bone less, we would have been required to exert an enormous amount of effort to make up for its loss; and in most circumstances, our efforts would have been of little avail.

Let's imagine we were not able to use just one thumb. How immense an obstacle would that have proven to be?

Some teeth are flat, suitable for grinding. Others are pointed and sharp, ideal for cutting into and dividing food.

To move the bones, the Almighty has created muscles. The amount and shape of each muscle varies according to its specific location in the body. The eye, too, comprises many muscles. Only a simple malfunction of one has a detrimental effect on the entire eye.

These marvels are just those that are visible. There are also spiritual qualities imperceptible to sensory experience, like temperament, character, personality and conscience, which are even of a more astounding nature.



The wonders of the human body are the Almighty's art devised from a single drop of water. Upon seeing a beautiful painting, one tends to admire the painter's skill, art and genius. The painter's reputation is suddenly blown out of proportion. Yet, far from creating something out of nothing, all that the painter does is assemble some paint and a brush and reflect onto a canvas his impressions of sensible things, all of which are created by the Almighty in the first place.

In that case, seeing that even a painter's work attracts admiration, should not we contemplate the nature of the admiration we ought to nurture towards the wonder that is the human being, a unique masterpiece of art created, by the Absolute Artist, from a mere drop of liquid?

### **The Limbs**

The structure of the ears, the benefit of the nose, the function of the tongue and the distinct manner in which it utters each letter, the teeth that adorn the oral cavity and their pearl-like wonderful design, the sensitive structure of the vocal chords...That the voice of each person is different from another, so much so that the blind recognize people simply from their voices...

The hair, beard, eyebrows and lashes...The stomach, liver, kidneys and veins...Underlain by a supreme



intelligence and wisdom and working harmoniously with each other, each truly merits a lengthy reflection.

Our kidneys are a small piece of meat; they yet discern the poisonous from the nonpoisonous, sending the poisonous out of the body and returning the nonpoisonous thereto. Is it that the kidneys have a mind of their own or have access to computers or perhaps laboratories for medical analysis? We all know the troubles we are put through when this tiny organ begins to malfunction. Machines of enormous sizes are unable to fully perform what that small, 50 grams of meat does with ease.

Now, let's look at our hands. They have been made long so that they can reach out to the things desired. With a flat palm, the hand has been given five fingers, each with three phalanges. Four fingers stand to one side and the thumb to another. The thumb can run to the help of the remaining four fingers. If every human being, past and present, was to come together and ingeniously try to give the hand a better shape than what it already it has, they truly would not be able to.

If man was to lose a seemingly unimportant part of his body, like perhaps a fingernail, he would find himself the most helpless among all creation upon feeling the urge to scratch. If he were to ask the help of another person to scratch that severe itch, it would take numerous attempts of trial and error for the per-



son to find that itching spot. Yet, one's own hand never finds any difficulty in locating that spot and scratching it, even when deep asleep.

The seemingly simple motions we carry out with our arms, hands and fingers in fact demand a highly complex and calculated effort. To think that the limb motions of the high-tech robots today still lag incomparably behind those of human limbs, it would be reckless to remain indifferent to the eternal power and wisdom the Almighty exhibits in the human body, day in day out.

Poetically expressed below is the fact that man, like the rest of creation, constantly pronounces through its own language the Absolute Artist, to eyes that can see and ears that can hear:

*Witness to the existence of my Creator, is the existence of me*

*Other certain proofs are redundant, though there indeed may be...*

(Şinâsî)

## **The Compassion and Mercy of the Almighty**

Just look at the mercy and compassion of Allah, glory unto Him, that He postpones the full surfacing



of teeth to two years after birth. In the first two years, babies are not able to receive nourishment in the fullest sense of the term except by being breastfed. They therefore do not need teeth during that period. Fully developed teeth during this period would have been a great cause of pain for breastfeeding mothers.

As the child develops so does his need for nourishment and there soon comes a time when milk alone is no longer enough to fulfill that need. Arising at this time is a strong need to digest certain foods and with that comes the need to chew and swallow. The full development of teeth in children is hence neither too early nor too late. They develop exactly at the right time. Were they to develop earlier, they would prevent proper breastfeeding. That Allah, glory unto Him, not only thrusts forth those hard bones from out of soft gums but also makes them surface at exactly the right time, is indeed cause for wonder.

The Almighty has moreover imparted parents with an exceptional feeling of compassion to look after the child. Who would have borne a baby's brunt had not the Almighty placed in the parents' heart a drop of His own mercy?

The human body presents an incredible object for contemplation. It is an indisputable witness to the existence of the Creator. But one entirely ignorant



of this clear fact is constantly preoccupied with the desires of his ego. In attending to such desires, even animals stand on the same level as human beings. The ability that separates humans from animals and what grants them the credit of being the most honorable of creation is the wisdom acquired through gazing at the wonders of the skies and earth with a perceptive eye and contemplating the Divine works of art glaring throughout the universe, as well as human beings. As one grows deeper in this wisdom, he is raised to the level of angels, even higher, shortlisted to be resurrected in a state loved by the Almighty, amid the prophets and the righteous. This honor and privilege is remote from those enchained by their lusts, even more bewildered than animals.<sup>43</sup>

### **The Face and Fingerprints**

One day, someone commented next to Omar -Allah be well-pleased with him-, "Chess truly amazes me. Even though a chess board is only a meter in length and width, a person could perhaps make a million different types of moves on it, without one resembling the other!"

"There is something even more amazing", replied Omar -Allah be well-pleased with him-. "The length



and width of a face is a mere hand span. To add to it, the location of the eyebrows, the eyes, the nose and the mouth always remain the same. Still, you would not find any two people, in East and West, who have the exact same appearance. How great the glory, majesty and wisdom of Allah is that He displays boundless differences on a little piece of skin!” (Râzî, *Tafsîr*, IV, 179-180 [al-Baqara, 164])

Drawing attention to this wisdom, the poet says:

*Who is the Mastermind to have drawn this face?*

*Will not anyone face the mirror and ask?*

(Necip Fâzıl)

Of even greater magnificence are man's fingerprints. Today, there are computers and doors programmed to have fingerprints as security codes. Each person carries different and unique fingerprints. Even the fingerprints on the fingers of a single hand are different from one another.

It was only towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that fingerprints were discovered to carry different patterns in each person, like barcodes, after which they were begun to be utilized for the purpose of identifying people, especially in the legal and criminal sphere. Today, there is a science called dermatoglyphics, reserved exclusively to the study of fingerprints.



Endowing human beings with this unique characteristic, Allah, glory unto Him, has moreover hinted at this wonder in the verses of the Holy Quran revealed some 1400 years ago, declaring that when Resurrection comes to pass, even the fingerprints are to be rearranged in the exact manner they were during life. The verse states:

“Does man think that We shall not gather his bones? Yea! We are able to make complete his very fingertips.” (al-Qiyamah, 3-4)

The Holy Quran, as seen, continually leads the way and science only follows in its wake in confirmation.

Similar to fingerprints, the eyes also vary from person to person. Becoming prevalent in everyday life is the use of devices, from computers to doors that recognize its users not from old fashioned codes but from the specific qualities of their retinas.

Majestic is Allah, glory unto Him, who creates infinity of variety in an area even smaller than 1 cm<sup>2</sup>.

## **The Marvel of the Gene**

Recent discoveries in genetics show that each person carries another kind of code exclusive to himself. What's more, so tiny are these genes that even the entire genes of every single living being on Earth



would not be able to fill up something as small as a tailor's thimble.

Invisible even through a microscope, these genes settle in the cells of every living organism and give them their characteristics. In this sense, a thimble might seem too small to be able to hold each individual characteristic of the over 6 billion human beings there are in the world today; yet the evidence in support leaves no room for doubt.

How does, then, this tiny thing called the gene keep hold of the characteristics of every single living organism of who knows what amount? How is it that it can safeguard in an infinitesimally small area every single attribute of a given organism, even all the way to her psychological characteristics?

The fact that millions of atoms trapped in a single gene, too small to see even with the aid of a microscope, can virtually govern life on Earth, can only be through the discretion of a boundlessly Wise Creator. Here, there is not the slightest room for theory.<sup>44</sup>

Drawing attention to this, the Almighty declares:

“And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! we bear witness.

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44 See, *İlim-Ahlâk-Îman*, prepared by: M. Rahmi Balaban, p. 189-190.



Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: Surely we were heedless of this.” (al-Araf, 172)

These and alike manifestations of Divine power and art, which have been discovered only recently, leave reason speechless. Inspired by such feelings was Ziya Pasha, who as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, wrote:

*I glorify He whose art makes minds meek,  
And whose might leaves the wise weak...*

Who operates the Factory that is the Human Body?

Man must appreciate the fact that all beings, in the skies and on earth and in the sea, including him, depend on the Almighty every moment. On the simplest level, he must see:

Nearly all the activities within our bodies take place independently of our will. In this manner do our heartbeats, our breathing, the actions of all our other organs take place, including the inner workings within our cells and the mutual aid and communication that run frenetically between them. Who knows of the amount of malfunctions we would have caused if only the activities of one of these perfectly functioning organs or even the hundreds of types of biochemical reactions that occur within a single cell were left to our administering and control for only a day?<sup>45</sup>

How enormous a lesson there is in the fact that, on the one hand, we see a 10 ton elephant succumb to the command of a 10 year old child while on the other, as an expression of the sheer weakness of man, a tiny virus, invisible to the naked eye, bring down many an imposing man of strength!

We therefore must never ascribe to ourselves the strength given to us by the Almighty; we must never give way to arrogance and must always be reminding ourselves of the True Owner of strength. We must retreat to a constant state of gratitude, acknowledging that we are not even specks of dust next to the Divine Power. We must always seek refuge in the Almighty.

Here, we have only briefly touched upon some of the many instances of Divine power and wisdom so abundantly manifested in human beings. Sparing time to reflect on man is bound to expose many more mysteries and wisdom Allah, glory unto Him, has placed therein. If a book was to be written for each cell of the human body, it would surely be an appropriate undertaking.

### **Why was Man Created?**

What is the true purpose of man, created in the best possible fashion as an honorable being and



endowed with countless blessings of the Divine? What is expected of him? What are his responsibilities?

Allah, glory unto Him, asserts:

“What! Did you then think that We had created you in vain and that you shall not be returned to Us?” (al-Muminun, 115)

“And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me.” (ad-Dhariyat, 56)

Man must give thanks, in thousands, for each cell he has in his body, through deeds of worship, charity, enjoining goodness and patience, just to name a few. Each blessing comes with a price and each necessitates an expression of thanks.

The Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- says:

*“A charity a day is required for each joint man has. Helping a person mount his ride or placing his load upon it is charity. A kind word is charity. Every step taken on the way to the mosque for ritual prayer is charity. Giving directions, too, is charity.”* (Bukhari, Jihad, 72. See, Muslim, Zakat, 56)

*“A charity is required each day for each of your joints and bones. Every tasbih is charity. Every hamd is charity. Every tahlil is charity. Every takbir is charity. Advising with the good is charity. Preventing from evil is charity. Two rakat of ritual prayer offered at midmorn-*





*ing covers for all of these.”* (Muslim, Musafirin, 84, Zakat, 56. See, Bukhari, Sulh, 11, Jihad, 72, 128)

Other reports include “*adjudicating justly between two people*” and “*removing from the street things that bother passers by*”. (See, Bukhari, Sulh, 11, Jihad, 72, 128; Muslim, Zakat, 56)

The need to strive towards becoming a worthy servant of the Almighty is hence obvious. Making the most of each moment through deeds of worship and goodness and preparing for the life eternal in the best way possible is, moreover, essential.

## **Solving the Mystery of Death**

Muhammad ibn Kab al-Qurazi recounts:

“I had once met Omar ibn Abdulaziz in Medina. Back then he was a young man, quite handsome and wealthy, too. Years later when he became Caliph, I went to see him. After getting permission to go in next to him, I made my way through. Seeing him, however, I was stunned and I could not help but stare at him, astounded.

‘Why are you looking at me like that, Muhammad?’ he asked.

‘You have gone pale, your body looks worn out, you have lost most of your hair and what remains of



it is gray', I responded. 'Seeing you in this condition, Caliph, I could little hide my surprise.'

'Who knows then how great your surprise would be Muhammad, if you were to see me three days after I was placed in my grave' said he. 'Ants will have taken my eyes out of their sockets and they will have dribbled onto my cheeks; and my nose and mouth will have been filled with pus. It is really then that you will not recognize me and express a surprise greater than you can imagine!'" (Hakim, IV, 300/7706)

Above anything else, each person must contemplate his end: how is he to breathe his last, what will he encounter in the grave and what will his rank be in the Hereafter? These are the greatest mysteries lying in front of human beings; grasping the secret to the journey from the crib to the coffin and the wisdom underlying existence in this world and subsequent passage to the Hereafter. Each of us must make every effort in life to solve this riddle and thereby achieve eternal bliss.

One must first of all contemplate mortality, for it is an indisputable fact that:

"All that is on earth will perish." (ar-Rahman, 26)

There will come a day with no tomorrow; a day unknown to all of us. Allah, glory unto Him, states:



“And the agony of death will come in truth; that is what you were trying to escape. And the trumpet shall be blown; that is the day of the threatening.”  
(Qaf, 19-20)

Everyone enters this life through one door, the mother's womb, and lives out this life, a steeplechase that is run in a flurry of either spiritual or egoistical feelings. After passing through this narrow corridor, through the gate of the grave, each person finally makes their passage to the life of eternity.

The world, like a house with two doors, has been filled with and emptied of countless human beings, from the time of Adem –upon him peace- until today. Where are they now? Where will we be a short while later? Unknown...But one thing is for certain. Death has knocked on the doors of both the oppressors and the oppressed, sinners and saints; and now they stand waiting for the beginning of eternal life, Judgment Day.

Just to think that the ground which we walk on is filled with the bodies of billions of deceased human beings to have lived until now; bodies now completely turned to dust, like billions of shadows piled upon one another...Tomorrow, we too are bound to glide into this dense shadow. From there, an eternal life will begin; a journey to the never-ending. In that case, let us each stop awhile and



think: What person in their right mind would trade a moment for eternity?

