



2020

Ramadan Quiz

Answers and Commentary

‘What Am I?’



www.acquiringknowledge.co.uk



info@acquiringknowledge.co.uk



[instagram.com/acqknowledge](https://www.instagram.com/acqknowledge)



t.me/acquiringknowledge



twitter.com/acqknowledge



facebook.com/acqknowledge

FOREWORD

Assalamu ‘alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh,

We pray this reaches you in the best of health and imaan.

Please find attached the answers and tafsir (commentary) for the Ramadan Quiz. All the tafsir (commentary) has been taken from Ma’ariful Qur’an and/or Tafsir Ibn Kathir. It is NOT written by us personally. We read through the commentary and extract whatever is specific to the question of the day and format it. We do not add to the text from ourselves.

Thus, if anyone is interested in further reading, the aforementioned two kitaabs will be useful insha’Allah.

Having said which, if you come across any mistakes or typing errors – then those are from us and we seek forgiveness for it. Please refer the mistake/error to us at: **info@acquiringknowledge.co.uk** referencing the page number and insha’Allah we will amend it.

Request for sincere du’as.

DAY 1

ANSWER: Manna and Salwa

“And We made the cloud give you shade, and sent down to you Mann and Salwa: ‘Eat of the good things We have provided you’. And they (by their ingratitude) did Us no harm, but were harming only themselves.” (Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 57)

COMMENTARY

These two incidents took place in the wilderness of Tih. The Israelites belonged to Syria, but had gone to Egypt in the time of Sayyidna Yusuf (Joseph ‘alayhis salaam) and settled there, while Syria itself had come under the domination of a people called the ‘Amaliqah (Amaleks). When the Pharaoh had been drowned and the Israelites could live in peace, Allah commanded them to go to war against the ‘Amaliqah, and to free their homeland. The Israelites started on the expedition, but, on approaching Syria, when they came to learn about the military strength of the foe, their courage failed them, and they refused to engage themselves in the Jihad. Allah punished them for their disobedience, so that for full forty years they kept wandering about in a wilderness, and could not even go back to Egypt. The wilderness was not very vast, but only a stretch of some ten miles, lying between Egypt and Syria. They would make a day-long march in the direction of Egypt, and stop somewhere for the night. But, on getting up the next morning, they would always find themselves just where they had started from. Thus, they spent forty years wandering about in the wilderness in futile rage and exasperation. That is why the wilderness is called Tih, which signifies ‘having lost one’s way’.

The wilderness was just a barren space without a tree or a building which could offer protection against heat or cold. There was no food to eat, and no clothes to wear. But in answer to the prayer of Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam, Allah made a miraculous provision for all their needs. When they could not bear the scorching sun, Allah sent them the shade of a thin, white cloud. When they began to starve, Allah blessed them with Mann (manna) and Salwa. That is to say, Allah produced honeydew in abundance which they could easily gather. Hence it has been designated as mann which signifies “a gift or favour”. Then, quails would not flee but come around them, so that they could catch the birds with little effort. The two things being unusual, the Holy Qur’an says that Allah made them “descend” for the benefit of the Israelites. Similarly, when they were thirsty, Allah commanded Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam to strike a rock with his staff, which made twelve streams gush forth, as the Holy Qur’an narrates in another place. When they complained of the thick darkness of the night, Allah produced for them a constant pillar of light. When their clothes began to wear out, Allah showed another miracle - their clothes would neither go dirty nor wear out, while the clothes of the children grew with their growth. (Qurtubi)

Allah had commanded the Israelites to take as much of the miraculous food as they really needed, and not to store it for future use. But when they disobeyed this commandment, the meat began to rot. This is how they harmed, not Allah, but themselves.

“And when you said, ‘Musa we will no longer stay on a single food: So, pray for us to your Lord that He may bring forth for us of what the earth produces – its wheat, its lentils and its onions!’ He said, ‘Do you want to take the inferior in exchange of what is better? Go down to a town, and you will have what you have asked for.’ And disgrace and misery were stamped over them and they returned with wrath from Allah. That was because they used to deny the signs of Allah, and would slay the prophets unjustly. That was because they disobeyed and would go beyond the limits.” (Surah Al-Baqarah: Verse 61)

This episode has been indirectly referred to in verse 58, and it also occurred in the wilderness of Tih. The

DAY 1

Israelites grew weary of eating the Mann and the Salwa (manna and quails) everyday, and wished to have ordinary vegetables and grain. Allah commanded them through Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam to go to a certain town which lay somewhere in the wilderness, to till the land there, to grow to eat whatever they liked.

The Israelites were thus being ungrateful and impertinent. Even otherwise, it was so usual with them not only to transgress divine commandments but also to deny them outright. They had also been slaying a number of prophets at different times - they knew they were committing a misdeed, but their hostility to the truth and their stubbornness in disobedience made them blind to the nature of their conduct and its consequences. Through such persistent and wilful misdemeanour they drew upon themselves the wrath of Allah. Disgrace and degradation settled upon them for ever. That is to say, they no longer had any respect in the eyes of others, nor magnanimity in themselves.

One form of this disgrace is that temporal power has been taken away from them for ever. For only forty days, however, - and that too when the Day of Judgement will have come close – the Dajjah (Anti-Christ) belonging to the Jewish race, will have an irregular dominion like that of a robber. This cannot be described as having temporal power, in the proper sense of the term. Allah had made it quite clear to the Jews through Sayyidna Musa (Moses ‘alayhis salaam) that if they continued to be disobedient, they would always have to live under the domination of other nations. Says the Holy Qur’an: “And when your Lord proclaimed He would send forth against them, unto the Day of Resurrection, those who should visit them with evil chastisement.” (7:167)

As to how the Companions, their successors and the great commentators have interpreted the disgrace and degradation which has settled on the Jews, let us present a summary in the words of Ibn Kathir: “No matter how wealthy they grow, they will always be despised by other people; whoever gets hold of them will humiliate them, and attach to them the emblems of servitude.” The commentator Dahhak ibn Muzahim reports from the blessed Companion ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas radiallahu ‘anhu that the Jews will always remain under the domination of others, will be paying taxes and tributes to them – that is to say, they will themselves never have power and authority in the real sense of the term.

Another verse of the Holy Qur’an also speaks of the disgrace of the Jews, but with some addition: “And disgrace has been stamped over them wherever they are found, unless (saved) through a rope from Allah and through a rope from men.” (3:112)

Now, the ‘rope’ or means from Allah refers to the case of those who whom Allah Himself has, through His own commandment, saved from this disgrace – for example, children, women, or those who are totally devoted to prayer and worship and never go to war against Muslims.

The ‘rope’ or means from men refers to a treaty of peace with the Muslims, or a permission to live in a Muslim country on payment of the Jizyah (the tax levied on non-Muslims living in a Muslim country, which exonerates them from military service etc.) Since the Holy Qur’an uses the expression “from men” and not “from Muslims”, a third situation is also possible - the Jews may make political arrangements with other non-Muslims, live under their backing and protection, and thus be in ‘peace’.

There is another aspect to the question - we must look into the nature of the exception that has been made in the verse which we have just cited. Now, when an exception is added to a statement, the exception may fall into either of these two categories: (1) What has been excepted formed, or still forms, a part of what it has been excepted from. For example, take this statement: “The tribe came except Zayd.” Zayd was and still is a member of the tribe, but he has been excepted from it in so far as the act of coming is concerned. (2) What has been excepted did not form, or no longer forms, a part of what it has been excepted from. For example:

DAY 1

“The tribe came except the donkey.” The donkey, of course, never formed a part of the tribe, and he has been excepted from the act of coming in so far as the act pertains to the tribe. If the exception made in the present verse is of the first kind, then the statement would mean that all the Jews always and everywhere live in disgrace with the exception of two situations - protection provided to women and children etc. by the commandment of Allah Himself, or by a treaty of peace with the Muslims or with some non-Muslim nations. On the other hand, if the exception is of the second kind, the verse would mean that the Jews as a group would essentially and always remain in disgrace with the exception of some who may find protection under the commandment of Allah, or of some others who may receive support from other nations and thus disguise their own disgrace.

Thus, Verse 3:112 helps to elucidate Verse 2:61, and also dispels the doubt which sometimes arises in the minds of the Muslims at the sight of the so-called “Israeli state” imposed on Palestine. For, they find it difficult to reconcile the two things - the Holy Qur’an seems to indicate that the Jews will never have a sovereign state, while they have actually usurped Palestine and set up a state of their own. But if we go beyond the appearances, we can easily see that “Israel” is not an independent sovereign state, but only a stronghold of the Western powers which they have established in the midst of Muslim countries in order to protect their own interests; without the backing of these super-powers the Jewish “state” cannot survive for a month, and the Western powers themselves look upon the Israelis as their henchmen. The “Israeli state” has been living, as the Holy Qur’an says, “through a rope from men,” and, even at that, living as a parasite on the Western powers. So, there is no real occasion to have a misgiving about what the Holy Qur’an has said on the subject.

Moreover, the half of Palestine which the Jews have usurped and the parasite state they have set up there is no more than a spot on the map of the world. As against this, we have vast expanses of the globe covered by Christian states, by Muslim states, and even by the states of people who do not believe in Allah at all. Can this tiny blot on the map and that too under the American-British umbrella, negate the disgrace which Allah has made to settle upon the Jews?

DAY 2

ANSWER: Qalam (Pen)

FROM SURAH AL-QALAM

“Nun, by the pen and what they write” [Surah Al-Qalam: Ayah 1]

COMMENTARY

Pen and its Significance

In the phrase wal-qalami, the waw is the particle of oath [translated here as ‘by the pen’]. ‘Qalam’ refers to ‘pen’, and there are three types of pen: [1] the pen of destinies; [2] the pen of angels; and [3] the pen of human beings. It could refer to any or all of these types of pen. A pen is an object that is used for writing anything [as is the view of Abu Hatim Al-Busti]. According to Sayyidna Ibn ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu it specifically refers to the pen of destinies. Sayyidna ‘Ubaidah Ibn Samit radi’allahu ‘anhu narrates regarding the pen of destinies that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “The first thing Allah created was the pen, and He told it to write, and when it asked Him what it should write, He told it to write what was predestined, so it wrote what would take place to all eternity.” [Transmitted by At-Tirmidhi, saying that this is a Tradition whose chain of narrators is gharib]. Sayyidna ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar radi’allahu ‘anhu narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Allah recorded the destiny of all creatures 50000 years before creating the heavens and the earth.” [Sahih Muslim]. Qatadah rahimahullah says that pen is a great gift of Allah that He has endowed upon His servants. Some scholars say that Allah first created the pen, and that was the pen of decrees which recorded the destinies of the entire universe and all the creatures. Then He created the second pen that is used by the inhabitants of the earth. The second pen is referred to in Surah Iqra’ in verse [96:4], thus: “{He who) taught by the pen.” And Allah knows best!

If qalam ‘pen’ in the verse under comment refers to the pen of destinies, its greatness and its superiority over everything is quite obvious and swearing by it is quite understandable. If it is taken to refer to all pens in general, including the pen of destinies, the pen of angels, and also the pen of human beings, swearing an oath by it is apt because all great tasks are accomplished by pen. In the conquests of territories, pen play a mighty role: ‘The pen is mightier than the sword’ goes the famous saying. Abu Hatim Al-Busti has encapsulated this idea in two short verses:

*When the brave people swear by their sword some day,
And count it among things that give honour and veneration to men,
The writers’ pen is sufficient for their honour and superiority
For all times to come, because Allah has sworn oath by the pen*

In any case, it is immaterial whether the pen in the verse refers to the pen of destinies or it refers to the pen of creation in general. Then it swears an oath by “what they write [1]”.