In the Quran, the Almighty declares:

“On the day that they see it, it will be as though they had not tarried but the latter part of a day or the early part of it,” (an-Naziat, 46), informing us just how short this life is compared to the life of everlasting.

Echoing this truth is the following couplet, abbreviating the essence of worldly life:

Delicate is life, rapid, like the blink of an eye,

A bird taking flight, we heard not, yet it went by...

(Âşık Paşa)

Could there be anything more incredibly foolish than ruinously laying waste to the treasure of this earthly life like it is forever?

## Contemplating Death

The Prophet –upon him blessings and peace– used to command a frequent remembrance of death, discouraging us against being lost in worldly affairs.<sup>46</sup> He would say, “*A cause for wonder is he who only strives*

*for the deceitful life of the world, despite having belief in the life of eternity.”* (Qudai, Shihab’ul-Akhbar, n. 383)

The thought of the impending time of complete separation from the world, after which one will be left face to face with what he or she had done in life, good and bad, and receive her or his rewards or punishment in full, distances one from sin and temptation, and brings one closer to deeds of goodness. Contemplating one’s death, in other words, is a means to gaining greater conscience, straightening up one’s life and working towards bettering one’s condition in the life of eternity. The Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- says:

*“Remember death frequently; for remembrance of death purifies one from sins and renders him indifferent to the world. If you think of death while rich, it will protect you from the disasters of wealth. If you think of it when poor, it will enable you to become satisfied with your life.”* (Suyuti, Jami’us-Saghir, I, 47)

Again, encouraging the remembrance of death, the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- said:

*“I had forbidden you from visiting graves. But now you may, for visiting graves will remind you of the Hereafter.”* (Tirmidhi, Janaiz, 60; Muslim, Janaiz, 106)

*“Remember death and the decaying of bodies and*



*bones after death. He who desires the Hereafter deserts the dazzle of the world.”* (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 24)

*“Allah loves he who often remembers death.”*  
(Haythami, X, 325)

“Who is the cleverest Believer?” a Companion once asked the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace–, who replied:

*“He who frequently remembers death and prepares for what’s to come in the best possible way...It is they who are truly clever.”* (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 31)

### **The Companions’ Contemplation of Death**

Abu Bakr –Allah be well-pleased with him- once said during a sermon:

“Where are the handsome, the beautiful, who were once admired by everyone? Where are the young, gallant men of self-importance? Where are those kings who surrounded the grandiose towns they set up with high walls? Where are the invincible heroes of the battlefields? Time has eaten them away and made them level with earth. They have all been buried in the darkness of their graves. Hasten to come to your senses before it is too late and start preparing for beyond death! Save yourselves, save yourselves!” (Ibn’ul-Jawzi,

Aisha –Allah be well-pleased with her- explains:

“I once thought of hellfire and began to cry. Seeing me in tears, the Messenger of Allah –blessings and peace upon him- asked, ‘*What is wrong, Aisha?*’

‘I was reminded of hellfire, so I cried’, I replied. ‘Will you prophets remember your family members on the Day of Judgment?’ I then asked.

*‘There are three places where nobody will remember anyone. Before finding out whether the scale of deeds (mizan) will weigh in heavy or light; before knowing from which way the book of deeds will come, from the left, right or from behind, up until saying, ‘Here; read my book’ (al-Haqqqa, 19); and when the Bridge of Sirat is set up, suspended above Hellfire. On both sides of the bridge, there are many hooks and hard thorns. With them, Allah catches whom He wills from among creation and throws them into Hellfire. A person cannot think of anyone else until he finds out whether he will be spared from these hooks or not.’* (Hakim, IV, 622/8722)

Usayd ibn Khudayr –Allah be well-pleased with him-, of the most virtuous Companions, used to repeatedly say:

‘Had I been able to always sustain the state of mind that overtook me in either one of these three



moments, I surely would have been Paradise bound: While reading the Quran or listening to someone read it, listening to the talks of the Messenger of Allah –upon him blessings and peace- and upon seeing a funeral. Yes indeed...whenever I see a funeral, I feel like it is me experiencing the things the deceased is going through, taken to where the deceased is being taken.” (Hakim, III, 326/5260)

### The Benefits of Reflecting on Death

As stated in the *hadith* “**Death is sufficient advice**”<sup>47</sup>, there are many lessons awaiting the thinking mind in the phenomenon of death.

Excess love of the passing pleasures of the world, and desire for fame and fortune are symptoms of spiritual disease. Envy, conceit, hypocrisy and lust are nothing but products of the love of the world. One of the most decisive remedies in protecting oneself from such malicious habits and spiritual shortcomings lies in the contemplation of death, the grave and events of the Afterlife.

Defeating the ego, becoming free of its damaging dominance and thereby purging the love of the world from the heart is the main objective of *tasawwuf*.





Contemplation of death has therefore been an implemented method in many a *tariqah*, where the disciple spares five to ten minutes during his daily *wird* to reflect on death.

The Ottoman tendency to establish graveyards in town centers, by roads and in the courtyards of mosques, was only to provide an incentive for contemplating death. A Western traveler who picked up on this could not help but say, “Turks live with their dead.”

Preparing for the Hereafter by frequently remembering death and brushing aside the desires of the ego will help one avoid the agonizing remorse that may come with the final breath. The Almighty informs that a person, who during the throes of death suddenly comes to his senses as if waking up from a dream, is bound to plea, in deep remorse:

“My Lord! Why did You not respite me to a near term, so that I should have given alms and been among the doers of good deeds?” (al-Munafiqun, 10)

To avoid going through this tragic ordeal of remorse, we therefore need to open our eyes while we still have the time and begin to prepare for the impending life of eternity before the opportunity is forever lost.

Hasan Basri –Allah have mercy on his soul- had



attended a funeral. Following the burial, he asked the man next to him:

“Do you think this person is right now wishing to return to the world to increase his good deeds, prayers and repentance over his sins?”

“Of course he is” assuredly replied the man.

“Then what is stopping us from thinking like him?” responded Hasan Basri. (Ibn’ul-Jawzi, al-Hasan’ul-Basri)

### **Preparing for the Tremor of Death**

Hasan Basri –Allah have mercy on him- says:

“There are two nights and two days, the likes of which have never before been seen or heard. The first of these nights is the first night you spend in the grave with the dead. You had never before stayed with them. The second of these nights is the night whose morning breaks with the Hereafter. A day without a night is then to begin. As for the days, the first is when an emissary of Allah comes and tells you whether He is pleased with you or not, whether you are destined for Paradise or for Hell. The second day is when you shall receive your book of deeds, from your right or left, and then be taken to the presence of Allah.” (See, Ibn’ul-Jawzi, az-Zahr’ul-Fatih, p. 25; Abu’l-Faraj Abdurrahman,

Death is the greatest tribulation for man, the most terrible trial; but even worse than death is to live oblivious to death, to put it completely out of the mind and to fail to offer appropriate deeds for its preparation. Intelligent is the one who prepares for death before it comes knocking and cleans his or her soul of immorality.

Sheik Sadi says:

“You will become earth in the end, brother; so before you do, seek to become humble like earth.”

Omar –Allah be well-pleased with him- has said:

“Call yourselves to account before you are called to account. Adorn yourselves with righteous deeds before the greatest tribunal! The tribunal in the Hereafter of one who used to call himself to account during life, will surely be comfortable.” (Tirmidhi, Qiyamah, 25/2459)

As our mortal bodies are placed in the grave, our children and wealth will remain behind. Only our deeds will accompany us as we lay buried in the depth of earth. There, our bodies will turn to soil, together with our shrouds, leaving nothing behind but our good deeds.

Imam Ghazzali –Allah have mercy on his soul- says:



“Only three things remain with a person at the moment of death.

1) Purity of the heart, that is a heart purified of the dirt of the world. Allah states:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّيْهَا

‘He will indeed be successful who purifies it...’  
(as-Shams, 9)

2) Familiarity with the remembrance of Allah, glory unto Him, who says:

أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

‘...Now surely by Allah's remembrance are the hearts set at rest.’ (ar-Rad, 28)

3) Love of Allah, glory unto Him. Again, He declares:

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

‘Say: If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will then love you and forgive your faults. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.’ (Al-i Imran, 31)

Purifying the heart is possible only through *marifah*, knowing Allah, glory unto Him, in the heart.

*Marifah*, in turn, is acquired through being constantly

occupied in *dhikr* and contemplation. These three qualities are thus saviors.” (Ruh’ul-Bayan, XI, 274)

If a person is able to make adequate preparation for ‘tomorrow’, death starts to assume a beautiful shape; he soon finds himself no longer afraid of it.

Bishr ibn Harith –Allah have mercy on him- in fact asserts, “What a wonderful station the grave is for he who obeys Allah.”<sup>48</sup>

Similar words of wisdom come from Mawlana Rumi -Allah have mercy on him:

*“The color of death, son, is in the eye of the beholder. To those who hate death without sparing a thought that it is death that unites one with the Lord and are hostile to it, death appears as a terrifying enemy. To the friends of death, death comes as a friend.*

O the soul who flees in dread from death! If you want to hear the truth of the matter, you are not really afraid of death; you are but afraid of yourself.

*For it is not the face of death that you behold in the mirror in horror; it is your own ugly face. Your spirit is like a tree. Death is a leaf on that tree. And every leaf belongs to the species of the tree it stems from...”*

48 The Commission, *Nadratu’n-Naïm*, III, 963; Abu’l-Faraj Abdurrahman, *Ahwâlu’l-Qubûr*, p. 155.



In short, our death and experiences of the grave, set to continue until Resurrection, will take shape according to the way we lived and the deeds we offered. It is for that reason that Allah, glory unto Him, explains to us the gist of both the life of the world and that of eternity on numerous occasions in the Holy Quran. Encouraging us to consider how the world will ultimately come to an end in due course, He urges us to remain aloof from its dazzle and deceit. He wants us to consciously turn instead to the life eternal, a life approaching by the minute that shall never cease.

It is therefore necessary for a person to sincerely repent from all of ones sins before death and make amends for his or her shortcomings in complying with the commands and prohibitions of the Almighty. Again, he must restore the rights to all those whose rights he may have infringed on; that is, before breathing his last, he must seek the pardon of people he may have verbally or physically assaulted, slandered, backbitten or acted with malicious intent, and be cleared of all personal debts, be they physical or spiritual.

An ignorant person may rejoice over having infringed on the rights of others; he may misread his corruption for joy. But there is simply no telling how bottomless his remorse will be on the day when the



scales of justice are set and it is said to him, “You are a helpless, low and deprived man in ruin. Here, you may no longer restore any rights or seek the forgiveness of anyone.”

As his death approached, Abdulmalik ibn Marwan, the Umayyad Caliph, saw a launderer in the outskirts of Damascus wrapping the clothes around his hand and thrashing them against a washing rock. Heaving an agonizing sigh upon suddenly remembering the terrifying tribunal of the Hereafter, the Caliph lamented:

“If only I too was a launderer! If only I earned my daily feed with my hands and did not have any say in worldly affairs!” (Ghazzali, *Ihya*, VI, 114)

Together with preparing for the tremor of death, it is also essential not to lose hope in the mercy of Allah, glory unto Him.

Uqba al-Bazzar recounts:

“Viewing a funeral procession, a Bedouin standing next to me, who was looking on at the coffin, commented, ‘Congratulations...you have all the joy in the world!’

‘Why are you congratulating him?’ I asked.

‘How can I not congratulate a person being taken into custody by an Eternally Generous Custodian,



whose treatment of His guests is splendid and mercy boundless!’

It was as if I had never before heard words so beautiful.” (Abu’l-Faraj, Abdurrahman, Ahwal’ul-Qubur, p. 155)







## CONTEMPLATION IN THE QURAN

For believers of heart, the Holy Quran is a majestic gateway to the depths of the realm of contemplation, a vast horizon of reflection. It is the language of the heavens and earth. With its words of wisdom, spirit's only food, it is an endless treasure of inspiration, a miracle of eloquence given to human beings.

Thousands of books written in the Islamic world over the past 1400 years have had the aim of understanding and delving into the depths of one 'Book' and gaining a closer acquaintance with one 'Man' and becoming annihilated in his person.



## CONTEMPLATION IN THE QURAN

Humans are naturally predisposed towards contemplation. But we need a guide to steer our minds out of the narrow straits of the ego and turn its direction to the truth and good. The most dependable guide is the Holy Quran, the Almighty's word, and its embodiment and physical clarification, the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace-.

For believers of heart, the Holy Quran is a majestic gateway to the depths of the realm of contemplation, a vast horizon of reflection. It is the language of the heavens and earth. With the words of wisdom it provides, spirit's only food, it is an endless treasure of inspiration, a miracle of eloquence given to human beings.

The Holy Quran is the elucidation of man and the universe. The universe, man and the Quran are three interconnected planes that shed perfect light on each



other. A person steeped in the Quran starts to read the Divine blessing both in himself and in the universe and begins to turn the pages of the book of wisdom. Many Divine secrets become manifest to him, many windows open up in his heart to beyond.

The remedy to curb the desires of the ego that push humanity onto the path of destruction is in the Quran; it is also the cure for moral depravity that renders man lower than beasts and the measure for preventing feelings of justice from turning into uncompromising oppression. In short, the most potent medicine for happiness, for which human beings stand in need under all circumstances, is only in the Holy Quran.

### *Allah taught the Holy Quran*

The Holy Quran is the greatest gift to humankind from the Almighty's own presence. It states:

“The Beneficent. Taught the Quran. He created man. Taught him the mode of expression.” (ar-Rahman, 1-4)

Teaching the Holy Quran as an enormous manifestation of His eternal mercy, the Almighty has thereby provided human beings access to much wisdom and the answer to many mysteries. Humanity is therefore required to learn the Quran and first develop ones inner world, then strive towards becoming the Quran come-to-life with all ones actions and behavior and



finally toil to communicate it to the rest of humankind in the most effective manner.

### **All Books are for *One Book***

Thousands of books written in the Islamic world over the past 1400 years have been for the aim of understanding and plumbing the depths of one 'Book' and gaining a closer acquaintance with one 'Man' and becoming less like ones self, and more like his person. If all the trees in the world were to serve as pens and the seas as ink, it would still be impossible to enumerate the wisdoms and truths contained in the Holy Quran.<sup>49</sup> Within it are the codes of all knowledge and wisdom, as well as the keys to happiness in life both in this world and in the Hereafter.