In other words, swearing an oath by what the pens have written or what they will record in the future, Allah refutes the unbelievers’ false charge of madness that they made against the Holy Prophet ﷺ thus: (with the grace of your Lord, you are not insane... 68:2). The verse contains the phrase (with the grace of your Lord... 68:2). It states not only the claim, but also evidence to support and substantiate the statement of claim. [See special note below.] Man is required to turn the pages of history, and he will realize that a person as great as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, upon whom Allah has conferred great blessings and grace, cannot be insane. Calling such a sane person insane is itself insanity.

Special Note

DAY 2

Scholars have explained the Qur’anic concept of ‘oath’: Wherever Allah has sworn an oath by an object or a phenomenon, its subject has been cited as evidence or testimony to support and substantiate the claim. Here the phrase: “what they write [1]”. Is the proof of the claim, that is, world history has been cited as testimony for critics to look into the pages of history, if they can ever find a person of such lofty calibre as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, with high morals insane. He takes care of other people’s sanity.

FROM SURAH AL-ALAQ

“Read, and your Lord is the most gracious, who imparted knowledge by means of the pen. He taught man what he did not know.” (Surah Al-Alaq: Ayah 3-5)

COMMENTARY

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

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

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

An authentic narration of Sayyidna Abu Hurairah radi’allahu ‘anhu reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “When Allah created the creation, He inscribed a document which is with Him above the Throne: Indeed My mercy has preceded My anger.”

In another narration, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said: “The first thing Allah created was the pen. He told it to write, so it wrote what was to take place till Doomsday. This is with Allah on His Throne.” [Qurtubi]

Three Types of Pen

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

Divine Throne; [3] the Garden of Eden; and [4] Holy Prophet 'Adam 'alayhis salaam.

Who was First Trained in the Writing Skill and Art?

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

Writing Skill and Art: A Great Divine Gift

Sayyidna Qatadah radi'allahu 'anhu has stated that Pen is a great Divine gift. If Allah had not granted man the art and skill of writing with pen, it would not have been possible for him to preserve or protect the religion in its pristine form, nor would it have been possible for him to conduct his worldly affairs in the proper manner. Sayyidna 'Ali radi'allahu 'anhu has stated that it is a great generosity that Allah has granted His servants knowledge of things they did not know. He drew them out from the darkness of ignorance and brought them into the light of knowledge. He urged them to acquire the art and skill of writing as it accrues great benefits. Only Allah is able to keep count of the benefits of writing. All sciences and philosophies are codified by means of pen. The history of the former and latter nations are compiled by means of pen. Their chronicles and monographs are preserved in writing. The Divinely revealed Books are committed to writing, and shall be preserved till the world lasts. 'The pen' is thus able to make great contribution towards the propagation and dissemination of spiritual sciences and Divine secrets revealed by the Qur'an and of physical sciences to which the study of the Qur'an imparted a great stimulus. Without the pen, all worldly and religious works will come to a standstill.

Writing Skill and Art: Attitude of Scholars in All Ages

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

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

It is really very significant that mention should have been made of 'Pen' in a Book which was revealed to a person, the Final Messenger ﷺ who himself did not know how to read and write. The reason for this is the profound Divine wisdom underlying it. Allah had willed that the dignity and status of the Final Messenger should be far above the thinking of the general populace. Allah placed the Holy Prophet ﷺ in an environment which was not favourable for any spontaneous accomplishments, nor was it conducive to any achievements by natural exposure. His birth-place was the rugged and rocky mountainous terrain. The desert of Arabia had fewer plants apart from the date-palms, little water apart from the zam zam well and the weather was always dry, far away from civilisation, and completely cut off from the cradle of knowledge and wisdom. The communications system or network was inaccessible; as a result, the people of Arabia had no contact with Syria, Iraq, Egypt and other civilised areas of the world. Hence, all the Arabs were referred to as 'unlettered' who generally had no respect for knowledge, wisdom and writing. Very rarely people had the opportunity to learn knowledge or to acquire the art and skill of writing. The Holy Prophet ﷺ was born in such bare region, among such illiterate tribes and in such harsh environment. He was never given the opportunity to become literate. It was inconceivable that a person born in such a surrounding will be gifted with knowledge, wisdom and high morals. He was, however, suddenly granted the cloak of Prophet-hood, together with incessant flow of knowledge and wisdom. The greatest of poets and orators of Arabia were

subdued by the eloquence of the unlettered Holy Prophet ﷺ. This was his open and overt miracle. Every open-minded person should be able to see with his eye of certainty that his attainments were not the result of acquisition by his own efforts or human exertion, but they were the result of the invisible generosity of Allah Who endowed him with the Prophetic gift. This is the Divine wisdom underlying the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ was not trained in the skill and the art of writing. [Adapted from Qurtubi]

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

Many other Means of Teaching

The present verse purports to say that the real teacher is Allah, and He has innumerable ways and means, besides pen, to impart knowledge. Therefore, the verse says that Allah taught man things with which he was unacquainted previously. The verse does not mention 'pen' or any other means of teaching. The reason for that is man is taught from the very inception of his life. First, he is gifted with intellect, the greatest means of receiving knowledge. Man, by the right use of intellect, is able to understand many things. Further, his entire environment is the manifestation of the perfect power of Allah and studded with the evidence of Divine power by witnessing which he is able to recognise his Creator. Revelation and inspiration are other means of knowledge. The knowledge of many essential things are learnt intuitively. Intuition is the God-given ability to know or understand things through feelings, rather than by considering facts or evidence. As a result, there is no need for tongue or pen. When a baby is born, it is not conscious of how its environment operates. However, it instinctively reaches out for the mother's breast, when it feels hungry and feeds itself. Who teaches it and who can teach it? Allah has taught it the 'skill' of crying since its birth. The cry of the baby is the means of satisfying all its needs. When it cries, it becomes a cause of concern for the parents to find out what is wrong. The baby's cry satisfies its hunger, thirst, heat and cold. Who teaches the new-born baby how to cry? All this is instinctive knowledge with which Allah has programmed every living organism, especially man. After the instinctive knowledge, man's knowledge continues to increase by word of mouth, and then by the supra-rational organ of intuition, called the heart. Apparently, there was no need to say (... what he did not know) because normally knowledge is imparted of things that are not known. It is explicitly stated here, probably because man may not assume that the God-given knowledge and skills are the results of his own efforts and exertion. The concluding phrase "what he did not know" has been added in order to make man realise that there was a time when he knew nothing, thus in [16:78] we came across (And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs when you knew nothing...). This shows that knowledge is not an ingrained personal excellence of man. It is the gift of the Creator and the Master. [Mazhari]. Some scholars interpret the word 'man' to be referring to the Holy Prophet 'Adam 'alayhis salaam because he was the first man to whom knowledge was imparted, thus in [2:31] (And He taught 'Adam the names, all of them...). And others say the reference is to the Final Messenger ﷺ whose knowledge embraces the knowledge of all the previous Prophets.

DAY 3

ANSWER: Shirt (Qamees)

“Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man. And bring to me all your family!” (Surah Yusuf: Ayah 93)

COMMENTARY

The previous verses about the story of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam have told us about the time when, by the will of Allah, it was appropriate for him to disclose his secret to his brothers. This he did. His brothers sought his forgiveness. He, not only that he forgave them, did not even choose to admonish them for what they had done to him in the past. In fact, he prayed to Allah Ta’ala for them. Meeting his father was now his next concern. Given the conditions, he found it better that his father comes to him with the family. But, having come to know that his father had lost his eyesight as a result of his separation from him, that became his first concern. So, he said to his brothers: (Go with this shirt of mine and put it over the face of my father, and he will turn into a sighted man - 93). It is obvious that putting someone’s shirt on the face of a person cannot become the physical cause of an eyesight to return. In fact, this was a miracle of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam for he, by the will of Allah, knew that once his shirt was put over the face of his father, Allah Ta’ala will give him his eyesight back.

Tafsir authorities, Dahhak and Mujahid have said that this was the inherent quality of that shirt because it was not like ordinary clothes. Instead, it was brought from Paradise for Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam at the time when he was thrown into the fire naked by Nimrud. Then, this apparel of Paradise remained preserved with Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam. After his death, it passed on to Sayyidna Ishaq ‘alayhis salaam. After his death, it came to Sayyidna Ya’qub ‘alayhis salaam. In view of its status as a sacred legacy, he put it inside a tube, sealed it and made Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam wear it round his neck as a Ta’widh (spiritual charm) so that he remains safe against the evil eye. When the brothers of Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam removed the shirt of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam to deceive their father and he was thrown into the well without it, Sayyidna Jibra’il al-Amin came, and opening the tube hanging round his neck, took this shirt out from it, and made Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam wear it. Since that time, it remained preserved with him. When needed again, it was Jibra’il al-Amin again who advised Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam that this shirt was an apparel of Paradise. It had a unique property. If put over the face of a blind person, he becomes sighted. He asked him to send it to his father and he would become a sighted man.

The view of Hadrat Mujaddid Alf Thani rahimahullah, is that the beauty rather the very existence of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam, was itself a thing of the Paradise. Therefore, every shirt that touched his body could have this property. (Mazhari)

Said in the last sentence of verse 93 was: that is, “all of you, my brothers, bring your entire family to me.” Though, the real purpose was to have his respected father come to him but, here he did not specifically mention his father, instead, talked about bringing the family - perhaps, because he considered that asking his father to be brought to him was contrary to etiquette. However, he was already certain that the sight of his father would return and there would remain no reason which could stop him from coming to him, rather, he would himself want to honour him with his visit. According to a narration reported by Al-Qurtubi, Yahuda (Judah) from among the brothers of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam offered to carry this shirt personally - because, it was he who had carried young Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam’s shirt smeared with fake blood and which brought many shocks for his father, and now, it should be him again who should carry the shirt in his own hands, so that amends could be made for past injustices.

DAY 4

ANSWER: Staff of Musa ‘alayhis salaam

FROM SURAH TAHA

“And what is that in your right hand, O Musa? He said, “It is my staff. I lean on it, and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep, and for me it has many other uses.” [17-18]

The question: “What is in your right hand, O Musa?”- 20:17 marks the beginning of the special favour which Allah Ta’ala showed towards Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam in order to dispel the fear created by the unusual sights that he had seen and the Divine Word that he had heard. The style in which Allah Ta’ala addressed him was friendly, inquiring from him what he held in his hand. Besides there was a subtle purpose in the question, namely to make him aware that what he held in his hand was a staff made of wood and nothing more. And when he had satisfied himself again that it was indeed a wooden staff, then the miracle of turning it into a serpent was revealed, thus precluding any doubt in his mind that in the darkness of the night he might have picked up a serpent instead of his staff.

(He said, “It is my staff” - 20:18). The simple question which was put to Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam i.e. “What is in your hand?” called for an brief answer, such as, “It is a staff”. But he volunteered additional information which was outside the scope of the question put to him. First, he said that the staff belonged to him; second, that it served him many purposes, namely that he often reclined on it, and also beat down leaves from trees for his goats; third, that he put it to many other uses. This long and detailed reply is a perfect combination of extreme love and adoration on the one hand and profound reverence on the other. It is a natural human instinct that when a person finds the object of his adoration to be kind and attentive, he wishes to prolong the conversation in order to get the best advantage. At the same time the dictates of extreme respect require that the conversation should remain within proper limits and not become too lengthy. For this reason he ended his reply with a brief statement i.e. “And for me it has many other uses”, but he did not give any detail of those “other uses”. (Ruh and Mazhari)

From this verse Qurtubi has deduced in his Tafsir that when needed, it is permissible, while answering a question, to include matters which are not specifically covered in the question.

Rule

This verse also shows that carrying a staff is a practice followed by the prophets. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also used to carry a staff in his hand and this practice has numerous religious as well as mundane advantages.

FROM SURAH AL-ARAF

“So he threw down his staff, and it was a serpent, manifest” [Surah Al-A’raf: Ayah 107]

The verse 103, has said that after the prophets Nuh, Hud, Salih, Lut and Shu’aib ‘alayhimis salaam, We sent Musa ‘alayhis salaam with Our signs towards Pharaoh and his people. The ‘signs’ may refer to the verses of the Torah or to the miracles of the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam. The word Pharaoh was the title of Egyptian kings. The Pharaoh of Musa ‘alayhis salaam’s time is said to be Merneptah. The phrase “they did injustice to them (signs)” here means that they showed indifference to the verses of Allah, instead of being grateful to Him and having faith in them they rejected His verses. The word ظلم rendered as wrong or injustice, in fact, signifies the use of something for a purpose opposite to what it was created for. Further it “So look how was the fate of mischief-makers.” Again the people are invited to take lesson from these events and think of their own fate.

The verse is a clear declaration of the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam before Pharaoh that he was a messenger

DAY 4

of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, and that his status of prophethood does not allow him to ascribe anything but truth to Allah because the message given to the prophets by Allah is a sacred trust and it is a great sin to tamper with it. All the prophets of Allah are free of all sins and cannot do so. The prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam tried to convince them that they should believe him because his truthfulness was beyond question and that he had never uttered a word of lie. In addition to this, his miracles are a clear proof to support his claim to prophethood. In the light of these clear signs he must believe him and let the children of Isra’il go with him free of his illegitimate surveillance. The Pharaoh, out of his obstinacy, did not listen to anything, but demanded saying, “If you have come with a sign, bring it out, if you are among the truthful”. The prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam in response to his demand, threw down his staff on the earth, instantly it turned into a serpent: The word ‘thu’ban’ in Arabic signifies a huge serpent. The use of the word ‘mubin’ as an adjective which means ‘clear or prominent’ is quite descriptive of the fact that this miraculous event took place manifestly before the eyes of the people of the Pharaoh, and it was not performed secretly in a hidden or secluded place as is usually done by magicians. In some historical traditions it has been cited on the authority of the Companion Ibn ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu that as the serpent moved towards Pharaoh, he jumped from his throne and sought shelter near the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam and many of his courtiers died of extreme fear. (Tafsir Kabir)

Transformation of the staff into a real serpent is not, in fact, totally impossible as it apparently seems. It is, however, surprising due to being unusual. The miracle has to be an unusual act, beyond the power of a common individual. Allah shows the miracles through His prophets to make people understand that they possess some divine powers and are true prophets of Allah.

“And We revealed to Musa, ‘Throw your staff.’ Then of a sudden, it began to swallow all that they had concocted. [Surah Al-A’raf: Ayah 117]

These verses narrate the remaining part of the story of the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam. Seeing these wonders of staves turning into serpents and making his hand emitting strong white light, the Pharaoh should have been convinced and have believed in Musa ‘alayhis salaam as the logic and sense demanded. But it is the common practice of the wrong-doers that they always seek false interpretations of the truth in order to conceal it, the Pharaoh and his people belied him instead, and said to the people that he was a great sorcerer and that he wanted to expel them from their homes and take over the rule of the country. The people of the Pharaoh suggested: **“leave him and his brother alone for a while, and send men to the cities to collect and bring to you every expert sorcerer”** (ayahs 111, 112)

The people of the Pharaoh said that there were many expert sorcerers in their cities who were capable of defeating Musa ‘alayhis salaam. Some soldiers should be sent to collect and bring the sorcerers for this purpose. Sorcery and magic, being the custom of the day, the sorcerers enjoyed a high status among people. Allah sent Musa ‘alayhis salaam with the miracles of the staff and white-lit hand so that people may clearly observe the misery of the sorcerers after entering into a contest with Musa ‘alayhis salaam. It is the usual practice of Allah that He sends His prophets with miracles that are appropriate to the demand of the time. For instance, in the time of the prophet ‘Isa ‘alayhis salaam (the Jesus), Greek philosophy and medical sciences were at their zenith. He was, therefore, sent with the miraculous powers of restoring the sight of those who were born blind and cure the lepers instantly with a touch of his hand. In the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the Arabs were boastful of their oratory and linguistic capabilities. The Holy Qur’an was sent as the greatest of all miracles of the Holy prophet ﷺ. Its diction and style so bewildered the Arabs that they instantly acknowledged a super human element in it. The sorcerers came to Pharaoh and said: **“There must be a reward for us, if we are the victors.”** (113)

DAY 4

He said, **“Yes, and of course, you will be among the closer ones.”** (114)

The sorcerers were invited from all over the country. When they all came to Pharaoh they asked him of some reward if they gain victory over Musa ‘alayhis salaam. He promised that in addition to their reward they shall be included among those close to him. The historical reports about the number of these sorcerers give us different information. These give us a number from nine hundred to three hundred thousand. The quantity of the staves and strings used in this contest is reported to be as great as was loaded on three hundred camels. (Qurtubi) It may be noted that the first thing the sorcerers did, was to have an assurance about the reward they will get in return of their performance. It is because worldly people are always after worldly gains. They do nothing unless they are sure of their gains, while on the contrary, the prophets and their disciples always declare: **“I do not ask you for a reward, as my reward is with the Lord of all the worlds.”** (26:109)

That is, the prophets of Allah preach and convey the message of Allah only for the good and guidance of people and they seek no financial gain against it. They seek their reward from Allah alone. After this discourse with Pharaoh the sorcerers got the place and date fixed for the great encounter. An open land was chosen for the purpose and the time was fixed after the sunrise on their festival Day. It is also mentioned in a verse of the Holy Qur’an: Musa ‘alayhis salaam said: **“your appointed day is the day of zinah so that people may be gathered after sunrise.”** (20:59)

Some reports say that the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam had a short conversation with the chief of the sorcerers and asked him if they would accept the faith in case he defeated them? He said that there was no question of their being defeated as they possessed such great magical powers that could not be overcome by any one. And in case ‘you bring defeat to us we shall declare our faith openly in the presence of the Pharaoh’. (Mazhari and Qurtubi)

They said, **“O Musa, either you throw (first) or shall we be the ones to throw.”**

The Arabic word: ‘ilqa’ means to drop something down. On the day of encounter the sorcerers asked the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam if he would drop down his staff first or should they throw theirs first? This question of the sorcerers was perhaps to show their complacency about their art, though the mode of their sentence indicated that they wanted to start first, but for giving an impression of power to their opponent they put that question. Since the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam had nothing to fear about, he invited them saying ‘you drop.’

Ibn Kathir has said that the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam behaved with them politely by inviting them to have their turn first. The effect of this behaviour was that they accepted the faith after their defeat. Here we are faced with a question. The sorcery is an impermissible act, specially when it is used to oppose a prophet sent by Allah it becomes an act of infidelity. How then the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam gave permission of magic to the sorcerers by saying ‘you drop’? With a little thought we can find the answer. It was certain that the sorcerers will show their magic by all means. The point of conversation was to decide who should start the contest. The prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam allowed them to begin. Another advantage of this strategy was that the people could see their performance and the sorcerers had all the time to show their art and turn the staves into snakes. Then the staff of the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam should turn into a serpent and eat up all the snakes, thus the open defeat of magic should be exhibited before the people. (Bayan- al- Qur’an)

“So, when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people, and made them frightened, and came out with great sorcery.” (116)

DAY 4

This verse indicates that this demonstration of their magic was just a bewitching of the eyes of the people which made them see the staffs and strings as snakes leaping on the ground, while the strings and the staffs did not change physically. It was a kind of mesmerism hypnotising the minds of the onlookers. This does not mean that sorcery is confined only in this kind and that it cannot change something into another, as we do not have any proof against it. On the contrary, many forms and kinds of magic have been taken as being reality. The terms magic and sorcery are usually applied for all the acts that seem to be happening in unusual way. Sleight of hand, telepathic influences and mesmerism are sometimes called magic. Transformation of one thing into another through magic may be a possibility but we have no valid reason or proof for or against it.

The next verse 117 said, **“And We revealed to Musa ‘Throw your staff.’ Then, of a sudden it began to swallow all that they had concocted.”** We find it reported in history, when thousands of staffs and ropes were turned into snakes leaping all over the ground, Allah commanded Musa ‘alayhis salaam to drop down his staff on the ground. It turned into a great snake and instantly began to eat up the snakes of the sorcerers. The crowd stood bewildered and stunned at this sight. Within no time all the snakes were eaten up by the great snake of the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam. Next, the verse said:

“So, the truth prevailed and what they were doing became a nullity. So there they were overcome and turned humiliated. And the sorcerers were constrained to fall in prostration. They said, “We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Musa and Harun.”

The sorcerers were so overawed by the miracle of the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam that they fell in prostration. This may also imply that Allah blessed them with favour and put them in prostration. They added the phrase, the Lord of Musa ‘alayhis salaam and Harun after saying, the Lord of the worlds, to make it clear that the Lord worshipped by Musa ‘alayhis salaam and Harun is, in fact, the Lord of the Universe, and not the Pharaoh as he pretended to be.

The foregoing verses had a detailed account of the contest between the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam and the sorcerers and that after their defeat the sorcerers declared their faith in Allah. Some historical reports say that subsequent to their declaration of faith in Allah, six hundred thousand more people followed suit and declared their belief in Allah. Before this open contest there were only two individuals believing in Allah. Now a great army of people became Muslims.

It Was A Miracle

The instant perfect change of mind of the sorcerers was, in no way, a lesser miracle than the other miracles of the prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam. Those who led a life of infidelity and ignorance for their whole life were instantly changed into the most cognizant, knowledgeable and true Muslims, as faithful as to readily sacrifice their life for their faith. It is a pity that the Muslims and the Muslim states are trying all other ways and means to make themselves powerful and strong, but have become neglectful of the real source of power and strength. That is faith, perseverance and patience.

DAY 5

ANSWER: An-Nahl (The honeybee)

“And your Lord revealed to the honey bee: ‘Make homes in the mountains, in the trees and in the structures they raise. Then, eat from all the fruits and go along the pathways of your Lord made easy for you! From their bellies comes out a drink of various colours in which there is cure for people. Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who ponder.’” [Surah An-Nahl: Ayahs 68-69]

COMMENTARY

The first word: (awha) in the first sentence of verse 68 has not been used here in its technical sense of Wahy or Revelation. Instead, it appears here in its literal sense which happens when the speaker communicates to the addressee something particular, secretly, in a way that the other person remains unable to understand that which has been communicated. Hence, its translation as ‘revealed’ is also in a literal sense.

As for the next word: (an-nahl), it is well-established that the honey bee is a distinct entity among non-human life forms particularly in terms of its intelligence and management. Therefore, the way it has been addressed by Allah Ta’ala shows a distinct elegance of its own. For the rest of the creation, particularly for life forms in the animal and insect kingdom, it was said: (He gave everything its form, then provided it with guidance - Taha, 20:50), something stated as a universal law for all of them. But, for this tiny creature, it was specially said: (And your Lord revealed) which has been designed to indicate that it has a prominent status among other life forms by virtue of its intelligence, sense and functional insight.