The Holy Quran always leads the way, while the sciences follow in its wake. Each scientific discovery confirms and sheds light on the truths of the Quran.

Allah, glory unto Him, declares:

"We will soon show them Our signs in the Universe and in their own souls, until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient as regards your Lord that He is a witness over all things?" (Fussilat, 53)

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49 See, Luqmân, 27.



Continuing research into the Quran will continue to manifest its hidden miracles anew. The Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- has in fact informed that scholars can never have enough of reading the Quran, that it never loses its freshness in spite of continuous recital and that its aspects which reduce man to speechless admiration are inexhaustible.<sup>50</sup>

### Reading the Quran Contemplatively

Muslim scholars have defined the purpose of reciting the Holy Quran as contemplating its meaning, inner wisdom and then acting in accordance with what it demands.

For the stimulation of thought, there is nothing better than reading the Quran, since it is the word of the Almighty who infinitely knows the intricacies of the human condition. In other words, the Holy Quran holds a mirror to each person, enabling him to recognize himself just the way he is. Every Muslim must therefore frequently recite the Quran and reflect on what it exactly is that the Almighty requests with each verse.

Since each word of the Quran comprises immeasurable secrets, a contemplative read of a single verse



in this manner is preferable to a careless read of the Quran entire. Only a purified heart and a refined soul gained through delicate contemplation, high morals and righteous deeds can grant one access to the truth of those mysteries.

Allah, glory unto Him, states:

“A *surah* (chapter) which We have revealed and made obligatory and in which We have revealed clear communications that you may be mindful.” (an-Nur, 1)

“A Book We have revealed to you abounding in good that they may ponder over its verses, and that those endowed with understanding may be mindful.” (Sad, 29)

“Do they not then reflect on the Quran or are there locks on the hearts?” (Muhammad, 24)

The Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- was once asked about the best tone of voice and manner of recitation (*qiraah*) for reading the Quran.

“The recitation by he, whose voice, upon hearing it, makes you feel he fears Allah”, he replied. (Darimi, Fadail’ul-Quran, 34)

Reading the Quran is one of the foremost activities exposed to the whispers of Shaytan, for a person who reads the Quran and reflects on its promises, warnings, clear signs and explanations will offer righteous deeds with greater enthusiasm. He will refrain from the



impermissible and the doubtful with greater dedication. As reading the Quran is among the most virtuous of all the righteous deeds, Shaytan leaves no stone unturned in trying to keep people away from the Word of Allah, glory unto Him. It has therefore been commanded to seek refuge in the Almighty before beginning to read the Quran, by saying «أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ». As the verse declares:

“So when you recite the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Shaytan.” (an-Nahl, 98)

How did the Prophet of Allah read the Quran?

The Prophet –upon him blessings and peace– used to recite the Holy Quran slowly, with a depth of feeling. He would contemplate the meanings of each verse, immediately putting into practice their commands. Upon reciting a verse commanding to glorify (*tasbih*) the Almighty, he would say *subhan'Allah*, negating the Creator of all deficiencies. Upon reciting a verse suggesting prayer, he would pray the Almighty. Reading a verse speaking of seeking refuge in the Almighty, seek refuge is what he would do.<sup>51</sup>

At times he would focus on single verse so intently that he would pray and contemplate it until daybreak.





Abu Dharr –Allah be well-pleased with him- recounts:

“The Messenger of Allah –upon him blessings and peace- once kept on repeating the following verse at ritual prayer until morning:

إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَبْدُكَ وَإِنْ تَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ  
فَإِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

‘Should You punish them, then surely they are Your servants; and should You forgive them, then surely You are the Mighty, the Wise.’ (al-Maida, 118)” (Nasai, Iftitah, 79; Ahmed, V, 156)

The Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace-, after reading the above verse, once added the following:

“My Lord! Surely they have led many men astray; then whoever follows me, he is surely of me, and whoever disobeys me, You surely are Forgiving, Merciful.” (Ibrahim, 36)

Immediately afterward, he lifted his hands aloft and began pleading, “My Allah...My followers, my followers!” shedding tears at the same time.

Allah, glory unto Him, thereupon commanded Jibril –upon him peace- to, “Go and ask why Muhammad is crying, so humans know the reason, although Your Lord of course knows why he is.”



Jibril –upon him peace- returned, informing the Almighty that His Messenger was crying over concerns for his followers. Allah, glory unto Him, then once again commanded the Archangel to, “Go to Muhammad and give him Our glad tidings that ‘We shall please him regarding his followers and never distress him.’” (Muslim, Iman, 346)

Such was the Prophet’s –upon him blessings and peace- compassion and keenness for his followers. We need to thoroughly reflect on the above and honestly assess our degree of love for the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- and how much we are able to practice his *sunnah* as a testimony of that love.

Abdullah ibn Masud –Allah be well-pleased with him- narrates:

“One day the Messenger of Allah –upon him blessings and peace- asked me, ‘Can you read me some Quran?’

‘How can I read you some Quran when it is you to whom the Quran is revealed?’ I responded.

‘I like hearing the Quran from others, too’ said the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Thereupon I began reciting chapter an-Nisa. When I came to the verse that says:



‘How will it be, then, when We bring from every people a witness and bring you as a witness against these?’ (an-Nisa, 41), he said:

‘That will suffice for now...’

When I fixed my eyes on him, I saw tears flowing freely from both his eyes.” (Bukhari, Tafsir, 4/9; Muslim, Musafirin, 247)

Aisha –Allah be well-pleased with her- recounts a scene that provides a glimpse of the Prophet’s –upon him blessings and peace- sensitivity of heart and depth of contemplation:

“One night, the Messenger of Allah –upon him blessings and peace- said to me, ‘If you allow me, Aisha, I wish to spend the night worshipping my Lord.’

‘I would surely love to be with you,’ I said, ‘but would love even more anything that makes you happy.’

He then got up, took a thorough ablution and began his ritual prayer. He was crying...So much that it soaked his clothes, beard and even the ground on which he fell prostrate. Still in that condition, Bilal came to call him to the ritual prayer of *fajr*. Seeing him overflowing with tears, Bilal wondered:

‘Why do you cry, Messenger of Allah, when Allah has forgiven your past and future sins?’



‘Shouldn’t I be a thankful servant to his Lord?’ replied he. ‘Such verses were revealed to me this evening that shame on him who reads them without contemplating.’ He then disclosed the revelation:

‘Most surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day there are signs for men who understand. Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You have not created this in vain! Glory be to You; save us then from the chastisement of the fire!’ (Ali Imran, 190-191)” (Ibn Hibban, Sahih, II, 386; Alusi, Ruh’ul-Maani, IV, 157)

The night in which these verses were revealed, the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace– shed tears of pearl until daybreak, as if to make the stars in the sky jealous. Tears shed by believers when contemplating the manifestations of Divine Might and Splendor will, with the blessing of the Almighty, adorn passing nights, radiate the dark grave and reappear as dew in the gardens of Paradise.

In expression of the necessity and rewards of reading the Quran in a thoughtful and inquiring manner, the Blessed Prophet (peace be upon him) has said:

*“If a group of people gather in a house among the houses of Allah, read the book of Allah and talk about*



*it amongst each other, serenity will descend onto them, they will be encompassed with mercy and be surrounded by angels. And Allah, glory unto Him, will mention those people in His presence.”* (Muslim, Dhikr, 38; Abu Dawud, Witr, 14/1455; Tirmidhi, Qiraah, 10/2945)

*“One who completes reading the entire Quran in less than three days cannot properly understand it and properly contemplate on it.”* (Abu Dawud, Witr, 8/1390; Tirmidhi, Qiraah, 11/2949; Darimi, Salat, 173)

*“Recite the Quran in a way that it will hold you back from evil! If it does not hold you back from evil, then you have not really read it.”* (Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Zuhd, p. 401/1649)

## **The Companions’ Reading of the Quran**

The Companions put all their focus on contemplation in order to understand the Holy Quran and meditating on the Word of Allah, glory unto Him, they read it in a way conducive to practice.

A perfect example of this, are the words of Omar –Allah be well-pleased with him-:

*“I completed chapter al-Baqara in twelve years and sacrificed a camel in gratitude.”* (Qurtubi, I, 40)

Similarly, Abdullah, the son of Omar –Allah be well-pleased with both- is reported to have studied



chapter al-Baqara for an entire eight years, in order to put its commands to practice. (Muwatta', Quran, 11)

They read the Quran, properly learning each of its commands and prohibitions in the process. A depth of contemplation on each verse of the Quran made it possible to put each into practice. (Kattani, Taratib, II, 191)

A man once went to Zayd ibn Thabit –Allah be well-pleased with him- and asked him his opinion regarding a complete reading of the Quran in a single week. “It would be good” replied the Companion, adding:

“But I take greater enjoyment from completing the Quran in fifteen days, or even twenty. If you ask why, it is because that way I can thoroughly reflect on the Quran and better understand its meanings.” (Muwatta', Quran, 4; Ibn Abdilbarr, Istidhkar, Beirut, 2000, II, 477)

Abdullah ibn Masud -Allah be well-pleased with him- says:

“Whoever seeks knowledge should contemplate on the meanings of the Quran, focus on its interpretation and recital; for Quran contains the knowledge of both past and future.” (Haythami, VII, 165; Bayhaki, Shuab, II, 331)

A Bedouin had once heard the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- recite:



“So he who has done an atom’s weight of good shall see it. And he who has done an atom’s weight of evil shall see it.” (az-Zilzal, 7-8)

“The weight of a grain, Messenger of Allah?” he asked, astounded.

“Yes”, responded the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace-. Suddenly growing pale, the Bedouin began to moan, lamenting, “Then shame on me for my faults!” which he repeated many times, repeating the verse of the Quran to himself over and over, he then left the scene.

From behind him, the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- commented, “*Faith has trickled into his heart!*” (Suyuti, ad-Durr’ul-Mansur, VIII, 595)

## **The Righteous’ Reading of the Quran**

Fudayl ibn Iyad –Allah have mercy on him- had said, “The Quran was revealed to be practiced. But humans have only adopted its reading as practice.”

“How does one put the Quran into practice?” he was then asked.

“By accepting what it declares as permissible and impermissible, putting them to practice, complying with its commands, avoiding its prohibitions and pausing to think over its awe-inspiring expressions.”



(Khatib al-Baghdadi, *Iqtida'ul-Ilm'il-Amala*, p. 76)

Even a single verse of the Holy Quran is comprised of a vast array of meanings. Imam Shafii –Allah have mercy on him- in fact says:

“Just chapter al-Asr would suffice if people were able to adequately contemplate and reflect upon it.”  
(Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, ‘al-Asr’)

Asmai, a great Muslim scholar, recalls the following account with regard to contemplating on the Quran:

“A Bedouin had turned up next to Caliph Hisham ibn Abdulmalik. ‘Give me some advice’, the Caliph said upon which the man, directing the Caliph’s thoughts to the Quran, said:

‘The Quran suffices as an adviser. I seek refuge in Allah from the expelled Shaytan. In the name of Allah, the Compassionate and the Merciful:

‘Woe to the defrauders! Who, when they take the measure (of their dues) from men take it fully! But when they measure out to others or weigh out for them, they are deficient. Do not these think that they shall be raised again? For a mighty day; the day on which men shall stand before the Lord of the worlds...’  
(al-Muttaffifin, 1-6)’

The Bedouin then went on to say, ‘This is the punishment, my Caliph, for those who cheat when





scaling and measuring for others. It is for you to estimate the punishment for those who completely seize others' possessions!" (Ibn Abdirabbih, *Bedevî Arapların Özdeyiş ve Âdetleri*, Istanbul 2004, p. 57)

The famous Ottoman scholar Muhammed Hadimi states:

"The only way to be saved from all kinds of troubles, tribulations and misfortunes lies in embracing the Quran and actualizing it in life. Persist in deeds of worship, especially in reading the Quran slowly and contemplatively, with discretion, which is among the best of deeds! Reading the Quran in such manner is like speaking with Allah, glory unto Him." (See, Hadimi, *Majmuat'ur-Rasail*, p. 112, 194, 200)

## **Examples for Contemplation in the Holy Quran**

### **Contemplating the Knowledge of Allah, glory unto Him**

In many a verse, the Holy Quran touches upon the infinite knowledge of Allah, glory unto Him, and invites human beings to contemplation. Stated in one such verse:

"And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures - none knows them but He; and He knows what



is in the land and the sea, and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book.” (al-Anam, 59)

Upon hearing the above verse, a believer should pause and think: There are so many treasures which are unknown, the keys of which are with the Almighty only; never before opened, not yet existent and ever out of reach of human comprehension. Nobody except for Allah, glory unto Him, knows about them. Together with possessing an infinite knowledge of these mysteries of the unknown, the Almighty also has knowledge of every single being, up to their minute details. Never does a leaf fall outside the Almighty’s knowledge, who knows when and where it fell and how many times it turned in the air before it actually hit the ground.

The Almighty knows when a grain that has fallen to the earth is to flourish and by whom it will be eaten. All that is seen or unseen, felt or unfelt, large or small, known or hidden, every event that has happened or is waiting to happen are within the knowledge of Allah, glory unto Him, with all their complexities.<sup>52</sup>

Reading the above verse allows one’s imagination to spread its wings. It opens new horizons and unseen

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52 See, Muhammed Hamdi Yazır, *Hak Dîni*, III, 1947; Abû Hayyân, IV, 145-146, (al-Anam, 59).



realms; it wanders in the unknown corners of the land, into the bottomless depths of seas. With every experience, the mind beholds the knowledge and art of Allah, glory unto Him, in every corner of the vastness of space and beyond the visible universe. It gazes at the countless number of leaves that fall off from each and every tree on Earth, fully aware that the Almighty is seeing one leaf dropping here and another falling there. It appreciates that not a single grain, no matter how deeply hidden in the ground it may be, can elude Divine Sight and that every single particle, be it wet or dry, moves according to His command.