The intelligence of the honey bees can be gauged fairly well by their system of governance. The system of this tiny flier’s life operates on the principles of human politics and government. All management rests with one big bee which is the ruling head of all bees. It is her managerial skill and efficient distribution of work which helps run the whole system soundly and safely. Certainly so unique is her system and so established are its rules and regulations that human mind has but to marvel at the phenomena of the bee. This ‘queen’ itself lays six to twelve thousand eggs in a period of three weeks. By its size, physique and demeanour, it is distinguishable from other bees. This ‘queen’, following the principle of division of labour, appoints its subjects to handle different matters. Some of them serve on guard duty and do not allow some unknown outsider to enter into the hive. Some stand to protect eggs. Some nurture and train baby bees. Some serve as architects and engineers. The compartments of most roofs made by them range between twenty to thirty thousand. Some bees collect and deliver wax to architects which build homes. They procure this wax material from a whitish powder settled upon vegetation. This material is commonly visible on sugarcane. Some of them sit on different kinds of fruits and flowers and suck their juices which turns into honey while in their bellies. This honey is their food and the food of their children. And the same is, for all of us too, the essence of taste and nutrition, and the prescription of medicine and remedy.

These different parties discharge their assigned duties very enthusiastically and obey the command of their ‘queen’ most obediently. If one of them happens to perch on filth, the guards of the hive stop the unwary worker on the outside gate and the ‘queen’ kills it. One can only wonder about this system and the performance of its managers and workers. (Al-Jawahir)

The first instruction given through: (your Lord revealed) appears in the next sentence: (Make homes in the mountains) which mentions the making of homes. At this point, it is worth noting that every animal makes some sort of a sheltered arrangement to live anyway, then, why is it that bees have been particularly commanded to build ‘homes’ and that too with such considered attention? Furthermore, the word used here is that of: (buyut) which is generally used for the places where human beings live, their homes. By doing this

DAY 5

two hints have been given. The first hint is towards the fact: Since bees have to, prepare honey, therefore, they should first make a safe home. The second hint is toward another fact: The homes they make will not be like the homes of common animals, instead, their design and construction will be extraordinary. As such, their homes are highly distinct, far different from those of other animals, virtually mind-boggling. Their homes are hexagonal in shape. Measuring them with a pair of compasses and rulers will hardly spell out a difference. Other than the hexagonal shape, they never choose any shape such as that of a square, pentagon or any others as some of their corners turn out to be functionally useless.

Allah Ta'ala did not simply order the bees to make homes, He also told them as to where they should be located, that is, it should be at some altitude because such places help provide fresh, clean and almost-filtered air flow for the production of honey. Thus, honey stays protected from polluted air as well as from incidences of breakage or damage to the hives. So, it was said: (Make homes in the mountains, in the trees and in the structures they raise) so that honey could be prepared in a hygienically safe way. This was the first instruction.

The second instruction appears in: (Then, eat from all the fruits) where the bee is being commanded to suck juices from fruits and flowers as it desires and likes. No doubt, what is said here is: (from all the fruits). But, obviously, the word: (kull) used here does not mean the fruits and flowers of the whole world. Instead of that, it means those within easy reach, and which serve the desired purpose. This word: (kull) has also appeared in relation to the event concerning the queen of Saba' where it was said: (she has got everything - An-Naml, 27:23). It is obvious that 'all' or 'every' in this sense do not denote totality without exception to the limit that the queen of Saba' be required to have a personal aeroplane, Rolls Royce and palace train! What is meant here is what she needed to have as complement to her function as the ruler of the time. So, here too, the expression: (from all the fruits) means nothing but this. As for the bee sucking juices from fruits and flowers, it can be said that the molecular composition of juices she sucks is extremely refined and precious, the extraction of which in identical measure through mechanical means even in our advanced scientific age cannot be accomplished as efficiently.

Then comes the third instruction: (and go along the pathways of your Lord made easy for you). When the bee goes to suck juices from fruits and flowers to places far away from home, then, obviously enough, its return to home base should have been difficult. But, Allah Ta'ala has made flight routes easy for it. Thus, it goes miles away and returns home without straying or getting lost. Allah Ta'ala has made for it flying routes in the air because in going by the circuitous pathways on land, there is the likelihood of going astray. So, it can be said that Allah Ta'ala has subjugated the air space for this humble bee so that it can go home without any let or hinderance.

After that, the real outcome of this revealed command was stated in the following words: (From their bellies comes out a drink of various colours in which there is cure for people - 69). The difference in colour is caused by the difference of climate and by what they suck from. This is the reason why a particular area with abundance of particular kinds of fruits and flowers does leave its effect and taste on the honey produced in that area. Since honey comes in the form of a liquid substance, therefore, it was called 'sharab' (drink). Even in this sentence, present there is a decisive proof of the Oneness and Power of Allah Ta'ala. Is it not that this tasty and blissful drink comes out from the belly of a tiny animal which, in itself, is armed with poison? The emergence of antidote from poison is really a unique exhibit of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ala. Then, such is the staggering working of nature that milk from milch animals does not turn red or yellow under the effect of different climates and foods while honey from the bee does take different colours.

As for the oft-quoted statement: (in which there is cure for people), it can be said that honey is on the one hand, an energy-giving food as well as a delicacy in terms of taste and flavor, while on the other hand, it

DAY 5

serves as a remedial prescription for diseases too. And why not? This delicate mobile machine which goes about extracting pure and powerful essences from all kinds of fruits and flowers after which it returns home to store them in its safe compartments specially designed, constructed and guarded for a purpose. Now, if natural herbs and plants contain ingredients which have medicinal and curative properties, why would everything disappear from their essences? Honey is used as medicine directly in phlegmatic diseases while in other diseases it is recommended in combination with other ingredients. Expert physicians in the Greco-Arab medical tradition include it specially as a binder in their medicinal electuaries. Another property of honey is that it does not get spoiled itself and, on top of it, it helps preserve other things as well for a long time. This is the reason why eastern physicians have been using it as an alternate of alcohol for thousands of years. Honey is laxative and proves efficient in expelling unhealthy substances from the stomach.

A Sahabi radi'allahu 'anhu mentioned the sickness of his brother before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He advised him to give his brother a drink of honey. He returned the next day and reported that his brother was still sick. He repeated his advice. On the third day, when he again said that there was no change in his condition, he said: (The word of Allah is true. The stomach of your brother is a liar). The sense was that there is nothing wrong with the suggested remedy. It was the particular temperamental condition which had caused delay in the actual effect of the remedy. When the treatment with honey was repeated after that, the patient got well.

At this place in the Holy Qur'an, the word: (shifa': remedy, cure, bliss) appears as common noun (nakirah) in the context of an affirmative sentence. That it is shifa' for every disease is not apparent on this basis. But, the nunnation (tanwin) of 'shifa' which carries the sense of greatness does necessarily prove that the shifa' in honey is of a great and distinct nature. Then there are those spiritually valiant servants of Allah who just have no doubt about honey being a cure for any disease whatsoever. So firmly convinced they are with their staunch belief in the very outward meaning of this statement of their Rabb that they would treat an abscess or an eye with honey, not to mention other diseases of the body. According to reports about Sayyidna Ibn 'Umar radi'allahu 'anhu, even if an abscess showed up on his body, he would treat it by applying honey on it. When some of the people asked him as to why would he do that, he said in reply: Is it not that Allah Ta'ala has said about it in the Holy Qur'an: (In it, there is cure for people). (Al-Qurtubi)

Allah Ta'ala deals with His servants in harmony with the belief they have about their Rabb. It was said in Hadith Qudsi*: "I am with the belief of My servant in Me."

In the last sentence of verse 69: (Surely, in that there is a sign for a people who ponder), Allah Ta'ala has, after having given examples of His perfect power mentioned above, invited human beings once again to look into them and think about them. Allah Ta'ala, by causing rains to come down, gives new life to dead lands. Winding through the impurities of faeces and blood, He makes pipelines of pure and pleasant milk flow for you. On date-palms and grape-vines, He grows sweet fruits from which you make all sorts of syrups and preserves. Through a tiny little living creature with a poisonous bite, He provides for you what is an excellent combination of food, drink, taste, flavor, and cure.

Would you still keep calling gods and goddesses of your making? Would your worship and fidelity still remain detached from your real Creator and Master and attached to lifeless idols of stone and wood? Would your reason still keep looking for escape from truth by suggesting that this whole phenomena is some charismatic working of blind, deaf and inert matter? Face truth, think, realize. These countless master pieces of Divine creativity, marvels of wisdom and design, and the finest of decisions based on absolute intelligence are the loudest of heralds announcing that our Creator is One, unique and wise, sole object of worship, obedience and fidelity. He alone is the remover par excellence of all difficulties and He alone deserves gratitude and

glorification as due.

Special Notes

1. The verse tells us that, beside human beings, there is consciousness and intelligence in other living creatures too: (There is nothing which does not recite His praises - Al-Isra', 17:44). However, the degrees of intelligence are different. The intelligence of human beings is more perfect than those of any other living creatures. This is the reason why they have been obligated with the precepts and injunctions of the Shari'ah. Again, this is the reason why a man or woman who does not remain rational due to insanity, does not remain so obligated very much like other creatures.

2. Another distinction of the honey bee is that the Hadith mentions its superiority. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "All bees will go to Hell (like other hurting creatures). They will be made a punishment for the people of Hell, except the honey bee (which will not go to Hell)" - (Nawadir al-Usul with reference to Al-Qurtubi). According to another Hadith, he has prohibited its killing - Abu Dawud.

3. Traditional physicians doubt that honey is the excretion or saliva of the bee. Aristotle had placed bees in a hive made of glass and had closed it. He wished to find out their working system. But, these bees first mounted a curtain made with wax and mud on the inner side of the glass cage and did not start their work until such time that they became certain of having become totally veiled from sight.

Giving an example of the lowness of worldly life, Sayyidna 'Ali radi'allahu 'anhu said: "The finest dress of the progeny of Adam is saliva from a tiny insect and the finest of his drinks is the excrement of a bee."

4. From the statement: (in which, there is cure for people) we also find out that treating diseases with medicine is permissible because Allah Ta'ala has mentioned it as a reward and blessing.

Elsewhere it has been said: (And We send down from the Qur'an what is cure and mercy for believers - Al-Isra', 17:82). Hadith induces people to go for treatment of diseases and use medicines. Some Companions asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: Should we use medicine? He said: Why not? Do take advantage of treatment because for every disease Allah has created, He has also created a matching medicine. But, there is no cure for one disease. They asked: Which disease is that? He said: Extreme old age. (Abu Dawud & Tirmidhi from Al-Qurtubi)

There is yet another narration from Sayyidna Khuzaymah radi'allahu 'anhu. He says: Once I asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the practice of blowing on the sick and seeking to cast off diseases which we are used to, or treat ourselves with medicines are the kind of arrangements we make to stay safe against diseases. Can these change the destiny determined by Allah Ta'ala? He said: These too are nothing but the very forms of Divinely appointed destiny.

To sum up, there is consensus of all 'Ulama' on the justification of seeking treatment and using medicine. Many Ahadith and reports from the Sahabah radi'allahu 'anhum are available in support. If one of the children of Sayyidna Ibn 'Umar radi'allahu 'anhu was stung by a scorpion, he would give him an antidote and seek to help the child to get well through the benediction of supplicatory recitations. He treated a person suffering from partial paralysis by branding. (Al-Qurtubi)

*Al-Hadith Al-Qudsi: The Sanctified Hadith: A technical term for what has been communicated to the Holy Prophet ﷺ by his Rabb. Its meanings are from Allah which He reveals for His Rasul, through inspiration or dream, while its words are from the Rasul of Allah ﷺ.

ANSWER: Daabba-tul-ard (Beast coming out of the earth)

“And when the word will come to fall upon them, We will bring forth for them a beast from the earth who will speak to them that the human beings (i.e the infidels) did not believe in Our verses.” [Surah An-Naml: Ayah 82]

COMMENTARY

The nature of the beast coming out of the earth, and its time and place

It is reported in Musnad of Ahmad on the authority of Sayyidna Hudhaifah radi'allahu 'anhu that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the Doomsday would not come until you witness ten signs of it. They are:

- (1) Appearance of the sun from the west.
- (2) Dukhan (Smoke).
- (3) Dabba-tul-ard, i.e the beast coming out of the earth
- (4) Coming out of Ya'juj and Ma'juj.
- (5) Descent of Sayyidna 'Isa 'alayhis salaam.
- (6) Dajjal.
- (7, 8, 9) Three lunar eclipses together - one in the west, second in the east and the third in the peninsula of Arabia.
- (10) A fire, that will emerge from the Gulf of Aden and drive every one towards the plain of mahshar; wherever people will stop for the rest at night, the fire will also stop there, and will drive them again the next day. (Muslim, Tirmidhi)

This hadith has informed us of the emergence of such an animal close to Doomsday that will talk to human beings. The Tanwin of the word Dabbah indicates that this animal will be extra-ordinary. This animal will not be born by the normal way of propagation; instead, it will emerge from the ground all of a sudden. There is an allusion in this hadith that the emergence of this animal would be one of the very last signs, after which the Doomsday will follow soon. Ibn Kathir has reported in a lengthy hadith on the authority of Sayyidna Talhah ibn 'Umar radi'allahu 'anhu through Abu Dawud Tayalisi that this beast will emerge in Makkah from the mount of Safa, and after cleaning the dust from its head will reach at a point between the Black Stone (Al-Hajar-al-Aswad) and the Station of Ibrahim (Maqam Ibrahim). Seeing this creature, people will start running helter-skelter. Only one group of people will stay behind. Then the beast will make their faces glitter like stars. After that it will go out in the world, and put a sign of infidelity on the face of every infidel. No one will be able to get out of its grasp. It will recognize every believer and the infidel (Ibn Kathir). And Muslim Ibn Hajiaj has reported on the authority of Sayyidna 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar radi'allahu 'anhu that he had heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying, which he did not forget, that among the last signs of the Doomsday the first would be the rising of the sun from the west, and after that Dabah would come out. Out of the two signs whichever appears first, the Doomsday will follow soon. (Ibn Kathir)

Shaikh Jalaluddin Mahalli rahimahullah has said that after the appearance of Dabbah the obligation of inviting others to good deeds and forbidding them from the evils will cease to apply, and no infidel would convert to Islam after that. This statement is inferred from many ahadith and the statements of Sahabah radi'allahu 'anhum. (Mazhari).

As for the question as to what this Dabah will converse with people, some commentators are of the view that it will communicate what is stated in the Qur'an, that is (that the human beings did not believe in Our verses). It will communicate the message on behalf of Allah Ta'ala that 'Many did not believe Our verses before this'. It would mean that now the time has come that every one would believe, but then it would be too late, because it would not be acceptable then. Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbas radi'allahu 'anhu, Hasan Al-Basri

DAY 6

rahimahullah, Qatadah rahimahullah, have reported, which is corroborated by a narration of Sayyidna 'Ali radi'allahu 'anhu also, that the Dabbah will converse with people normally, as people do among themselves (Ibn Kathir).

FROM TAFSIR IBN KATHIR

The Emergence of the Beast of the Earth

This is the beast which will emerge at the end of time, when mankind has become corrupt and neglected the commands of Allah and changed the true religion. Then Allah will cause a beast to emerge from the earth.

ANSWER: Al-Lat

“Have you ever considered about the (idols of) Lat and ‘Uzza” [Surah An-Najm: Ayah 19]

Refuting Idolatry

The preceding verses declared the Glory of Allah, His Majesty and Dignity. They further confirmed and verified in the fullest details the Prophet-hood and messenger-ship of Muhammad ﷺ and the preservation of his revelation. The present two verses imply a subtle rebuke to the Makkan pagans. The purport of the verses is to say to them that without any proof, instead of adoring such a Mighty and Powerful Creator and Lord, they stoop so low as to worship gods made of wood and stone. They allege that the angels are the daughters of God. According to other narratives, they also alleged that these idols are the daughters of God.

Pagans of Arabia had countless idols that they worshipped. However, there were three of them that were most popular, and they were worshipped by strong and powerful tribes of Arabia. The three idols were Lat, ‘Uzza and Manat. Lat was the idol of the tribe of Thaqif or of the residents of Ta’if, ‘Uzza was the idol of Quraish, and Manat was the idol of Banu Hilal. They built houses for their idols to resemble the Ka’bah. After the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet ﷺ demolished them. (Qurtubi)

FROM TAFSIR IBN KATHIR

Allah the Exalted rebukes the idolaters for worshipping idols and taking rivals to Him. They built houses for their idols to resemble the Ka’bah built by Prophet Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaa, Allah’s Khalil.

Al-Lat was a white stone with inscriptions on. There was a house built around Al-Lat in At-Ta’if with curtains, servants and a sacred courtyard around it. The people of At-Ta’if, the tribe of Thaqif and their allies, worshipped Al-Lat. They would boast to Arabs, except the Quraysh, that they had Al-Lat. Ibn Jarir said, “They derived Al-Lat’s name from Allah’s Name, and made it feminine. Allah is far removed from what they ascribe to Him. It was reported that Al-Lat is pronounced Al-Lat because, according to ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abbas, Mujahid, and Ar-Rabi’ bin Anas, Al-Lat was a man who used to mix Sawiq (a kind of barley mash) with water for the pilgrims during the time of Jahiliyyah. When he died, they remained next to his grave and worshipped him.”

Muhammad bin Ishaq narrated, “Al-Lat belonged to the tribe of Thaqif in the area of At-Ta’if. Banu Mu’attib were the custodians of Al-Lat and its servants.” I say that the Prophet ﷺ sent Al-Mughirah bin Shu’bah and Abu Sufyan Sakhr bin Harb radi’allahu ‘anhuma to destroy Al-Lat. They carried out the Prophet’s ﷺ command and built a Masjid in its place in the city of At-Ta’if.

DAY 8

ANSWER: Hoopoe (HudHud)

“And (once) he (Sulaiman) checked the birds and said, “What is wrong with me that I do not see the hudhud (hoopoe)? Rather he has disappeared. I will punish him with a severe punishment or slaughter him unless he brings to me a clear plea!” Then the bird did not take long and said (to Sulaiman), “I have discovered what you did not, and have brought to you a sure information from Saba’ (Sheba). I have found a woman ruling over them and she has been given of everything (she needs) and she has a great throne. I have found her and her people prostrating to the sun, instead of Allah, and the Satan has beautified their deeds for them and has prevented them from the way, so they do not take the right path, that is, they do not prostrate to Allah who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and the earth and who knows whatever you conceal and whatever you reveal, Allah! There is no god but He, the Lord of the Great Throne!” He (Sulaiman) said, “We shall see whether you have told the truth or you are one of the liars. Go with this letter of mine and deliver it down to them, then turn back from them and see what they return.” (Surah An-Naml: Ayahs 20-28)

COMMENTARY

(And he checked the birds - 27:20). The word (tafaqqud) means to verify about the presence or absence of some people. Hence it is translated as to check. Sayyidna Sulaiman ‘alayhis salaam was bestowed by Allah Ta’ala hte rule over Jinns, the beasts and the birds, apart from humans. As it is customary for the ruler to look after and take care of all of his subjects, it is stated in this verse, that is Sayyidna Sulaiman ‘alayhis salaam inspected the birds from his subjects, and made a note of the presence and absence of them all. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also had the habit to keep himself informed about the well-being of his companions. If someone was absent, he used to go to his house to find out his welfare. If anyone was sick, he would go and visit him and do the needful nursing. If some one was afflicted with any trouble, he would make the effort to remove it.

It is necessary for the rulers to take care of their subjects and for the saints of their disciples and students. This verse has proved that Sayyidna Sulaiman ‘alayhis salaam used to keep an eye on all types of his subjects, and used to keep himself fully informed about them, so much so that the absence of a small and weak bird like a hoopoe which has a small population compared to other birds, did not go unnoticed from him. It is also possible that his specific enquiry about the hoopoe was due to its small population and weak make-up among the species of birds. Therefore, he made special effort to keep his eyes on the weaker section of his subjects.

Among the companions, Sayyidna ‘Umar radi’allahu ‘anhu established the traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in totality during his tenure as caliph. He used to go round the streets of Madinah during the nights to keep him fully abreast with the state of affairs. If he found any one in distress or need, he would help him out. A number of such incidents are related in his biography, He used to say “If a wolf kills a lamb by the side of river Euphrates, for that too Umar will be answerable”. (Qurtubi)

Such were the principles of rule and administration, which were taught by the prophets and practically demonstrated by the revered companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Because of these practices, the entire populace, both Muslims and non-Muslims, used to live in complete harmony and tranquillity. Such justice and fair play, composure and tranquillity were never witnessed ever in the whole world after their time.

“What is wrong with me that I do not see the hoopoe; rather he has disappeared?” - 27:20

Taking account of one's own Self

(“What is wrong with me that I do not see the hoopoe; rather he has disappeared?” - 27:20)

Apparently Sulaiman ‘alayhis salaam should have said at this occasion, “What is wrong with the hoopoe that he is absent?” But Sulaiman ‘alayhis salaam asked about his own wrong when he said, “What is wrong with me?” Perhaps, it was because the hoopoe and all other birds were put under his control as a special reward. Initially it crossed his mind momentarily that probably His blessings have been curtailed for some slip on his part that a species of birds (the hoopoe) was not present. So, he made some soul searching to find out what could have been the reason for its absence? It was a case similar to that of the mystic saints who make enquiries from their Self before looking into the material causes for the relief of any distress, or when any blessing is reduced for them. It is their practice to take into account of any possible slips on their part in paying gratitude to Allah Ta’ala for His bounties, which might have caused the withdrawal of the blessings from them. Qurtubi has quoted here the practice of these saints on the authority of Ibn al-’Arabi in the following words: That is ‘when these saints do not succeed in their objectives, they take stock of their deeds to find out where have they committed the mistake.’

After this initial stock-taking of Self and due considerations and deliberations it is said: **(rather, he has disappeared - 27:20).**

Here the word **بل** is used for the meaning of the word **بل** (rather) (Qurtubi). Therefore, the meaning of the sentence is ‘It is not that my sight has faltered in locating the hoopoe, but in fact it is not present’.

Reason for picking up hoopoe from among the birds, and an important warning

Sayyidna ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu was asked as to what was the reason that the hoopoe was picked up from all the birds. He replied that Sayyidna Sulaiman ‘alayhis salaam had camped at a place where there was no water, and Allah Ta’ala has bestowed such a peculiar instinct to hoopoe that it can see things under the ground and can also locate the underground water. Sayyidna Sulaiman ‘alayhis salaam wanted to find out, through the proficiency of the hoopoe, the depth and extent of the underground water. Having known the location of the underground water, he would have commanded the Jinns to excavate the ground to bring the water up - a task they would have performed very quickly. Paradoxically, despite having the piercing sight, the hoopoe gets entrapped in the nets of the hunters. Sayyidna Ibn ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu has commented on this:

‘O the people of knowledge! try to understand this fact that the hoopoe has the ability to see things under the ground, but the net spread out over the ground gets obscured from its sight, and hence it gets entrapped in that’.

The bottom line to understand is that whatever is destined for a person through the divine decree, whether it is trouble or comfort, has to be enforced, and no one can escape from it by his wisdom, insight or through the use of force or money.