This journey through life fills the mind almost to the point of being overwhelmed, with awe. It is an expedition to the frontiers of time, to the most distant horizons of space, to the depths of worlds, known and unknown. The distance to be covered by the journey is tremendously long, the area immeasurably vast. If truth be told, the imagination is utterly helpless in perfectly invoking this area; for it is beyond measure. Still, this perfect scene has thoroughly, yet flawlessly, been depicted in the above verse in just a few words. (Sayyid Qutub, *Fi Zilal*, II, 1111-1113, *al-Anam*, 59)

As one continues to contemplate on the Holy Quran in this manner, he begins to realize a glimpse of the Almighty's knowledge and power. One detached from contemplation, on the other hand, continues to



be dragged relentlessly in the ego's torrent, deprived of Divine wisdoms, and majesty, hidden and yet there for all to see.

Sadi Shirazi says:

“For persons of wisdom, each leaf of a green tree is a book of Divine wisdom. As for the ignorant, all the trees do not add up to a single leaf.”

In another verse, the Almighty avows:

“He knows that which goes down into the earth and that which comes out of it, and that which comes down from the heaven and that which goes up to it; and He is the Merciful, the Forgiving.” (Saba, 2)

With a read of the above verse, the vision of innumerable objects, motions and shapes rush into the mind. It is even impossible for the imagination to accommodate all these visions. Even identifying and counting a split second portion of the phenomena alluded to in the above verse is out of the question. If all of humankind was to come together for this task and devote their entire lives for its accomplishment, in the end they would be left exhausted as they came to terms, in resignation, with their sheer helplessness in counting the number of objects raised to the skies and the number of those that tumble down in a single moment.



What exactly are those things that make their way into the ground? What sorts of seeds fall into the Earth's bosom? What kinds of species of bugs, insects and animals abide under ground? Who knows of the amount of water, gas molecules and radioactive rays that infiltrate the seemingly endless soil? Indeed, many things crawl their way underground; all with the command and permission of Allah, glory unto Him...

On the other hand, what kinds of things make their way out of the ground? How many plants sprout forth? The Holy Quran declares:

“Do they not see the earth, how many of every noble kind We have caused to grow in it?” (as-Shuara, 7)

“That We pour down the water, pouring it down in abundance. Then We cleave the earth, cleaving it asunder. Then We cause to grow therein the grain. And grapes and clover. And the olive and the palm. And thick gardens. And fruits and herbage. A provision for you and for your cattle...” (Abasa, 25-32; also see Qaf, 7-11)

Again, are the springs not without number? How many a volcano erupts, spilling forth its lava? How many varieties of gas are vaporized? How many an insect creeps out onto the surface of Earth from its hidden nest? How astounding it is that when fallen snow covers the entire ground, countless beings seek refuge in the bosom of the earth and, by Divine protection,



remain there safe and sound for weeks or months. The Almighty has made earth a virtual cradle for their well being. When the snow eventually melts, we never see piles of corpses belonging to those insects. They make their way above the surface of earth like nothing happened and once again resume their existence as before.

Again, if we pause for a moment and think of the forces, angelic and spiritual, as well as voices and prayers which rise to the skies...Many things, perceptible and imperceptible, living and nonliving, human beings know very little of, with the remainder entirely outside the limits of their knowledge.

What comes down from the skies, one wonders? Raindrops, meteors, flaming and illuminating rays on the one hand, arrows of destiny, predestined decisions and breezes of Divine mercy on the other. Some are inclusive of all beings, while others are wafts of mercy exclusive only to some.

All of these take place in the blink of an eye. Could human understanding grasp such happenings, occurring worldwide in a split second? A myriad of life spans would not be enough to count these happenings. Yet, the infinite Divine knowledge, which immeasurably goes beyond human cognition, recognizing no limit whatsoever on the way, encompasses all these happenings, whenever and wherever they may take place. It is therefore necessary to always bear in mind



that every heartbeat, with its hidden intentions, is under the surveillance of Allah, glory unto Him. (See, Sayyid Qutub, *Fi Zilal*, V, 2891-2892, Saba, 2-3)

## Chapter al-Waqia

We know that it is vital to deeply reflect on each verse of the Holy Quran. But here, we will only focus on some verses from the chapter al-Waqia, an-Naml and ar-Rum as cases in point.

The Almighty begins chapter al-Waqia by depicting the dread of the Day of Judgment, a day in which some will be elevated and others debased. After having been called into account, human beings are to be separated into three groups.

Then with a spellbindingly eloquent depiction, the Almighty explains the blessings that will be given to the servants, who led the way in life in all things good, and the righteous who received their book of deeds from the right side. This is followed by an illustration of the sad and horrid punishment that will be inflicted on those who receive their book of deeds from the left. By depicting hair-raising scenes of torment, the Almighty thereby deters His servants from committing sins. To steer clear of falling into this lamentable state, He then warns His servants by inviting them to contemplation, stating:



## **The Creation of Mankind**

“We have created you, why do you not then assent? Have you considered the seed? Is it you that create it or are We the creator?” (al-Waqia, 57-59)

What a tremendous work of Divine art it is that from a mere speck of water the intricately detailed yet harmoniously organized human body is formed.

## **Death and Resurrection**

“We have ordained death among you and We are not to be overcome. In order that We may bring in your place the likes of you and make you grow into what you know not.” (al-Waqia, 60-61)

This is the reality of death, the inevitable from which nobody can run. If the Almighty wills, He could destroy the deniers all at once and generate a brand new batch of people.

“And certainly you know the first growth, why do you not then mind?” (al-Waqia, 62)

Having perfectly created human beings once already, the Almighty doubtless has the power to recreate them. It is vital to contemplate on this fact and prepare for the resurrection, the inescapable rebirth after death.





## Seeds and Plants

“Have you considered what you sow? Is it you that cause it to grow, or are We the causer of growth? If We pleased, We should have certainly made it broken down into pieces, then would you begin to lament: ‘Surely we are burdened with debt; nay - we are deprived!’” (al-Waqia, 63-67)

We must look at the surrounding crops, trees and other plants with a perceptive eye and admiringly gaze at the Almighty’s blessings and inimitable art of creation. Without the working of Allah, glory unto Him, all efforts of human beings count for nothing; we could not even grow a single weed.

Let us imagine, for a moment, that all the greenery around us suddenly dried out. How bleak would our lives would be then!

## Fresh Water

“Have you considered the water which you drink? Is it you that send it down from the clouds, or are We the sender? If We pleased, We would have made it salty; why do you not then give thanks?” (al-Waqia, 68-70)

Fresh water brought down by the clouds is an enormous treat of the Almighty. Had it been bitter,



nobody could have been able to sweeten it. Or if there was a severe drought...who would have had the power to gather the clouds together and make them to spill a single drop of rain?

## Fire

“Have you considered the fire which you strike? Is it you that produce the trees for it, or are We the producer? We have made it a reminder and an advantage for the wayfarers of the desert.” (al-Waqia, 71-73)

Worthy of reflection is the question of who it is that created fire, which is of tremendous use for humanity, and trees, which are its fuel?

Just look at the might of Allah, glory unto Him, that He produces fire from green trees! And let's consider the nature of fire. How does it produce light and heat as it burns?

Travelers in the desert seek refuge in fire, from the cold and dark of night. For them, fire is an indispensable means of heating, cooking and light. Fire is no doubt an essential need for all human beings also. Living without fire is almost impossible. Fire, as remarkable as it is, is therefore also an essential need, much like earth, water and air. The Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- has said:



“Muslims are partners in three things: Water, greenery and fire.” (Abu Dawud, Buyu’, 60/3477)

Gazing at fire, on the other, ought to remind us of Hellfire. How significant it is that standing under us is a giant layer of magma, an incredible ocean of flames, while over us is the Sun, a great ball of fire. No amount of thanks we give to our Lord for granting us a pleasant life amid a two raging fires could possibly be enough!

In return for all these blessings, one must frequently glorify (*tasbih*) the Almighty:

“Therefore glorify the name of your Lord, the Great.” (al-Waqia, 74)

Our tongues should be occupied with the Quran and enjoining the good. That is its *tasbih*.

Our hearts should give thanks, immersed in a depth of feeling. That is its *tasbih*.

Our bodies, too, should continue their *tasbih* through voluntary prayers, fasts and deeds of goodness.

## Stars or Revelation

“But nay! I swear by the falling of stars; and most surely it is a very great oath if you only knew!” (al-Waqia, 75-76)



The infinity of Divine Splendor...The Almighty directs our contemplation to infinity.

Space is virtually a sea without a pillar, a boundless ocean...

These verses draw attention to dawn, which begins after the stars disappear from sight, and to deeds of worship offered by believers at night.

Again, vowed upon in these verses are the revelations given to the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace-. Each revelation would consist in one or more verse or it would be an entire chapter, for which reason each revelation has also been called *najm* or a star.

## The Holy Quran

“Most surely it is an honored Quran. In a book that is protected. None shall touch it save the purified ones.” (al-Waqia, 77-79)

It is necessary to show great respect towards the Holy Quran. Even touching the outer cover of the Quran without ablution is considered impermissible. Unless a person has ablution, he or she may not hold the Quran even if it be with the tip of her clothing. It is a grave ignorance to behave in a disrespectful manner towards the Holy Quran, as it is:

“A revelation by the Lord of the worlds. Do you then hold this announcement in contempt? And to give (it) the lie you make your means of subsistence.” (al-Waqia, 80-82)

That we have been made subjects to the Holy Quran is one of the greatest blessings we have been given. Giving due thanks to this blessing requires us to appreciate its worth and conduct our lives accordingly.

## Death

“Why is it not then that when it (soul) comes up to the throat...and you at that time look on.” (al-Waqia, 83-84)

When the time comes and, with the Almighty’s command, death arrives, man can not do anything to turn it away.

“And We are nearer to it than you, but you do not see. Then why is it not- if you are not held under authority. That you send it (not) back-- if you are truthful?” (al-Waqia, 85-87)

Such is the might of Allah, glory unto him and the helplessness of man...Humankind in all its entirety is bound to succumb and surrender to Divine Decree, willingly or unwillingly. At that moment of truth,



conceited oppressors who spent their lives rebelling against Divine Command will not be able to do so much as to raise their voices. Relieved of the countless drapes of ignorance veiling his understanding, man will finally see and fully realize at that moment, once and for all, that it is to Allah, glory unto Him, that true sovereignty belongs.

### **Awaiting the Deceased is One of Three Situations**

“Then if he is one of those drawn nigh (to Allah). Then happiness and bounty and a garden of bliss. And if he is one of those on the right hand. Then peace to you from those on the right hand. And if he is one of the rejecters, the erring ones. He shall have an entertainment of boiling water; and burning in hell.” (al-Waqia, 88-94)

Nonbelievers and corrupt Muslims are included in that final group.

“Most surely this is a certain truth.” (al-Waqia, 95)

### **Seeking Refuge in the Almighty**

“Therefore glorify the name of your Lord, the Great.” (al-Waqia, 96)



## Chapter an-Naml

This chapter begins by affirming that the Quran is sent by the Almighty, the infinitely Wise and Knowledgeable. The majesty of Allah, glory unto Him, is beyond measure and imagination. It says that the miracles and aids He grants his prophets are invincible. It goes on to give the good news that the sending of the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- as the final messenger is means for a tremendous advance of humankind, touching upon the experiences of prophets Musa, Dawud, Sulayman, Salih and Lut –upon them all be peace- to make the case clear.

These historical accounts are proofs of the power and perfection of the Almighty. As the idolaters did not come around to believing them, the Almighty challenged them with more general proofs addressing their ability to understand:

“Nay, He Who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down for you water from the cloud; then We cause to grow thereby beautiful gardens; it is not possible for you that you should make the trees thereof to grow. Is there a god with Allah? Nay! They are people who deviate.” (an-Naml, 60)

Immediately after reciting this verse, the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- would say:



بَلِ اللّٰهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ وَأَحْكَمُ وَأَكْرَمُ وَأَجَلُّ  
وَأَعْظَمُ مِمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

“Nay; Allah the Almighty is (infinitely) better, longer-lasting, wiser, more generous and sublime, and greater than what they hold partners to Him.” (Bayhaki, Shuab, II, 372)

Inviting us to a contemplation of beings and events, marks of Divine power, the chapter continues:

“Or, Who made the earth a resting place, made in it rivers, raised on it mountains and placed between the two seas a barrier? Is there a god with Allah? Nay! Most of them do not know! Or, Who answers the distressed one when he calls upon Him and removes the evil, and He will make you successors in the earth? Is there a god with Allah? Little is it that you mind! Or, Who guides you in utter darkness of the land and the sea, and Who sends the winds as good news before His mercy? Is there a god with Allah? Exalted by Allah above what they associate (with Him). Or, Who originates the creation, then reproduces it and Who gives you sustenance from the heaven and the earth? Is there a god With Allah? Say: Bring your proof if you are truthful.” (an-Naml, 61-64)



## Chapter ar-Rum

Allah, glory unto Him, again calls His servants to contemplation:

“Do they not reflect within themselves: Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them two but with truth, and (for) an appointed term? And most surely most of the people are deniers of the meeting of their Lord. Have they not travelled in the earth and seen how was the end of those before them? They were stronger than these in prowess, and dug up the earth, and built on it in greater abundance than these have built on it, and there came to them their messengers with clear arguments; so it was not beseeing for Allah that He should deal with them unjustly, but they dealt unjustly with their own souls.” (ar-Rum, 8-9)

A few verses later, proofs of the unity, infinite power and majesty of Allah, glory unto Him, are mentioned, one after another:

“He brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and gives life to the earth after its death, and thus shall you be brought forth. And one of His signs is that He created you from dust, then lo! You are mortals (who) scatter. And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in



them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect. And one of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colors; most surely there are signs in this for the learned. And one of His signs is your sleeping and your seeking of His grace by night and (by) day; most surely there are signs in this for a people who would hear. And one of His signs is that He shows you the lightning for fear and for hope, and sends down water from the clouds then gives life therewith to the earth after its death; most surely there are signs in this for a people who understand. And one of His signs is that the heaven and the earth subsist by His command, then when He calls you with a (single) call from out of the earth, lo! You come forth. And His is whosoever is in the heavens and the earth; all are obedient to Him.” (ar-Rum, 19-26)

### **Neglecting the Contemplation of the Verses of the Quran**

Categorizing His true servants, Allah, glory unto Him, states:

“And they who, when reminded of the communications of their Lord, do not fall down thereat deaf and blind.” (al-Furqan, 73)

When they are read the Quran or advised with it, believers are all ears; they listen to it with their hearts, think about what they hear and obey what they are called to.