It is permissible to punish a lethargic animal moderately

(I will punish him with a severe punishment - 27:21)

It is part of the political sagacity to punish the absentee after making due scrutiny. Allah Ta’ala had permitted Sayyidna Sulaiman ‘alayhis salaam to punish the animals in the same way, as He had permitted people of all ages, a permission which is still valid, to slaughter them to make use of their flesh, bones, skin etc. Similarly, if the domestic animals, such as cow, horse, camel, donkey etc., do not perform their normal duty, then it is permissible even now to punish them moderately for disciplining. Punishing animals, other than domestic, is not permissible under Islamic law. (Qurtubi)

DAY 8

(Unless he brings to me a clear plea. - 27:21)

That is, if the hoopoe offers a plausible excuse for its absence, then it will be saved from the punishment. There is a subtle hint in it that it is expected of a ruler or an administrator that if someone falters doing something, then it should be thoroughly investigated before punishing him. The punishment should be enforced only when the guilt is established, otherwise he should be forgiven

(I have discovered what you did not - 27:22). That is, the hoopoe said while offering its excuse that it knew something which he did not know. What it meant was that it had brought information, which he (Sulaiman'alayhis salaam) did not know before.

The prophets do not have the knowledge of the unknown

Imam Qurtubi has deduced from this incident that the prophets do not have the knowledge of the unseen ('Ilm ul-ghayb), so that they could know all about every thing. It is quite evident from this verse. **(“And have brought to you a sure information from Saba' (Sheba)” - 27:22)**

Saba' (Sheba) is a well-known city of Yemen, and its other name is Ma'arib. The distance between San'a', the capital of Yemen, and Saba' is three day's journey.

Is it proper for a junior to say to his senior that he knows more than him?

On the basis of this conversation by the hoopoe, some people have deduced that it is appropriate for a pupil to say to his teacher or for a common man to say to a knowledgeable person that he knows more than the latter on the subject, provided he is absolutely confident that his knowledge on that subject is really more than others. But it is argued in Ruh ul-Ma'ani that such an assertion before the elders and scholars is against the etiquettes, and should be avoided. This argument, however, does not apply to the conversation of the hoopoe, because it made that statement to save itself from the punishment and to justify its excuse for the absence. The hoopoe actually wanted to place before Sulaiman 'alayhis salaam the exact position, so that he could understand the reason for its absence. In such situations it is not improper if something is said against the normal etiquettes.

(I have found a woman ruling over them- 27:23)

The name of this woman is given in the history as Bilqis, daughter of Sharahil. But in some other narrations, it is mentioned that her mother was a jinni whose name was Bal'amah, daughter of Shisan. (Wuhaib b. Jarir has reported this from Khalil Ibn Ahmad, Qurtubi) Her grandfather, Hudahud, was a great king and controlled the entire land of Yemen. He had forty sons. All these sons became kings. Her father, Surah, had married a jinni woman, who gave birth to her (Bilqis). Different reasons are given for his marriage to a jinni. One of them being that he used to say with arrogance “No one from you is a match for me; hence I will not marry. It is because I do not like marrying outside my matching clan”. As a result of this, people got him married to a jinni woman. (Qurtubi) Perhaps it was his conceit that he deemed his own people as not his equal. This did not go well with the Divine writ and he was made to marry a jinni woman, who was neither from his family nor his kind or race.

(She has been given of everything – 23)

It means that whatever services are needed to a king or an aristocrat according to their time, they all were available to her. It is, however, obvious that those things that were not invented by then, their unavailability is not in conflict with this verse.

(And she has a great throne - 23)

Literal meaning of 'Arsh is throne of the empire. A narration is attributed to Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbas radiallahu

DAY 8

‘anhu that the length of the throne of Bilqis was eighty yards, its breadth was forty yards and height thirty yards. It was profusely decorated with pearls, red rubies, topaz and olivine, and its legs were studded with precious stones and pearls. Its curtains were made of silk and fine cloth. The throne was secured within seven buildings, one within the other, all well protected and locked.

(I have found her and her people prostrating to the sun - 27:24)

This shows that her people were star-worshippers and used to worship the sun. Some believe that they were Zoroastrians, who worship fire and all forms of light.

(“they do not prostrate to Allah who bring forth what is hidden” - 25). This sentence is linked with the previous one, “The Satan has beautified their deeds - 26” and the sense is that the Satan had engrained in their minds that they should not bow down before Allah, or had prevented them from the righteous path so that they should not prostrate before Allah Ta’ala.

Social etiquettes should always be observed, no matter if it is a gathering of infidels

(“Go with this letter of mine and throw it down to them, then turn back from them” - 27:28)

When Sayyidna Sulaiman ‘alayhis salaam made use of the hoopoe as a courier, he also taught him the social etiquette that after delivering the letter to Queen of Saba’ it should move out of her court, which is the norm of the royal courts. This shows that observance of social etiquettes and good human behaviour is desirable as a general rule.

DAY 9

ANSWER: Valley of Tuwa

“And has there come to you the story of Musa? When he saw a fire and said to his family, “Wait. I have noticed a fire. Perhaps I bring you an ember from it, or find some guidance by the fire.” So when he came to it, he was called, “O Musa it is Me, your Lord, so remove your shoes; you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa. And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed: Surely, I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish Salah for My remembrance. Surely, the Hour has to come. I would keep it secret so that everyone is given a return for the effort one makes. So the one who does not believe in it and follows his desires must not make you neglectful of it, otherwise you will perish.” [Surah Ta Ha: Ayah 9-16]

COMMENTARY

(And has there come to you the story of Musa? - 20:9) In the earlier verses, reference was made to the greatness of the Qur'an and also to the reverence due to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thereafter, the story of Sayyidna Musa 'alayhis salaam has been related so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should become fully aware of the trials and tribulations which afflict the prophets in the discharge of their missions, and which were rendered with courage and fortitude by the earlier prophets. This was to prepare the Holy Prophet ﷺ for the great mission which was entrusted to him. There is another verse which conveys the same sense:

“And We narrate to you everything from the events of the messengers with which We strengthen your heart.” (11:120)

It means that these stories are narrated to prepare you (the Holy Prophet ﷺ) and make you strong to undertake the responsibilities of the mission.

The story of Sayyidna Musa 'alayhis salaam which is related here begins like this. At Madyan he stayed with Sayyidna Shu'aib 'alayhis salaam with the understanding that he would serve the latter for a period of eight or ten years. According to Tafsir Al-Bahr ul-Muhit, after the expiry of this period he sought the permission of Sayyidna Shu'aib 'alayhis salaam to proceed to Egypt to see his mother and sister. He had fled earlier from Egypt fearing capture or death by the soldiers of the Pharaoh but this danger had now passed through the lapse of so many years. Sayyidna Shu'aib 'alayhis salaam willingly gave the permission and sent him away, with his wife (who was the latter's daughter). He also gave him some money and a few articles which they might use during their journey. Since he was apprehensive of the hostility of some of the rulers in Syria, he adopted a less frequented route. It was winter season and his pregnant wife was very close to confinement. The route which he had taken was unfamiliar to him and he lost his bearings. He came out to the west, i.e. the right side of the mount of Tur. It was a dark and cold night and to add to the misery, his wife began to experience birth pangs. He tried to strike fire with flint but did not succeed. In this state of utter confusion he saw light on the Tur mountain which, infact, was the Nur (the light symbolizing the truth). So he said to his family, “I have noticed fire. I am going there to bring for you a live coal and I may also find someone who could tell me the way to Egypt.” The presence of his wife on the journey is well established. According to some traditions there was a servant with him who is also addressed. Others say that there were some other companions also who were separated when they lost their way. (Al-Bahr ul-Muhit)

(So when he came to it - 20:11): means that he approached the fire which he had seen from a distance. Musnad by Ahmad, on the authority of Wahb Ibn Munabbih rahimahullah reports that when Sayyidna Musa 'alayhis salaam drew near the fire he saw a very strange scene. A fire was blazing on a green tree without scorching even a leaf or a branch. On the other hand the flame added manifold to the beauty and

the freshness of the tree. He stood there quite a while watching this strange sight waiting for a chance to pick up a piece of burning wood. At last he collected some dry grass and tried to light it but as soon as he pushed the grass towards the fire, it retracted. It is also related that the fire advanced towards him and he drew back in consternation. Consequently he was unable to collect any fire. And as he stood, not knowing what to do, a mysterious voice called him. This happened in a plain called Tuwa which was to his right side and at the foot of this mountain.

(He was called, “O Musa, it is Me, your Lord, remove your shoes - 20:11,12). It is related in Al-Bahr ul-Muhit, Ruh ul-Ma’ani and other books that the voice which Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam heard appeared to come from all directions and not from any particular direction. At the same time the manner in which the voice reached his perception was most extraordinary, because it was heard not only through his ears but by the entire body. This, indeed, was a miracle! What the voice said was that the light that he saw was not fire but a particular kind of divine manifestation. And the voice said, “Surely I am your Lord”. The question arises: how did Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam know that it was the voice of Allah Ta’ala? The answer is that Allah Ta’ala had created in his heart the conviction that the voice which he heard was really the voice of Allah Ta’ala. Then there was the circumstance that the fire, instead of burning the tree added to its beauty and luster. Also the manner in which the voice was perceived by all the parts of his body and not only by his ears, were all factors which left no doubt in his mind that the voice he heard was really the voice of Allah Ta’ala.

Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam learned the words of Allah directly

It is mentioned in a report of Wahn mentioned in Ruh ul-Ma’ani on the authority of Musnad by Ahmad that when the mysterious voice called him “O Musa!”, he replied, “I hear the voice O Allah! But I do not know from where it comes. Where are you, O Allah?” And Allah Ta’ala said, “I am above you in front of you, to your right and your left. Indeed I am all around you.” Then Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam said, “O Allah, do I hear these words from you directly or through an angel sent by You?” And Allah Ta’ala said, “I myself am speaking to you.” According to Ruh al-Ma’ani this proves that Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam heard this (spoken words) directly from Allah Ta’ala.

To take off shoes at a sacred place is an act of respect

Remove your shoes - 20:12). The command to take off shoes was given because it was a sacred place and it was necessary to take off shoes to show it proper respect. Another reason for this command may be that since shoes are made from the hides of dead animals, they should be removed when entering upon sacred places. Sayyidna ‘Ali radi’allahu ‘anhu Hasan al-Basri and Ibn Juraij rahimahuma ra’ala have supported the first explanation and reasoned that the real purpose in commanding Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam to remove his shoes was that the soles of his feet should come into contact with the soil of this hallowed place and be blessed thereby. Others have said that by this command Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam was required to show humility and in earlier times devout and pious believers used to take off their shoes when circumambulation around the Holy Ka’bah.

There is a Hadith that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ once saw Bashir Ibn Khasasia walking through the graves with his shoes on, said: “When you pass by a place which needs to be respected, take off your shoes.”

All the jurists are unanimous that if the shoes are clean they may be worn when offering prayers and it is established by authentic reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions often wore clean shoes when saying prayers. But their common practice appears to be of removing the shoes when saying prayers, because it is closer to humility.

DAY 9

(You are in the sacred valley of Tuwa - 20:12): Allah, in his Divine Wisdom, has granted special status to some selected places such as Baitullah (the Holy Ka'bah), the Aqsa Mosque, Masjid Nabawi etc. Wadi Tuwa (the valley of Tuwa) is also one such sacred place and is situated at the foot of the mount of Tur.

How to conduct oneself when the Qur'an is being recited

(So listen to what is revealed - 20:13). Sayyidna Wahb Ibn Munabbih has said that the correct behavior while listening to the recitation of the Qur'an is, that one sits still, refrains from any unnecessary movement in a way that no organ of his body is involved in any other work, keeps eyes down - concentrates the mind towards understanding its meaning. The person who listens to the Holy Qur'an in this respectful manner is rewarded by Allah Ta'ala with a better understanding of His word.

(Surely I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish Salah for My remembrance - 20:14): with these words Allah Ta'ala bestowed upon Sayyidna Musa 'alayhis salaam knowledge of all the basic principles of the true Faith, namely the Oneness of Allah Ta'ala, the prophethood and the Hereafter. (So listen to what is revealed) refers to prophethood. **فاعبدوني** means "worship Me alone and no one else". This points to the Oneness of Allah Ta'ala. (Surely, the Hour has to come) points to the inevitability of the Hereafter. Although the word **فاعبدوني** (worship Me) encompasses the injunction for prayers also yet it has been mentioned separately to stress its special merit relative to the other forms of worship. It is the pillar of the Faith and its neglect is the mark of the infidel.

(Establish Salah for My remembrance - 20:14): means that the essence of prayer is the remembrance of Allah Ta'ala and that the Salah, from beginning to end is nothing but remembering Allah - with the tongue, the heart and the other organs of the body. Therefore, one should not neglect to remember Allah Ta'ala while praying. This sentence also means that if a person omits to say his prayers at the appointed time due to over-sleeping or forgetfulness while engrossed in some other task, he should say his prayers as soon as he wakes up from sleep or becomes aware of his lapse. This is according to Hadith.

(I would keep it secret - 20:15): Allah Ta'ala says that He wishes to keep the circumstances relating to the Day of Judgement hidden from all created things including prophets and angels. The word (I would) gives a subtle hint that it is only to induce people to good deeds that the coming of the Day of Judgment has been disclosed, otherwise even this fact would have been concealed.

(So that everyone is given a return for the effort one makes - 20:15). If this phrase is taken to be linked with the word (has to come) then it would mean that this world is not a place of requital. Here a person does not receive recompense according to his merits and even if he receives some reward in this world it is just a token which does not constitute the full recompense of his deeds. It is, therefore, essential that there should be a time when everybody would receive his due reward. Another possibility about the construction of this phrase is that it is taken to be linked with the words **(I would keep it secret - 20:15)**. In this case, it would mean that the philosophy in not revealing the time of death and the Day of Judgment is that people should continue in their endeavours and should not cease to strive in the belief that their own death or the Day of Judgment are still far away in the future. (Ruh)

(must not make you neglectful of it - 20:16) Here Sayyidna Musa 'alayhis salaam is cautioned by Allah Ta'ala lest he should allow himself to be led away by the infidels and become negligent about the Day of Judgment because that would be the cause of his ruination. It is clear that a Prophet and a Messenger who is impeccable cannot commit such a lapse but the fact that such a warning has been addressed to him is meant to warn his followers as well as mankind at large to be cautious in the matter.

DAY 10

ANSWER: The body of Fir'awn

“So, today, We shall save your body, so that you may become a sign for those after you. And many of the people are heedless of Our signs.” [Surah Yunus: Ayah 92]

Addressing Pharaoh in the first verse (92), it was said that Allah will take his body out of the waters after he is drowned so that his body becomes a sign of Divine power, and a lesson for people after him.

It happened when, after having crossed the sea, Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam told Bani Isra’il about the drowning of the Pharaoh, they were so overawed and subdued by him that they refused to believe the news and said that the Pharaoh was not drowned. To guide them right and to teach others a lesson, Allah Ta’ala had the dead body of Pharaoh, thrown ashore by a wave of the sea. Everyone saw it and believed that he had died and then, this corpse became a sort of moral deterrent for everyone. After that, it is not known as to what happened to this corpse ultimately. The place where the dead body of the Pharaoh was found is still known as the mount of Pharaoh.

Some time back, newspaper reports indicated that the dead body of Pharaoh was found intact and was seen by the public at large and that it was deposited safely in the Cairo Museum. But, it cannot be said with certainty that this is the same Pharaoh who confronted Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam, or is some other Pharaoh because names of Pharaohs differ. Every ruler of Egypt in that period of history had the title of Pharaoh.

But, no wonder, the Divine power had thrown a drowned dead body ashore. Very similarly, it may have kept it even preserved against spoilage so that it could become a lesson for future generations. And it may still be there! (However it remains essential to learn a lesson from it as compared to becoming excited about its discovery as an archeological triumph).

At the end of the verse, it was said that many people pay no heed to the verses and signs of Allah. They do not ponder over them and fail to learn their essential lesson in living a better life. Otherwise, signs abound. They are everywhere, in every particle of this universe. A look at them would help one recognize Allah and His perfect power.

ANSWER: The Spider (Al-Ankabut)

“The example of those who have taken to patrons other than Allah is like the spider that has made a house. And surely the weakest of houses is the house of the spider. If only they know. Surely, Allah knows whatever thing they invoke beside Allah, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. And these examples We cite for people, and no one understands them except the knowledgeable ones. Allah has created the heavens and the earth with truth. Surely in this there is a sign for the believers.” [Surah Al-Ankabut: Ayah 41-44]

‘Ankabut is the Arabic language equivalent for spider. There are different species of spiders. Some of them live underground. Apparently those are not meant here. Instead the specie of spider meant here is the one which weaves web for itself, and stays suspended in it. It attracts and kills flies in the cobweb. Among all the known types of nests, dens and other abodes of animals, the spider’s web is the weakest. Even a mild breeze can break its threads. This verse has described those who worship and place their trust in any one other than Allah, are like the web of spider, which is extremely weak. The trust of those who depend on idols or any human is as weak and fragile as the trust of a spider on its web.

Ruling

Scholars have different viewpoints in the matter of killing of spiders and removing of cobwebs from the houses. Some do not like it, because at the time of Hijrah the spider weaved its web at the mouth of the cave Thaur, and thus made a place of respect for itself. Khatib has reported that Sayyidna ‘Ali radi’allahu ‘anhu had prohibited its killing. But Tha’labi and Ibn ‘Atiyyah have quoted a narration, again from Sayyidna ‘Ali radi’allahu ‘anhu that says (Clean your homes from the web of the spider, because its retaining causes poverty.) The chain of the narrators of both these reports is not reliable, but the second narration draws credence from other narrations in which keeping of homes clean is stressed. (Ruh- ul-Ma’ani)

(And these examples We cite for people, and no one understands them except the knowledgeable ones. - 29:43). After comparing the weakness of the gods of disbelievers with cobweb, it is stressed that Allah Ta’ala provides such clear examples to elucidate the truth of Oneness. But only knowledgeable persons draw benefit from them, and the people at large do not ponder, so that they could also understand the truth.

Who is knowledgeable in the sight of Allah?

Imam Baghawi has quoted with his own sanad (chain of narrators) a report from Sayyidna Jabir radi’allahu ‘anhu that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse and said ‘knowledgeable is the one who ponders over Allah’s message, and acts in obedience to Him, and keeps away from the deeds that annoy Him’.

This explains that one does not become knowledgeable in the sight of Allah only by developing some understanding of Qur’an and hadith. To be on that high pedestal one needs to give a continual careful thought to Qur’an, and then lead a life conforming to Qur’anic teachings.

Musnad of Ahmad has reproduced a narration of Sayyidna ‘Amr Ibn Al-Aas radi’allahu ‘anhu that he said he had learnt one thousand amthal (maxims or examples) from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. After reproducing this narration, Ibn Kathir has observed that it was a great honour for Sayyidna ‘Amr Ibn Al-Aas radi’allahu ‘anhu because those who understand the examples (Amthal) given by Allah Ta’ala and His messenger ﷺ are termed by the present verse as knowledgeable.

Sayyidna ‘Amr Ibn Murrah radi’allahu ‘anhu has said that he felt very bad whenever he came across any

such verse of the Holy Qur'an, which he could not understand, because Allah has said: (And these examples We cite for people, and no one understands them except the knowledgeable). (Ibn Kathir).

FROM IBN KATHIR

Likening the gods of the Idolators to the House of a Spider

This is how Allah described the idolaters in their reverence of gods besides Him, hoping that they would help them and provide for them, and turning to them in times of difficulties. In this regard, they were like the house of a spider, which is so weak and frail, because by clinging to these gods they were like a person who holds on to a spider's web, who does not gain any benefit from that. If they knew this, they would not take any protectors besides Allah. This is unlike the Muslim believer, whose heart is devoted to Allah, yet he still does righteous deeds and follows the Laws of Allah, for he has grasped the most trustworthy handle that will never break because it is so strong and firm. Then Allah warns those who worship others besides Him and associate others with Him that He knows what they do and the rivals they associate with Him. He will punish them for their attribution, for He is All-Wise and All-Knowing.

ANSWER: Mahmud (Name of the elephant)

“Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the People of the Elephant? Has He not turned their plan into nullity? And He sent upon them flying birds in flocks, throwing upon them stones of baked clay, and thus He turned them into an eaten-up chaff.” [Surah Al-Fil]

COMMENTARY

The subject-matter of the Surah

This Surah refers to the story of the People of the Elephants who came with an army of elephants for the purpose of destroying the House of Allah in (The Holy Ka’bah) in Makkah. But their plan backfired and the Divine scourge overtook them. Allah destroyed the army with a flock of ordinary birds. Thus their plans were foiled and thwarted.

When did the event take place?

This event took place in the very year in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ was born at Makkah, according to some traditions and the popular view among the historians. [Ibn Kathir]. The scholars of hadith have taken this event as a special type of mu’jizah (miracle) of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but the term mu’jizah, in its real sense, refers to an abnormal event shown by Allah to prove the claim of a prophet to having been sent by Him. Therefore, a mu’jizah is shown after a prophet’s Divine commission. However, sometimes it happens that a miraculous event takes place before a prophet’s claim to prophet-hood. This, in the parlance of the scholars of hadith, is called irhas which means ‘prologue or introduction’. The word rahs means a ‘foundation stone’ [Qamus]. As the miraculous events taking place before the advent of prophets or before their claim to prophet-hood are meant to introduce and affirm that soon a particular prophet will be Divinely commissioned, they are referred to as irhas. Many miraculous incidents of this nature [irhasat] occurred before the birth and the advent of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and one of them was the incident of the ‘People of the Elephants’ who were miraculously prevented by the Heavenly scourge from destroying the House of Allah.

Story of the people of the elephants

Ibn Kathir, the leading authority on Prophetic Tradition and history, recounts the story as follows: Yemen was under the control of the rulers of Himyar. They were idolaters. Their last king was Dhu Nuwas, an idolater himself, was the enemy of the righteous Christians of his time, who believed in and worshipped One Allah. He persecuted the believers, who were opposed to idol-worship, by burning them alive. Most scholars agree that he killed, in cold blood, by throwing about 20 000 sincere and righteous Christians in his city into a large fire pit, burning them alive in an effort to get them to give up their sincere religion. This is the story of the ‘People of Fire-Pit’ referred to in [85:4-7]. Two men somehow managed to escape from him. They fled to Syria and took refuge with Caesar, who was himself a Christian and the emperor of Syria. They requested the emperor to avenge this cruel act of Dhu Nuwas. Caesar wrote to Najashi (Negus), the king of Abyssinia [now Ethiopia], who was closer to the home of the man. Najashi sent two governors with him: Arbat and Abrahah, along with a huge army.