Stated in another verse:

“Those only are believers whose hearts become full of fear when Allah is mentioned, and when His communications are recited to them they increase them in faith, and in their Lord do they trust.” (al-Anfal, 2)

In contrast, those who fail to reap their share of the Quran’s inspiration, remain unaware of its signs and secrets, recoil from delving into the truth of its mysteries and are neglectful in sticking to its commands and prohibitions, are in a state of bitter loss.

The Almighty declares:

“I will turn away from My Revelations those who are unjustly proud in the earth; and if they see every sign they will not believe in It; and if they see the way of rectitude they do not take It for a way, and if they see the way of error. They take it for a way; this is because they rejected Our communications and were heedless of them.” (al-Araf, 146)

The conceited who behave arrogantly towards others, feeling themselves all high and mighty, are unable to reflect on the meanings of the Quran and



therefore cannot receive their share of its guiding light, as the Almighty has divested the hearts of oppressors of the opportunity to understand the wisdoms of the Quran and become acquainted with its manifestations of Divine Power. They are deprived of an unrivaled Divine treat, since it is not fitting for the Quran, a treasure of Divine wisdoms and mysteries, to dwell in such swamps of misery. It may only enter the hearts of the righteous, and for them, it becomes a guiding light.

The sad condition of those without the least share of righteousness is due to their lack of contemplating the Quran properly, as a result of which they are debauched by the extravagances of their egos. If they were to conscientiously reflect on the Quran and follow it, they would not find themselves left dumbfounded at the face of Divine commands. On the contrary, they would accept the truth and by adopting a good moral standard, they would begin to reap their share of Divine secrets and wisdoms; and as a result, the gates of eternal peace and happiness would become wide open for them.



Evident from what has been stated so far is that neglecting contemplation and consequently wasting the fortune of life is, for a believer, unthinkable. As a



warning against not appreciating the precious value of time and wasting it, the Almighty proclaims:

“By the time. Most surely man is in loss. Except those who believe and do good and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience.” (al-Asr, 1-3)

The look of a righteous believer must therefore be of depth and his silence ought to be of contemplation. He must especially gain depth in contemplating on the Divine truths spelt out in the Quran and strive towards acquiring knowledge of Allah. A believer, again, must perceive the Quran like a letter sent by the Almighty to His servants and embrace that eternal source of happiness with the enduring enthusiasm of faith.

### **Being in a Constant State of Muraqabah**

*Muraqabah* means to inspect the inner world, to keep it under surveillance and to divert all attention to it. *Muraqabah* has been defined in *tasawwuf* as awaiting inspiration or spiritual enlightening, as well as protecting the heart from what is harmful, with the awareness that Allah, glory unto Him, sees one at every moment and peers into the heart. Simpler put, *muraqabah* is for one to turn to his inner world and constantly reflect on and call to account his own condition; and in that way to acquire an awakened heart



and the state of mind needed to properly seek refuge in the Almighty.

### **The Shortest Way to Allah**

The realm of the heart, just like those that we see, provides boundless grounds for contemplation. The below parable by Mawlana Rumi –Allah have mercy on his soul- beautifully underlines the importance of *muraqabah*, the contemplation of that inner world:

*“A Sufi went to an adorned garden, to raise his spirits and to thereby throw himself deep in contemplation. He became infatuated with the vibrant colors of the garden. Closing his eyes, he began his muraqabah and contemplation. An ignorant man passing by thought the Sufi was asleep. Astonished and upset, he scolded the Sufi:*

‘Why are you sleeping?’ he asked. ‘Open your eyes and stare at the vines, the booming trees and the greening grass! Gaze at the works of Allah’s mercy!’

The Sufi replied:

‘Know one thing very well, you ignorant man, that the heart is greatest work of Allah’s mercy. The rest are like its shadow. A stream flows amid the trees. From its crystal water, you can see the reflection of trees on both sides. What is reflected on the stream is a dream garden. The real garden is in the

heart, for the heart is the focus of Divine gaze. Its elegant and slender reflections are to be found in this worldly life, made of water and mud. Had the things in this world not been the reflection of the cypresses of the heart's joy, the Almighty would not have called this dream world the place of deception. It is said in the Quran:

*'Every soul shall taste of death, and you shall only be paid fully your reward on the resurrection day; then whoever is removed far away from the fire and is made to enter the garden he indeed has attained the object; and the life of this world is nothing but a provision of vanities.'* (Ali Imran, 185)

*The ignorant who presume the world to be Paradise and exclaim 'here is Paradise!' are those fooled by the sparkle of the stream. Those who are left distant from the true gardens, who are the righteous servants of Allah, incline to that reverie and are deceived. A day will come when this slumber of ignorance will come to an end. The eyes will open, the truth shall be seen. But what is the worth of seeing that sight during the final breath? A great joy to he who has died before death and whose spirit has had a scent of the truth of this garden..."*

*Muraqabah* forms a vital path to reaching the Almighty and acquiring knowledge, wisdom and keys to mysteries. It is one of the most precious and inspirational ways, in *tasawwuf*, of spiritual progression.



A Muslim who wishes to do *muraqabah* first prepares his heart to it, and sitting just like in ritual prayer, tilts his head forward towards his knees. Gathering his entire concentration, he then turns to the Almighty, and in that state of mind contemplates on the truth that, ‘Allah constantly sees me all the time; He is with me at all times, closer to me than myself.’ Consequently, the Divine light which encompasses all things begins to trickle into his heart.

The people of love esteem *muraqabah* as the shortest way to obtain closeness to Allah, glory unto Him. Turning to the Almighty with the heart is definitely more effective and important than turning to Him with the other parts of the body. Anyone can turn their hearts to the Lord at any given time, with ease, whereas moving other parts of the body to offer deeds of worship can become difficult with injury or old age.

Sufis say that “A calm breath of *muraqabah* for Allah is better than owning the treasures of Solomon.”

As reported by the Prophet –upon him blessings and peace-, some people are to be shaded under the Throne on the Day of Judgment, a day in which there will be no other shade. One of such fortunate people will be those who remember Allah, glory unto Him, all alone in secluded places and shed tears of emotion.





## Achieving Muraqabah

*Muraqabah* is to reenact the consciousness of *ihsan* as is defined in the Jibril *Hadith*:

“*Ihsan* is to serve Allah as if you see Him. Even if you do not see Him, He surely sees you...” (Muslim, Iman, 1, 5; Bukhari, Iman, 37)

Achieving maturity in Islam and faith depends on acquiring that certain state of *ihsan*; and in order to live a life of *ihsan*, with an awareness of being under the Almighty’s constant supervision, we need to run a self-assessment through *muraqabah* and get our acts together.

The fact that Allah, glory unto Him, is closer to us than ourselves needs to become embedded in our hearts as a steady conviction.

A person has effectively reached *ihsan* through *iman*, once his heart begins to pulsate with these feelings. Thereafter, he offers all good deeds with an inspired heart filled with spirituality, becoming immersed in the spiritual zest of contemplating on the Quran, the universe and humanity.

In order to read the entire Quran contemplatively, the disciples of *tasawwuf* first do an exercise of contemplation on certain verses. Chosen for this are verses which have a greater affect on the heart and reinforce



more compellingly the sentiments of feeling the presence of the Almighty and His love. In the Naqshibandi Order, this process of throwing oneself deep into contemplating such verse is called *muraqabah*.

*Muraqabah* has four stages:

### **1. Muraqaba-i Ahadiyya (Contemplation of the Oneness of Allah)**

Contemplated here is the chapter al-Ikhlās and the *ahadiyyah*, that is the oneness of Allah, glory unto Him, who, ascribed with the most perfect attributes, is free of all kinds of deficiencies. It is believed at this stage that inspiration begins to flow into the heart.

The meanings of the verses are to be pictured in the mind without, however, resorting to analogies or seeking to ascribe physical qualities to the Almighty. One only considers these attributes the Almighty is ascribed with. When the picture becomes vague, the verse is repeated and the contemplation begins anew. As this continues, a Believer's feelings of *ihsan* increase, as he begins to receive a share of knowledge of Allah.

What chapter al-Ikhlās essentially reminds us of is this: Allah, glory unto Him, is One and Unique. Unity is exclusive to Him alone.



The Almighty does not manifest His Essence in this world. He has the attribute of *mukhalafatun'lil-hawadis*, that is He does not resemble creation in any way. Whatever there is in the universe we may think of or imagine, the Essence of Allah, glory unto Him, is of greater distinctiveness and supremacy. Our Lord is transcendent; infinitely greater than however we may conceive Him, and of perfection the understanding cannot possibly imagine. As He has no resemblance or opposite, it is impossible to conceive His Essence.

The Almighty is *Samad*. He stands in need of nothing, whereas everyone and everything stand in need of Him. All forces in the universe belong to Him. Man ought to reflect on the might and majesty of Allah, glory unto Him, and coming to terms with his own weakness, must surrender his entire existence to his Creator. Shedding his ego, he must seek to become a precinct of the manifestation of the Almighty's attributes of beauty (*jamal*).

*Ahadiyya*, or Oneness, does not allow of any division, segregation into parts or any partnership. The Almighty has therefore not been born and has not begotten; there has never been anything equal to Him. He is not a father, a mother or a son as the Christian creed claims. Belief in the Unity of Allah, glory unto Him, does not permit any notion of partnership or birth, for what is born segregates and what segregates



is doomed to perish; it faces the same fate as what it begets. Begetting is an activity that belongs to mortals and pertains to the need of prolonging the human race. A need of this caliber would have been a deficiency for Allah, the One, the *Samad*, the Necessary Being, who is remote from all kinds of faults and flaws.

The heart, the center of contemplation and spirituality, must feel the manifestations and flows of Divine Majesty and Power deep inside and be in a ceaseless state of gratitude.

## **2. Muraqaba-i Maiyya (Contemplation of Divine Togetherness)**

Deeply contemplated during this stage is the meaning of “He (Allah) is with you, wherever you may be...” (al-Hadid, 4). A person gains an understanding of whom he should accompany and this state of mind turns into a consciousness in the heart.

Humanity cannot, in any way, remain outside the knowledge and sovereignty of Allah, glory unto Him, even if one was to hide underground or in the deepest end of the ocean. Every beat of the heart, every breath taken, every object seen and every sound heard proves that the Almighty is constantly with His servants. When their times arrive, the Almighty in fact puts an end to their possession of these abilities as they breathe their last.



Allah, glory unto Him, pronounces:

“Do you not see that Allah knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth? Nowhere is there a secret counsel between three persons but He is the fourth of them, nor between five but He is the sixth of them, nor less than that nor more but He is with them wheresoever they are; then He will inform them of what they did on the day of Resurrection: surely Allah is Cognizant of all things.” (al-Mujadalah, 7)

The Almighty is man’s dearest friend, closer to him than his closest kin and relatives; a presence which is apparent through His power as such and the work of His angels. Others can only know one’s external conditions. Not only are they not helpful in each and every aspect, they are unable to solve many problems that may trouble one time and again. Allah, glory unto Him, on the other hand, intimately knows every condition one may find himself in and does as He wills, especially during the moment of death. It is then that one truly comes to terms with the fact that all along there has been no other closer to him than the Almighty. The Quran states:

“Why is it not then that when it (soul) comes up to the throat. And you at that time look on. And We are nearer to it than you, but you do not see.” (al-Waqia, 83-85)



To those who forget the Almighty is with them at all times and those who lack this consciousness, the Almighty sends the following warning:

“They hide themselves from men and do not hide themselves from Allah, and He is with them when they meditate by night words which please Him not, and Allah encompasses what they do.” (an-Nisa, 108)

One who is aware of being accompanied by Allah, glory unto Him, at all times and is conscious that all deeds are under Divine surveillance begins to mind what he or she does and thereby avoids temptation and committing evil.

### **3. Muraqaba-i Aqrabiyya (Contemplation of Divine Nearness)**

“And certainly We created man, and We know what his mind suggests to him, and We are nearer to him than his life-vein,” (Qaf, 16) is the verse contemplated at this level. As suggested by the word *aqrabiyya*, that is to say ‘closeness’, Allah, glory unto Him, is closer to us than ourselves. He knows our thoughts, intentions and feelings.

Things hidden even to angels entrusted with the duty of recording each and every word spoken, thoughts and decisions that come to the mind, even momentarily, are never secret to the Almighty, for it



is He who has created thoughts, like everything else.<sup>53</sup>  
How can the Creator not know?

It is impossible for one, who properly reflects on this, not to shiver and call oneself to account! Envisioning this verse alone in the heart and the mind would be enough to instill the fear to prevent one from uttering a single word that would displease the Almighty; even from entertaining a malicious thought. This verse is truly sufficient to keep one steady on the path of righteousness and alert with the thought of an impending judgment in the Hereafter.

It is said in chapter al-Anfal that Allah, glory unto Him, enters between a person and his or her heart and regulates ones thoughts and desires if He wills.<sup>54</sup> The Almighty is closer to a person than his or her heart, and closer to and more commanding of the heart than the person is himself. So valid is the power of Allah, glory unto Him, that not only does He enter between a person

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53 Allah, glory unto Him, manifests with the attribute *Khaliq*/Creator in the occurrence of both good and bad. When a person intends on committing a bad deed, the Almighty manifest His attribute as Creator and either allows the person to go through with the deed or prevents him from doing it. This is equally valid in good deeds, too. When a person intends on doing something good, the Almighty, again, manifests His attribute as creator, and either allows the person or prevents him. If prevented, the person still receives a reward for carrying a good intention. In short, it is Allah, glory unto Him, who creates good and evil, yet His pleasure always resides with the good.

54 See, al-Anfâl, 24.



and others, He also enters between the person and his or her own heart, depriving them, in as little as a moment, of the heartfelt desires he or she may have. Disrupting the will, He may turn a person towards the opposite direction, changing his or her opinions and preferences. When Allah, glory unto Him, therefore raises a curtain between one and his or her heart and invites him or her to death, it is impossible to ignore the call and put up a fight against the command. Human beings can thus never know what awaits them with their next breath. (See, Elmalılı M. Hamdi, IV, 2386-2387, [al-Enfal, 24])

Abu Musa al-Ashari –Allah be well-pleased with him- recounts:

“We were with the Messenger of Allah –upon him blessings and peace- during a journey. As we rose to the hills, we would call out, at the top of our voices, ‘*Allah-u Akbar! La ilaha ill-Allah*’. Thereupon the Messenger of Allah –upon him blessings and peace- said:

*‘Do not force yourselves, Muslims, for you are not calling out to someone deaf or absent. Allah is always with you, closer to you than yourselves.’*” (Bukhari, Jihad, 131; Muslim, Dhikr, 44)

As understood by many verses of the Quran and *ahadith* of a similar nature, the Almighty wants His servants to seek closeness with Him, just as He is ever





close to them. It is for that reason the Almighty says, “Prostrate and get closer!”<sup>55</sup>

A person who, through *muraqaba-i aqrabiyya*, realizes that even the thoughts that cross his mind are known to Allah, glory unto Him, not only tries to keep distant from wrongdoings, but also refrains from entertaining ill feelings and thoughts, striving to keep his intention honest and on a straight path.

As a result of this kind of contemplation, one grows feelings of deep love and closeness with the Almighty.

#### **4. Muraqaba-i Muhabbah (Contemplation of Divine Love)**

Contemplated at this stage is the verse “...He shall love them and they shall love Him”, (al-Maida, 54), as a result of which the love of Allah, glory unto him, grows in the heart. One, thereafter, perceives entire creation with love, simply for the sake of their Creator. The cat lying by the door, the dog strolling around and the green branch hanging down in the garden suddenly grow dear in one’s eye. One feels jubilant, simply upon seeing a blooming flower, knowing that, too, is the blessing of the Almighty. People of this ilk

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<sup>55</sup> al-Alâq, 19.



always remain in a genuine state of gratitude. They never hurt anyone and are always quick to forgive others who hurt them, remembering the countless faults they themselves have in the sight of Allah, glory unto Him. How can I have the face to ask forgiveness from the Almighty for my numerous flaws, they say, if I am not even willing to forgive the slightest harm inflicted upon me?

Deserving the forgiveness of Allah, glory unto Him, by continually forgiving others is an indispensable trait of mature believers.

True victory is where a person forgives the cruelty inflicted upon him by another without the slightest ill-feeling.

Forgiving for the sake of Allah, glory unto Him, is one of the greatest manifestations of Divine love. Without efforts like this, any claim of loving the Almighty is just paying lip service.

By contemplating on the aforementioned verse during *muraqabah*, each believer receives an inspiration in proportion to their understanding, aptitude and sincerity. The believer continues to strive forth to rise to a level where he or she can read the entire Quran contemplatively.

Consequent upon sessions of *muraqabah*, a person directs one's inner world to the Almighty and



keeps one's heart clean from being occupied with anything other than Allah, glory unto Him. The believer esteems the Almighty's command above everything else; his tongue becomes ever busy with Divine remembrance.

A loyal servant of the Almighty is like a child devoted to his toy. The child sleeps excited with the love of his toy and it is the first thing he thinks of and searches for when he wakes up. Such will be the exact case when one suddenly dies and wakes up, before long, from his grave to make his way to the plane of resurrection. One therefore needs to be careful of the kinds of concerns that cross and occupy the mind right before falling asleep. If it is Allah, glory unto Him, who dominates a person's thoughts in life, then his death as well as his resurrection will take place with Allah, glory unto Him, and according to His will and pleasure.

Stated in some sayings of the Prophet are the following:

*"Humans will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment on the state upon which they had died."*  
(Muslim, Jannat, 83)

*"You shall die the way you live and shall be resurrected the way you die."* (Munawi, Fayz'ul-Qadir, V, 663)

If a person's desire is actuated toward something other than Allah, glory unto Him, such is the way his



death and resurrection will be; stranded without an aid on the Day of Judgment.

Exercising in *dhikr* and contemplation are essential in order to achieve a perfect state of *muraqabah*. The Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace– says:

إِحْفَظِ اللَّهَ تَجِدَهُ تُجَاهَكَ

“Seek Allah so that you may find Him in front of you.” (Ahmed, I, 293)

To fully benefit from *muraqabah*, contemplation and *dhikr*, it is necessary to observe their prerequisites and adopt their required manners, which includes looking out for the most peaceful moments for doing them and avoiding moments when the heart is under duress like, when hungry, angry or sleepy.





## THE MANNER OF CONTEMPLATING

All beings are mirrors of Divine manifestation, held out to human understanding and consciousness by the Hand of Might. Sensing the wisdom and mysteries reflected forth from this mirror, on the other hand, depends on the purity of the mirror of the heart.



# THE MANNER OF CONTEMPLATING

## The Manners of the Righteous' in Contemplating

Abu Bakr –Allah be well-pleased with him- one day found himself in deep contemplation, thinking about the Day of Judgment, the great tribunal, Paradise and Hell, the assembling of the angels in rows, the folding of the sun, the blacking out and consequent falling of the stars and the flinging of mountains. Overcome with fear, he afterwards said:

“If only I was a grass amid that greenery over there, soon to be eaten by a passing animal to perish!” Revealed thereupon to the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- was the verse of the Quran:

“And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two gardens.” (ar-Rahman, 46) (Suyuti, Lubab'un-Nuqul, II, 146; Alusi, XXVII, 117)



Again, Abu Bakr –Allah be well-pleased with him- had once gone outside on a clear, sunny day. Looking at the bright sky, he was gazing around at nature, created by Allah, glory unto Him, for His servants, with a beauty almost beyond description. Meanwhile, he noticed a bird perched on a branch, chirping in a beautiful voice. Suddenly saddened, he let out a sigh. Looking at the bird with envy, he remarked:

“How fortunate you are...I swear I would have loved to have been in your position. You flutter about then perch on any tree you wish, eat away at its fruits and then take flight again. Neither is there a tribunal awaiting you, nor a punishment you ought to fear! By Allah, instead of being a human waiting to be called to account in the presence of my Lord, I would have preferred to have been a sapling by the road and have a camel chew me up and swallow me!” (Ibn Abi Shaybah, *Musannaf*, VIII, 144)

Ali –Allah be well-pleased with him- says:

“There is no benefit in worship without insight, in insight without piety and in a read of the Quran without contemplation.” (Abu Nuaym, *Hilya*, I, 77)

The following words of wisdom are also from Ali –Allah be well-pleased with him-:





“No benefit is there in ritual prayer without concentration, in fasting accompanied by vain words and behavior, in a read of the Quran without contemplation, in knowledge without piety, in wealth without generosity, in brotherhood without protection, in a blessing that is not everlasting and in a prayer without sincerity.” (Ibn Hajar, *Munabbihat*, p. 31)

Ali –Allah be well-pleased with him- used to perceive everything with a contemplative eye, reflecting lengthily on what he saw. From the fear of the Almighty, he would at times cry like an orphan, shiver like a man bedridden with fever. Being much fond of deeds of worship, he would persevere in acts of piety. He would eat only a little, but spend lots in the way of good. Esteeming Islam above anything else, he would say:

“Good lies entirely in four things: speech, silence, look and behavior. A speech outside the remembrance of Allah is vain. A silence devoid of contemplation is an error. A look without perception is ignorance. Behavior that does not direct one to worshipping Allah is foolish. May Allah have mercy on him whose speech is of Divine remembrance and good, whose silence is contemplation and whose behavior is of righteousness! People are always safe from their words and actions.”<sup>56</sup>

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56 Abû Nasr Sarrâj Tûsî, *al-Luma' / İslâm Tasavvufu*, trns. H. Kâmil Yılmaz, Istanbul 1996, p. 137-140.



In describing the genuine people of the Quran, Ibn Masud –Allah be well-pleased with him- says:

“When people speak to one another, a *hafiz*, who has memorized the Quran, should be recognized with his silence. The tears of a *hafiz* are of a distinct beauty. A *hafiz* ought to be dignified and display an excellent character through silence and contemplation...” (Abu Nuaym, *Hilyah*, I, 130)

When Umm Darda –Allah be well-pleased with her- was asked what deed Abu’d-Darda –Allah be well-pleased with him- regarded as most important, she replied:

“Being absorbed in self-correcting contemplation...” (Waqi bin Jarrah, *Zuhd*, p. 474)

Amr ibn Abdiqays, a notable of the *Tabiun* generation (the generation that saw the Companions without seeing the Prophet), has said:

“I heard this not from one or two Companions but many; they used to say:

‘The shining of the light of faith or its increase is through contemplation.’ (Ibn Kathir, I, 448, Suyuti, *ad-Durr’ul-Mansur*, II, 409, ‘Ali Imran, 190’)

Rabi ibn Haytham –Allah be well-pleased with him- was asked to describe a person of greater virtue than himself, to which he replied:



“He whose talk is *dhikr*, whose silence is contemplation and whose look is of perception...” (Ibn Hanbal, Zuhd, p. 334; Abu Nuaym, Hilyah, II, 106)

Abu Sulayman Darani says:

“Get your eyes used to crying and your heart to contemplation!”

“Being enslaved to the world is a veil between a person and the Hereafter, as well as a tremendous loss in the long run. Thinking of the Hereafter, on the other hand, gives birth to the light of wisdom in a person and revitalizes the heart.” (Imam Ghazzali, Ihya, VI, 45)

Yusuf Hamadani states:

“Once a contemplative faith sets root in a person, righteous deeds follow. It is necessary to bring these two, contemplation and deeds, together in whichever way possible.”<sup>57</sup>

Fudayl ibn Iyad states:

“Contemplation is like a mirror of Divine majesty and sovereignty; it manifests the good and the bad.” (Imam Ghazzali, Ihya, VI, 44)

Muhammad ibn Abdullah has said:

“There are five kinds of contemplation:

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57 Yusuf Hamadani, *Rutbat'l-Hayât*, trns. Necdet Tosun, Istanbul, 2002, p. 60.



Contemplating the verses of Allah through which comes *marifah*. Contemplating the blessings of Allah from which comes love. Contemplating the promises and rewards of Allah from which comes desire. Contemplating the warnings and punishment of Allah from which comes fear. Contemplating the ungratefulness of humans in return for the benevolence of Allah from which come shame and repentance.”

Compliant with the above are also the following words of wisdom:

“A lengthy contemplation is what combines everything good and right. Silence is peace. Getting carried away in what is vain is sorrow and an agonizing remorse. Whosoever remains enslaved to the desires of his ego, ignorant of the Hereafter, will put his own self to shame on the Day of Judgment and avidly desire to perish away.” (Bayhaki, Shuab, VII, 417/10812; IV, 272/5070)

### **Flowing the River of Contemplation onto Fertile Soil**

Allah, glory unto Him, has endowed every human being with the ability to grow in contemplation. In the depths of every person lies a roaring river of contemplation, ever flowing, relentless in its course. When not given direction and left on its own, it does not know



where to flow as it passes through all kinds of courses, good and bad. Sometimes it perishes in arid deserts, while at other times it is dragged to an unknown fate, knowing little what the future holds in store, like driftwood caught up in a flood.

Spiritual finesse lies in directing the river of contemplation to fertile soil and growing abundant crops with it.

The Almighty sends the below warnings to those who do not utilize the gift of contemplating and sensing in line with His pleasure:

“Surely the vilest of animals, in Allah’s sight, are the deaf, the dumb, who do not understand.” (al-Anfal, 22)

“And certainly We have created for hell many of the jinn and the men; they have hearts with which they do not understand, and they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; they are as cattle, nay, they are even more bewildered; these are the heedless ones.” (al-Araf, 179)

The heart is like a mirror blemished with ignorance and disbelief. Its garnish is to first believe in Allah, glory unto Him, and then turn to Him with love. At the most basic level, a person must think of answers to such questions like ‘why are we here, on whose property do we live, who is it that sends our food and where are we going?’ A life lost in the desires



of the ego without any concern for answers to such vital questions and a heart aloof from acknowledging the Real is destined for a pitiful end.

People of this kind turn a blind eye on things that display the Truth in the clearest and most comprehensible languages and never pause to reflect, for which reason they have been compared to beasts, cases in point in ignorance and in being gone astray. All their desires consist of is eating, drinking and satisfying their gluttonous pleasures of the flesh.

Allah, glory unto Him, states:

“Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his god? Will you then be a protector over him? Or do you think that most of them do hear or understand? They are nothing but as cattle; nay, they are further astray from the path.” (al-Furqan, 43-44)

A righteous man says:

“Life is a display of Divine art for the wise and just consumption and lust for the fool.”

Contemplation, from another vantage, is like a two edged sword; it can serve the good, as well as the bad. It can become a tool for the despicable ambitions of the ego, as well as the sublime purposes of the spirit. The Almighty cautions those who use their ability to contemplate for bad ends:



“And it is not for a soul to believe except by Allah’s permission; and He casts uncleanness on those who will not understand.” (Yunus, 100)

The disease of disbelief is the ugliest dirt that could smear a human being. One who does not busy his heart and mind with reflecting on the verses of the Quran, can never be purified of this dirt.

Minds nourished with the light of faith and led by the guidance of revelation find the way to come to know the Almighty, while those deprived of this are stranded on the way to the Truth. This is the greatest delusion of those philosophers who somehow believe they can find the Truth without taking Divine revelation as basis. Minds remote from faith, in their books, can find a way to the Truth just the same.

Maximizing the ability to contemplate, on the other hand, requires keeping the mind and the heart distant from ineffectual activities that amount to nothing but wasting time. Thus declares the Holy Quran:

“And who keep aloof from what is vain.” (al-Muminun, 3)

“And they who do not bear witness to what is false and when they pass by what is vain, they pass by nobly.” (al-Furqan, 72)



The Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- says:

*“Abandoning useless activities is the mark of a good Muslim.”* (Tirmidhi, Zuhd, 11; Ibn Majah, Fitan, 12)

The most effective medicine for the diseases of the ego is to focus all thinking on things beneficial and to move away from all things that should not be of any concern. Contemplating on useless things opens the door to all kinds of evil and depravity. Those who busy their minds with useless thoughts miss out on the good, on what they really need.

Ibn’ul-Jawzi says:

“If constantly thinking over things that are licit (*mubah*) leaves the heart in the dark, you go and imagine the damage done by thinking over the illicit (*haram*)! If even musk can change the makeup of water and take away its cleansing character, imagine water licked by a dog! Hence, says an elder, ‘He who makes a habit of doing things that are licit misses out on the taste of uniting with the Lord.’” (Bursawi, Ruh’ul-Bayan, ‘al-Muminun, 51’)

If one does not direct his powers to contemplate, represent and imagine to the good, Shaytan will direct it to the evil; and the person will consequently become unable to contemplate in a manner worthy of the Divine. Instead of benefiting from the gifts of the heart and reason endowed by the Almighty, he will only incur damage.





A Believer therefore must always have his thoughts occupied with the good, in the direction shown by the Quran and Sunnah.

### **Accompanying Contemplation with *Dhikr***

Yusuf Hamadani describes:

“The heart and *dhikr* are like a tree and water. The heart and contemplation, in contrast, are like a tree and its fruits. It would be a mistake to wait for the tree to flourish before watering it and expect it to yield fruits before its leaves grow and flowers blossom. It will never yield any fruits, no matter how much one desired. For the time is not to expect fruits from the tree, but to feed it and tidy up around it. One needs to water it, rid it of ivies and alien weeds and then wait for sunshine. Only when all these come together does the tree come alive and become adorned with luscious green leaves; and only then does it become right to expect its branches to yield fruits, for this means that the time has truly arrived.”  
(Rutbat’ul-Hayat, p. 71)

Hasan Basri says:

“The intelligent continue getting themselves used to contemplating through *dhikr*, and *dhikr* through contemplating. In the end, they get their hearts to talk; and when the heart does begin to talk, it only utters



words of wisdom.” (Imam Ghazzali, *Ihya*, VI, 46)

*Dhikr* and contemplation must never be separated. The most important thing about *dhikr* is to do it contemplatively and accompany it with a sense of awareness. According to Muhammad Parsa –Allah have mercy on him-, a prominent saint, “When saying ‘*La ilaha*’ (There is no god...), one should think of the mortality of all creation and consider them as nothing; and distancing everything but Allah, glory unto Him, from the mind, clear all thoughts. The heart should be filled with the consciousness of being a slave only of Allah and no-one else. When saying ‘*ill-Allah*’ (... except for Allah) one should think that the primordial existence of Allah, glory unto Him, is also eternal and that He is the only One to whom one can turn to with love. The Almighty’s attributes of beauty (*jamali*) thereby begin to manifest in the heart.”

Bahauddin Naqshband -Allah have mercy on him- says:

“The aim of *dhikr* is not just to repeat ‘Allah’ and ‘*La ilaha ill-Allah*’. It is to go from causes to the Cause and realize that all blessings come from Him.”

The truth of *dhikr*, in other words, is to enable one to rise from the swamp of ignorance to the horizons of witnessing the truth.

Mawlana Rumi –Allah have mercy on him- says:



*“Allah, the One and Unique has given us permission to remember (dhikr) Him, saying اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ: Remember Allah!’. Seeing us ablaze in fire, He gave us light. A dhikr done only with the tongue and lips without feeling and contemplation is a deficient dream. A dhikr that comes from the bottom of an admiring heart is distilled of sentences and words.”* (Mathnawi, v. 2, couplet: 1709, 1712)

In time, Divine love grows in a person who continues to remember the names and attributes of Allah, glory unto Him, contemplatively. The point is not to just repeat verbally the word ‘Allah’ but to place the love of ‘the Word’ in the heart, the center of comprehension.

Through *dhikr* and contemplation, one first reaches *muhabbatullah*, Divine love, and through *muhabbatullah* one proceeds to attain knowledge of Allah, that is a better understanding and knowledge of Divine names and attributes. As a result, Allah, glory unto Him, loves the person, too, and befriends him. Stated in a *hadith al-qudsi* is the following:

*“The righteous from among my servants and the ones I love from among creation are those who remember me; and I mention them in return for their remembrance of Me.”* (Ahmed, III, 430)

*Dhikr* is considered threefold: with the tongue, the body and the heart. The *dhikr* of the tongue is



to recall Allah, glory unto Him, with His names and attributes, glorify Him, read His word and pray to Him. The *dhikr* of the body is to busy each and every limb with what has been commanded and to keep it away from committing the wrong. As for the *dhikr* of the heart, exegete Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır comments:

“The *dhikr* of the heart is to remember Allah in a most sincere, heartfelt way, and that comes in three forms:

1) Thinking of the proofs that attest to the essence and attributes of Allah, glory unto Him, and searching for answers to doubts that may come to the heart about His sovereignty.

2) Contemplating on the rights Allah, glory unto Him, has over us and our duties of servanthood; thinking of His commands and prohibitions, their proofs and underlying wisdoms. Gaining insight into the commands and prohibitions and the consequences of adhering to them only increases tendency towards righteous deeds.

3) Contemplating on creation, both inner and outer, and the wisdoms underlying their existence in a way that allows one to realize that each particle acts as a mirror for the Divine realm. To eyes that properly gaze at that mirror, the lights of that realm shine forth and just a glimmer of that zest consciously acquired in



a split second is worth the entire world.

There is no end to *dhikr* carried out at this level. At this stage, one loses consciousness of himself and his surroundings; all consciousness is lost in the Real, to the point where not a speck remains from either the words of *dhikr* or the person doing *dhikr*. Only the object of the *dhikr*, that is the Real, is felt. Although there are plenty who talk about this level, those who are at it have no business with talking.” (*Hak Dîni Kur'an Dili*, [el-Bakara, 152])

All beings are thus mirrors of Divine manifestations, held out to human understanding and consciousness by the Hand of Might. Sensing the wisdoms and mysteries reflected forth from this mirror depends on the purity of the mirror of the heart.

Dawn: The Most Precious Time for *Dhikr* and Contemplation

A lover frequently talks about the beloved. One who frequently talks about something begins to feel a greater affection for it. Love is measured by the degree of sacrifice shown for the beloved. Abandoning a pleasant sleep and a warm bed near dawn to seek refuge in Allah, glory unto Him, is one of the most supreme indications of such love.

It is worthy of note that Divine mercy and forgiveness overflows near dawn. Nightingales, inspired



by this Divine abundance, tweet in the sweetest tunes and flowers that boom in multicolored tones, emit their most delicate scents. What a shame it would be for man to miss out on this feast of Divine mercy!

The most precious time of day is dawn, corresponding to the last third of night. Dawn marks a period where the mind is the most distant it can be from petty concerns, when the heart subsides to purity, a peaceful silence abounds all around and passing interests wane. This time is when Divine mercy descends and the Lord of the Universe is at His closest to His servant. Being so remote from petty concerns, the heart can then turn to the Almighty in the truest sense of the word, for which dawn is the most appropriate and fertile time to retreat to contemplation.

Allah, glory unto Him, states:

“O you wrapped up in garments! Rise to pray in the night except a little. Half of it, or lessen it a little. Or add to it, and recite the Quran in measure. Surely We will make to light upon you a weighty Word. Surely the rising by night is the firmest way to tread and the best corrective of speech. Surely you have in the day time a long occupation.” (al-Muzzammil, 1-7)

As opposed to the heavenly serenity of dawn, day-time is a period when noise reigns, and which leads to a



lapse in concentration. A person who does not make the most of the effective hours of night may not be able to attain to that spiritually inspiring enjoyment of turning to and worshiping the Almighty, amid all the distracting activities of daytime, as much as he can at dawn.

Dawn is a unique time made for worship, whereas daytime is a wonderful blessing given for serving the good and earning a living. A believer should only be with the Real at dawn, while amid the public, yet still with the Real, at day.

The Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- never abandoned offering ritual prayer, reciting the Quran, praying and contemplating at dawn, the richest and most inspiring time of night. Such that even when struck down with an illness that drained him of the strength to even allow him to stand up straight, he would still put his dawns to good use, even if it meant he had to be seated.<sup>58</sup>

The Blessed Prophet -upon him blessings and peace- would especially make the most of dawn to contemplate. He would remain standing, in tears, to the point where his feet would swell, and prostrate for hours on end.

Imam Hasan ibn Rushayq says:

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58 See, Abû Dawud, *Tatavvu'*, 18.



“There is no better key to open the locks of the ocean of contemplation and the gates of the Real than to wake up from sleep at dawn and engage in activities conducive to spiritual promotion. At that time, man is remote from external interests, worldly concerns and ambitions. The time is ripe for privacy with the Lord. The body has been rested and revived; it has come to its senses. Dawn is the time when the weather is at its most pleasant, the breeze is at its gentlest; it is the most appropriate time between day and night. *Light covers darkness at dawn*. It is a stark contrast at evening: darkness caves in on light.” (See, Abu Ghuddah, *Zamanın Kıymeti* p. 86)

The Holy Quran pronounces:

“Those who forsake their beds to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of that We have bestowed on them...” (as-Sajdah, 16)

Repenting for sins at dawn, becoming emotional from thinking of Divine punishment, remembering death, planning what to do in the name of good in the remaining days of life and contemplating on the Quran are among the righteous deeds treasured by Allah, glory unto Him.

To those who revive their dawns in the said manner and spend a life of charity, the Almighty promises the exceptional glad tidings below:

“No soul knows what is kept hid for them of joy,





as a reward for what they used to do.” (as-Sajdah, 17)

The Prophet -upon him blessings and peace- has interpreted this verse as follows:

*“Allah the Almighty has said ‘For My righteous servants, I have prepared treats no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has ever and can ever imagine!’”* (Bukhari, Bad’ul-Khalq, 8; Tafsir. 32/1; Tawhid, 35; Muslim, Jannah, 2-5)

Understood from here is that the awaiting treats of Paradise that have not yet been revealed are far greater than those that have. According some reports, not even angels and prophets have full insight into what they are.



## CONCLUSION

### **Contemplation: The Key to the Truth and Salvation**

Reaching the Truth is possible only through contemplation. How can a person who acts blind and deaf towards the glaring presence of Divine majesty find the right path? Not for no reason do they say, ‘That which does not awaken feelings is not knowledge’.

The mindsets of nonbelievers who cannot come around to finding the Truth are described by Allah, glory unto Him, below:

“Surely you do not make the dead to hear, and you do not make the deaf to hear the call when they go back retreating.” (an-Naml, 80)

A mind trained under Divine revelation, which assures security from coming under the grip of groundless fears, deliriums and desires, combined with an effort to emulate the heart thread of the Prophet



–upon him blessings and peace-, guides one to the truth and good. The Prophet’s –upon him blessings and peace- all other miracles aside, just reflecting on his morals and life would suffice to convince one of his honesty and the goodness of everything to which he invited. As a result of this reflection and with Divine help, one is then saved from the clamp of the ego and the dead ends of reason.

The plight and remorse of those in Hellfire are depicted by the Almighty as follows:

“And they shall cry therein for help: O our Lord ! Take us out; we will do good deeds other than those which we used to do. Did We not preserve you alive long enough, so that he who would be mindful in it should mind? And there came to you the one who warns; therefore taste; because for the unjust, there is no helper.” (Fatir, 37)

That means man can reach the truth and eternal salvation through two avenues:

1) By either finding righteous Muslims and surrendering himself to their dependable hands and obeying the Real through the inspiration and spirituality received from them;

2) Or by using his ability to contemplate and sense in the direction of the Quran and Sunnah to find the truth, to which he is to submit his ego. Not obeying



the *ahl'ul-haqiqah* and not training the mind and then following its unwavering lead is bound to conclude in a tragic end.

### **True Contemplation: Affirming the Necessary Existence**

As expressed before, it is impossible for human beings to grasp the Essence of Allah, glory unto Him. The only means for knowledge open to humans are the five senses, reason and heart; yet all of their capabilities are limited. With limited means, there is simply no way of grasping the One who is Absolute, Primordial and Everlasting. Limited means only amounts to a limited understanding.

Engaging in activities that surpass man's capability, like thinking of the Almighty's Essence and seeking to solve the riddle and mystery of fate, has therefore been prohibited by the Quran and Sunnah. Just as failing to contemplate Divine realities is a an invitation for disaster, not knowing one's place and plunging into thoughts that exceed mortal capability can also lead one down the path of destruction.

It is for that reason that the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- says:

*“Contemplate on Allah's creation and blessings but do not think about His Essence; for you can never*



*estimate His Might as befits Him.*” (see, Daylami, II, 56; Haythami, I, 81; Bayhaki, Shuab, I, 136)

The great Ibn Arabi has said:

كُلُّ مَا خَطَرَ بِبَالِكَ وَاللَّهُ غَيْرُ ذَلِكَ

“Whatever thought may pass your mind regarding Allah, He is something else.”

Indeed, as taught by Islam and as has been aforementioned, one of the essential attributes of the Almighty is *mukhalafatu'n-lil-hawadith*, that is not to resemble anything of creation. That we ascribe to Him attributes like wise, just and many others in which human beings also partake, is secured from amounting to *shirk*, that is ascribing partners to the Almighty, thanks to our belief in Him being *mukhalafatu'n-lil-hawadith*.

In contrast to the impossibility of coming to an understanding of the essential reality of Allah, glory unto Him, it is indeed possible to come to an inner certainty of His Unity and Existence, based on the manifestations of His attributes in the universe and phenomena. That marks the boundaries of human grasp, which like that of all other creation, is limited. And that is sufficient in Divine Sight to be accepted as a *mu'min*, a believer. Muslim scholars have for that reason often said, “The peak of knowledge is the knowledge of Allah.”



Human beings have an understanding that only enables them to move from the attribute to that which is attributed of, from the work to its creator, from the art to its artist and from the effect to its cause. By gazing at created beings, each of which is truly a work of art, humanity can come to an understanding of the majesty, splendor and mercy of the Almighty, to the extent of his aptitude. One may only take as much from the ocean that is the knowledge of Allah as is allowed by the capacity of his bucket.

Mawlana Rumi says:

*“One day a desire awakened in me to see the light of Allah on men. It was as if I wanted to see the ocean in a drop, the Sun in a speck.”*

Reflecting on the attributes, acts and works of the Almighty with a pure heart and sincere intention would make it inconceivable for anyone to be a disbeliever. Disbelief only begins when intellectual activity stops and the sensitive balance of the heart is disturbed. It is impossible for one, whose predisposition of mind and heart is still in tact, to be led to disbelief; and given he or she has opened his or her eyes in a world of disbelief, the likelihood of her being led out of it is very high. A good example of this is Ibrahim –upon him peace– who, despite being born into an environment in which idolatry reigned, ultimately acknowledged the existence and unity of Allah,



glory unto Him, simply by virtue of his intellectual and inner capabilities; an account of which the Quran gives plenty of mention.

Disbelief is therefore impossible for one who can think straight. Claiming something not to exist does not, in any way, settle a dispute. Strong proofs and clear evidences are required. What purpose does claiming something not to exist serve when the mystery of life, death and the universe remains to be solved? This is just like the case of those who are unaware that they are suffering from excruciating hunger, simply because their bodies are too frail to feel it. Being in denial of their hunger in fact only shows just how grave their illness really is. A person whose entire nervous system is paralyzed or who is sedated is never aware of a nail spiking his body or a knife cutting through his limbs like shredding paper. Those who bring diseases upon their spirits without being aware of it in the least are described by Allah, glory unto Him, as:

“Blind, deaf and dumb...”

The Almighty has placed in the predisposition of each human being both the need and the power to believe and the desire to search for the truth. Being oblivious to or detached from faith and the truth is therefore caused only by a spiritual blindness and deafness. Otherwise the spirit of a nonbeliever, too, is ready to understand or is at least at its threshold; but



this feature of his is suppressed from rising to the surface by a spiritual impairment by which he is struck, just like the vague dreams one cannot remember after waking up.

The human spirit is naturally inclined to belief, a need that meets us as early childhood, like a hunger urgently waiting to be satisfied. A child who sees her father offer ritual prayer, for instance, does not ask any question pertaining to the details of ritual prayer. Instead, she tries to learn the greatness of the Almighty; and upon trying to express this 'greatness' herself, she resorts to physical descriptions, as she is not yet able to understand it in abstract terms. She asks how many Allah's there are and curious of what awaits her after she dies, she eagerly asks questions to find out what kind of places Heaven and Hell are. She finds herself in a relentless search, for no other reason than that spiritual hunger is embedded in her predisposition. When this embedded aptitude rises to the surface, a person becomes a *mu'min*, a believer. When it is left incarcerated deep within consciousness, just like an encaged bird, it makes a person a nonbeliever. After long years in captivity, a bird forgets how to fly and cannot take flight, even if it were to be released; for its wings have become calcified. When the feeling of faith is held back from rising above consciousness, the ability to believe, too, in time, becomes blinded.





We must therefore seek to know Allah, glory unto Him, who created us out of nothing, to the best of opportunity and ability. To attain to wisdom and knowledge of Allah and thereby reach the Almighty, it is necessary we come to a correct understanding of His attributes and actions.

Had Allah, glory unto Him, infinitely Wise in all His acts, revealed first off to the Blessed Prophet –upon him blessings and peace- to ‘Read in the name of your Lord, who has no kin or partner’, it would have brought with it a ready made objection, reducing the possibility of guidance for minds inured to disbelief. But the Almighty instead began His Revelation with an emphasis on an indisputable attribute: the Creator – “Read in the name of your Lord Who created...” (al-Alaq, 1). Idolaters, who very well knew that idols were not creators of anything, then began coming to terms with the fact that it is Allah, glory unto Him, who is the real Lord, the only One deserving praise and thanks.

Baydavi, the prominent exegete, comments:

“The great Allah reminds in chapter al-Alaq that He delivered man from the lowest level to the highest. He thereby draws attention first to creation, an act that refers the mind back to the Almighty. Secondly, He underlines reading-writing, which refers the ability to hear the Almighty. In other words, He unites rational and narrative sciences.”



The Almighty has rendered contemplation on His creation a means for disbelievers to receive the honor of faith. For believers, on the other hand, it serves as a means to increase the certainty of their belief.

### **All Things are in a State of Flux and Change**

If truth be told, everything in the in the universe is subject to constant change, alternating from one appearance to another. In the mother's womb, for instance, a clot turns into a lump of flesh and that to flesh and bones. Change reigns over the vast array of every perceptible thing, from stars to planets, from minerals to plants, and so forth.

There is an enormous movement within a single atom. Electrons spin in a delicate dance, at a dizzying speed beyond the wildest imagination. The speed of protons and neutrons, on the other hand, being compressed in a lesser mass, revolve in an even more exhilarating speed of over 60,000 km per second. This gigantic speed makes them appear like the drops of a liquid boiling and frothing from immense heat.

The below couplet elegantly express how even a single particle is enough to highlight a link between the art and the Artist:



*No need for the entire universe, to come to know You,  
Enough proof is a single speck You made...*

Remembering there are approximately 100 trillion atoms on a 1 millimeter square needle head will give us a better appreciation of the nature of the Might that sets all things in motion throughout the universe.

There is needed a Real Cause for all this change and motion to take place; and that is the Almighty Allah, the Supreme Creator. It is absolutely inconceivable for this awe-inspiring parade of events to be without a source or to stem from an unconscious cause.

### **Everything is Created with a Purpose**

Evident is the fact that every single thing that exists in the universe has been created in line with a purpose. As expressed before:

-With rays coming from the Sun and reflecting from the Moon, organisms receive their light and flourish. Time comes to be with the Earth and Moon revolving around the Sun. Coming into being through the Earth revolving around its own axis are seasons, years, days and nights; and months as the Moon spins around the Earth.

-The air we constantly breathe infiltrates the lungs and cleans out the blood. Air is the most acces-



sible, since it is the one thing our bodies stand in need of the most.

-Steering the clouds in front of them, winds take rain to where needed, fertilizing plants and trees, regulating heat and cleaning the air.

-The benefits of seas and oceans are, likewise, countless.

The importance of these benefits and the countless more we have not been able to mention in human life is glaring. A contemplative gaze upon these would be enough to reveal the enormous wisdom and purpose underlying every single creation. Supposing these to be merely a haphazard assortment of coincidence is simply to cancel all power of judgment and clear thinking. They are undoubtedly the workings of One Allah, glory unto Him, infinitely Wise, Powerful and Glorious.

### **Different Things are made from the Same Material**

At their core, the seemingly different things we see around us are all the same. They are all made of matter. Different elements are but parts of the same content. Objects in space, for instance, are all made up from the very same matter, yet they each have a unique identity, position, density and life span. Some are cold, while others are extremely hot.



Plants and animals are made up of elements like nitrogen, carbon, oxygen and hydrogen, even though there is no connection between these elements and life, especially with characteristics like knowing, willing, power, hearing and seeing.

All these are Divine works of art. The diverse yet perfect range of organisms we see throughout the universe is the working of a Majestic Artist. It is inconceivable for a Being, who brings into existence so many works of masterpiece, to all of a sudden begin to resemble them. He is the *Wajib'ul-Wujud*, the Necessity of whose Existence comes from Himself.

In a word, it is really not difficult for a thinking person to find his Lord and admire Him. Through contemplation, a nonbeliever finds faith, while a believer perfects his or her faith and strides forth on the ladder of *marifatullah* and *muhabbah*.

### **The *Marifatullah* Road**

Muslim theologians have said that the first obligation humankind is commanded with is to turn to a contemplation that will deliver them to a knowledge of Allah.

The most general and basic aim of the Holy Quran is to deliver minds and hearts from the inva-



sion of every thought other than Allah, glory unto Him, and duly guide them to *marifatullah*.

Human beings were created to know and to serve the Almighty. There is no better way to fulfill this aim than *dhikr* and reflection. Worship is the essence of human life. *Dhikr*, on the other hand, is one of the best ways of worshipping Allah, glory unto Him. *Dhikr* and contemplation are like inseparable twins.

The most important thing for human beings is, without a doubt, attaining to eternal happiness and peace. Other desires should be trivial in comparison. By far, the most essential means of reaching everlasting happiness and peace is *marifah*.

Scientific knowledge is to grasp a given event with its causes and effects. *Marifah*, on the other hand, occurs with an additional understanding of Divine Will manifesting in that event. It is for that reason knowledge of Allah, glory unto Him, has been coined *marifatullah*, which is to understand the Almighty's existence as much as allowed by knowledge.

*Tadhakkur* (remembrance-thought) has therefore been given a priority of mention over *taqwa* (piety) in chapter al-Muminun, in verses 84 to 87. For it is through contemplation and spiritual sensing that humans acquire knowledge of worth, through which comes a recognition of Allah, glory unto Him, instilling one with an awareness of the need to become pious



and abandon opposing His Will. No deed is of any worth without knowledge of Allah.

There is thus not a shadow of a doubt that the noblest knowledge is *marifatullah*. Junayd Baghdadi says:

“Had I known of a better knowledge under the sun than that which the students of *marifah* chase, I would not have dealt with anything else and striven relentlessly to acquire it.”

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya has similar words:

“In the Quran, Allah, glory unto Him, invites His servants to *marifatullah* through two ways:

1. By observing the things created by Allah, glory unto Him, and reflecting on them,
2. By contemplating and reflecting on the verses of the Holy Quran.

The first group consists of the Lord’s observable signs, while the second consists of the visible, audible and thinkable.” (Ibn Qayyim, *Fawa'id*, p. 31-32)

Spiritually sensing and contemplating on these deliver one to an investigative faith (*al-iman’ut-tahqiqi*) and to the purpose of existence.

The poem says it beautifully:



*The vast universe, a grand book of Allah, imposing,  
Whichever letter you peer into, Allah is its meaning...*

### Contemplation Must Lead to Practice

To reach the truth through contemplation, *dhikr* and *muraqabah*, it is necessary to put all the knowledge one has learned to practice. However much one may think of Divine truths and the verses of the Holy Quran, his contemplation means nothing unless he properly practices what he learns; for practice is the external reflection of contemplating and spiritual sensing.

Imam Ghazzali says in this regard:

“Knowledge, the fruit of contemplation, is to acquire a state of mind (*hal*) and turn to doing good deeds. Once knowledge sets in the heart, the heart begins to undergo change. And when the heart undergoes change, so do the deeds executed by the limbs. Action therefore depends on the state of mind, the state of mind on knowledge and knowledge on contemplation. That means that contemplation is both the beginning and the key to all things good. True contemplation is that which delivers one from ugliness to beauty, from greed to abstinence and contentedness. This is the kind of contemplation that yields perception and piety.” (Imam Ghazzali, *Ihya*, VI, 47)





Through a contemplating and sensing that is conducive to practice, man becomes cured from the disease of looking on at the marvels of the universe simplistically.

An ordinary man, who is impressed with man made paintings, which after all are based on an imitation of nature, can not feel the same way when gazing at the universe in connection with its Creator. Things that should evoke awe are, for him, just ordinary happenings.

The pious, whose hearts are purified, on the other hand, have no business in acclaiming paintings made by artists with an interest of acquiring fame, and instead turn their interest and acclaim to the Real Artist and His masterpiece. They enjoy the zest of beholding the Divine art embroidered in the innumerable wonders of nature. They gaze at the multicolored flowers and leaves of plants, the inexhaustible difference of color, smell and shape each tree has, the unique taste of each fruit, even though they all spring from the very same soil, and look on admiringly at the wonderful patterns on the wings of a butterfly and the incredibility of human creation. They lend an ear to the mysterious words expressed through the silent language (*lisan'ul-hal*) of Divine wonders like eyesight and understanding, seen by many as just ordinary happenings.



For such people, the entire universe is like a book waiting to be read. Having surpassed knowledge of the written, they eye the knowledge of the heart; just like Mawlana Rumi, who as a scholar buried in his books and minding his own business in the Saljuk Madrasa, was suddenly ignited by the enlightening call of an enamored, mystic dervish named Shams, and found himself ablaze in the fire of love...Reborn in the atmosphere of love, it was the same Mawlana in whose sight the value of written books dropped to where they rightly belong, as he began reading the mysterious patterns of the universe with his very own eye of the heart. It was only after this stage that the masterpiece that is the *Mathnawi*, a cry exposing the mysteries of the Quran, universe and man, came to be.

How great a joy for the true servants who, through a refined heart and a reason guided and enlightened by the light of faith, lead their lives in the climate of contemplating and spiritual sensing, and are able to attain to *marifatullah!*...



## AFTERWORD

In our times, many people alienated from their own history and culture seek peace in personal development programs of Western origin or in courses of yoga and meditation derived from the Far East. Little are they aware that the real peace humans desperately seek is only to be found in *dhikr*, *tafakkur*, *tahassus* and *muraqabah*, strongly recommended by Islam as the keys of unlocking Divine wisdom and truth.

A contemplation matured through inner, spiritual sensing is the source of spiritual expansion and inner peace. Only a contemplation of such nature can deliver one to wisdom. The beginning of wisdom, on the other hand, is the fear of Allah, glory unto Him, coupled by feelings of piety and awe. Contemplation, in a word, carries a believer to the pleasure and love of the Almighty.

A person who duly reflects on the universe and the events that take place thereon seeks answers to ques-



tions like ‘What is life?’, ‘Why was I created?’, ‘What is the truth behind these passing days?’, ‘Which path is it that leads to happiness?’, ‘What must I seek to be?’, ‘How must I live?’, ‘From where have I come and where am I headed?’, and so forth. These thoughts detach him from the passing desires of the world and take him to the right path that leads to eternal happiness.

In this humble book, we have tried to convey only some of the mysteries, wisdoms and truths contained in the universe, man and the Holy Quran, with some help from contemporary scientific findings. Who knows of the amount of mysteries and underlying wisdoms that are set to become unraveled in the near future to shed further light on the infinity of Divine Might and Majesty?

What we have touched upon here are, moreover, just a few examples proportionate to the modest size of the book. We sincerely hope that our dear readers will *insha-Allah* be able to reenact that horizon of contemplation, which we have tried to expand upon in the light of those examples, within the realms of their own hearts, in a way that can encompass all beings and events; and thereby derive many a pearl of secret and wisdom from the vast ocean of *marifah*.

**May Allah, glory unto Him, grant each of us a horizon for contemplation! May He resurrect our**



hearts by giving us the ability to read the underlying wisdoms of the Quran, universe and man with a perceptive eye! May He include all of us among His blissful servants who live a life of *muraqabah* and are delivered to *marifatullah*!

Amin!



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