The army invaded Yemen and freed the whole country from the possession of Himyar. Dhu Nuwas tried to escape, but was drowned in the sea and died. Yemen thus became part of the Abyssinian dominion and Abrahah was appointed its viceroy. However, he and Arbat fought each other until Arbat was eventually killed and Abrahah emerged victorious. The latter was appointed the commander of the Abyssinian army in Yemen, and the governor of that region. Having captured Yemen, he built a superbly luxurious cathedral in his area. The purpose was to attract the people of Yemen to make pilgrimage to this cathedral instead of Ka’bah in Makkah. It was huge and tall so that a person standing at the bottom was not able to see the

top. He decorated the structure with gold, silver and other precious gems. In short, he meant it to be an architectural masterpiece, second to none or unsurpassed in the world, to be revered by all and sundry and divert pilgrims from the Sacred Mosque in Makkah to his cathedral in Yemen. He did this after he had witnessed the love and enthusiasm of the Yemeni Arabs – which were the same as those felt all over the Arabia - for the Ka’bah, with the aim of making them forsake their attachment to the Mosque of Makkah and turn instead to his new luxurious cathedral. Thus he proclaimed throughout his kingdom that no one should ever visit the Ka’bah in Makkah, and that the pilgrimage should from now on take place to his so-called ‘Ka’bah’ in Yemen.

Although the Arabs were idol-worshippers, the love and reverence for the religion of Prophet Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam and the Ka’bah had permeated their hearts. As a result, the ‘Andan, Qahtan and Quraish tribes were enraged and infuriated by this proclamation. One night, someone entered the church and defecated in it. According to other narratives, a nomadic tribe halted near the church and started a fire for their own needs. The wind on that day was blowing violently and the cathedral caught on fire and, sustained much loss. When Abrahah came to know about it, and learnt that a Quraishi had done this, he swore to march to the House of Makkah and destroy it stone by stone. Thus he prepared himself and set out with a huge and powerful army, so that none might prevent him from carrying out his mission. He asked for Najashi’s permission. He permitted him and sent for him, particularly for this expedition, a special elephant whose name was Mahmud. It was unusually huge in size and powerful in strength the like of which had never been seen before. The king of Abyssinia sent in eight more elephants as reinforcements for the army. Their intention was to use this extraordinary elephant to demolish the Ka’bah. They planned to do this by fastening chains to the pillars of the Ka’bah and placing the other ends around the neck of the elephant. Then they would make the elephant pull on them in order to tear down the walls of the Ka’bah [God forbid!] all at once. When the Arabs heard of Abrahah’s expedition, they considered it their moral obligation to defend the Sacred House and thwart the evil plans of the conspirators. Thus, the Arabs raised a large army under the command of Dhu Nafir, a Yamenite Arab. He called the Arabs to go to war against Abrahah and fight in defense of the Sacred House, so that the enemy is unable to tear it down. The people responded to him readily and entered into battle with the enemy, but he defeated them. This was due to Allah’s will that no humans should protect His House and His intent to expose the enemy to embarrassment and venerate the Sacred Sanctuary to the highest degree. Dhu Nafir was captured and taken prisoner.

The army continued on its way until it came to the settlement of the Banu Khath’am tribe. Their leader, Nufail Ibn Habib, led his entire tribe against the army, but they too were defeated and Nufail was taken prisoner. Abrahah at first decided to kill him, but at second thought he forgave him and took him as his guide to show him the way to Hijaz.

When the army approached Ta’if, the people of Thaqif went out to Abrahah. They wanted to pacify him, because they had heard about the fate of those who had resisted him previously. Also, they were afraid that he would demolish their temple consecrated in the name of their idol Al-Lat. Therefore, they did not resist him on the understanding that he would not touch the idol of Lat. He was compassionate to them, and they sent a guide with him by the name of Abu Righal. When they arrived in a place called Al-Maghmas, near Makkah, they settled there. This was the pasture where the camels of the Quraish grazed. Abrahah sent his troops on a foray to capture the camels and other grazing animals of the Makkans. They accomplished their mission. They also drove away about two hundred camels of ‘Abdul-Muttalib, grandfather of the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the leader of the Quraish. Abrahah then sent an emissary named Hanatah Al-Himyari to enter Makkah and bring to him the leader of the Quraish. He mandated him to convey to the leader of the Quraish his message that the king did not come to fight with the Makkans unless they stood in his way of destroying their Sacred Sanctuary. Arriving in the city, Hanatah was directed to ‘Abdul-Muttalib

DAY 12

Ibn Hashim, to whom he communicated Abrahah's message. According to Ibn Ishaq's narration, 'Abdul-Muttalib replied: "By Allah! We too have no desire to fight him, nor do we have the might to do so. This is the Sacred Sanctuary of Allah built by His friend Prophet Ibrahim 'alayhis salaam. If He wills to prevent Abrahah from pulling it down, He will protect it. And if He allows him to approach it, by Allah, we have no means to defend it." So Hanatah told him: "Come with me to Abrahah." So 'Abdul-Muttalib went with him.

When Abrahah saw him, he was highly impressed, because 'Abdul-Muttalib had the most handsome, charming and attractive personality. He descended from his throne and sat with the latter on a carpet on the ground. He then said to his interpreter to ask him: "What do you need?" 'Abdul-Muttalib replied to the interpreter: "I want the king to give back my two hundred camels which his soldiers have taken from me." Then Abrahah told his interpreter to relay to him: "When I first set my eyes on you, I admired you greatly and had great respect for you. But all that is now lost. You speak only of your two hundred camels while you fully well know that I have come to tear down your Ka'bah which is the embodiment of your religion and the religion of your forefathers. You did not even say a single word to persuade me to spare it." 'Abdul-Muttalib calmly responded: "I am the owner of my camels and am concerned about them. I am not the owner of Allah's House. The Master of the House knows how best to protect His House." Abrahah rudely rebuffed: "Your God cannot protect it from me." 'Abdul-Muttalib made a rejoinder: "Then do as you like or [take your chance!]" According to other narratives, there were other chiefs of Quraish with 'Abdul-Muttalib at the time of this negotiation. They proposed to Abrahah that if he withdrew from the Sanctuary, the entire region of Tihamah would pay him a third of their agricultural produce annually as tribute. But he turned down the offer. He then gave back 'Abdul-Muttalib's camels to him. 'Abdul-Muttalib took his camels and went back home, ordering his people to leave Makkah and seek shelter at the top of the mountains. He feared that atrocities might be committed by the army against them. Then he went with a few figures of the Quraish to the Sacred Sanctuary. He held the metal ring of the door of Ka'bah and prayed Allah to give them victory over Abrahah and his army. While hanging on to the ring of the Ka'bah's door, he earnestly implored: "We have no strength to face the army of Abrahah. So, O my Lord! Defend Your Ka'bah." Having so prayed in all earnestness, 'Abdul-Muttalib led all the Makkans to the neighbouring mountains, because they were convinced that Allah's scourge would overtake Abrahah and his troops. This is the reason why they spoke to Abrahah about their camels, and not about the House of Allah.

When the next morning dawned, Abrahah prepared to enter the sacred city of Makkah. He prepared the elephant named Mahmud and mobilized his army, and they turned the elephant towards the Ka'bah. At that moment Nufail Ibn Habib, whom Abrahah had captured earlier, approached it and stood next to it, and taking it by its ear, he said: "Return safely where you came from, because you are, verily, in the Sacred City of Allah." Then he released the elephant's ear and it knelt and sat down forthwith. The elephant drivers exerted all efforts to persuade the elephant to enter the City, but their efforts were in vain. Then they tried striking it with large iron spears and putting iron arrowheads in its trunk. They beat it on its head with axes and used hooked staffs to pull it out of its resistance and make it stand, but it refused. So they turned it towards Yemen, and it rose and walked quickly. Then they turned it towards Syria, it walked fast. Then they turned it towards the east and it walked briskly. Then they turned it towards Makkah, it knelt and sat down again.

This was one aspect of the manifestation of the Divine power unfolding itself miraculously. On the other hand, some flocks of birds were seen coming from the sea. Each bird carried three pebbles of the size of gram seeds or lentils, one in each claw and two in its beak. According to Waqidi's narration, the birds looked unusual which were never seen before. They looked smaller than pigeons, and their claws were red in colour. They flew over Abrahah's army and pelted them with the pebbles. Each pebble was more devastating than the bullet of a revolver. When it fell on anything, it tore directly through the body and settled deep in the

ground. Seeing this scourge, the elephants fled in panic, except one which was harmed and destroyed by the pebble. Not all of Abrahah's men were destroyed instantly. People escaped in different directions. They died excruciatingly on their way back. As Allah had willed that the most distressful scourge should be inflicted upon Abrahah, He did not allow him to die immediately. In fact, Allah afflicted him with a deadly disease. A kind of poison spread thoroughly through his entire body and caused every single part to decay - his limbs began to rot and separate from the rest of his body and he started losing one finger after another. His body was carried back in that state to Yemen. By the time they arrived back in San'a', the capital of Yemen, his body was broken down limb by limb until he eventually died. Two of Mahmud's (name of elephant) drivers remained in Makkah, but both of them became blind and paralyzed. Muhammad Ibn Ishaq reports that Sayyidah 'Aishah narrates that she saw them blind and paralyzed. Her sister, Sayyidah Asma' radi'allahu 'anha says that she saw the two blind and paralyzed men begging. The 'People of the Elephants' is a momentous event in Arab history, which was witnessed by hundreds of Arabs. It is to this well-known historical incident that this Surah refers.

Lexical Analysis

Verse [105:1]: **(Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the people of the Elephant?)** In the phrase 'alam tara' [have you not seen], the second person pronoun refers to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is interesting to note that the event took place before the blessed birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He could not have seen or witnessed it with his own eyes. However, the incident was so widely known as if the Prophet ﷺ had seen it with his own eyes, which is a sign of the certainty of its happening. Such a knowledge is described by the word ru'yat [seeing]. As reported earlier, Sayyidah 'Aishah radi'allahu 'anha and her sister, Sayyidah Asma' radi'allahu 'anha, both say that they had seen the two camel drivers had become blind and paralyzed and used to go around begging. In this way, the traces of this event were seen even after the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Verse [105:3] **(... birds in flocks.)** The word 'ababil' is plural and is said to have no singular. It means birds in flocks, or swarms of birds. It is not the name of a particular bird. In Urdu usually ababil refers to 'swallows', they are not implied in the verse as indicated in the above narration. These birds were somewhat smaller in size than pigeon and they were birds that were never seen before. [Sa'id Ibn Jubair, as quoted by Qurtubi]

Verse [105:4] **(...stones of baked clay.)** The word sijjil is a compound Persian word, Arabized, made up of two Persian words: 'sang' [stone] and 'gil' [clay]. They refer to ordinary or common clay rolled into little balls and then baked to harden. These pebbles are not heavy or hard like rocks chipped off mountains. They in themselves did not have any devastating power, but it was Allah who created in these stones the high capability of explosion and blowing-up even more than the bullets of a revolver.

Verse [105:5] **(And thus He turned them into an eaten-up chaff.)** The word 'asf means 'chaff, straw, husk or bran'. Usually the 'asf is scattered and when it is eaten or devoured by animals, it does not remain in the same state. This is what happened to Abrahah and his army.

Conclusion

The miraculous event of the 'People of the Elephant' enhanced in the hearts of the entire Arabian society the love, respect and honor of the Quraish. When Arabia witnessed that Allah has, on their behalf, miraculously destroyed their enemy, they were convinced that the Quraish are men of God, and custodians of the Sacred House of Allah [Qurtubi]. That is why they were respected and protected wherever they went; although other caravans in Arabia had to fear attacks from highway robbers, the Quraish travelled untouched and enjoyed high social status. As a result, they could freely and safely carry out their commercial

DAY 12

activities in the neighboring states, and enjoy economic prosperity. The Surah that follows refers to these journeys and invites the Quraish to be thankful to Allah and worship Him alone for providing them with all of their needs.



ANSWER: Libaas

“O children of ‘Adam, We have sent down to you clothing that covers your shame and dress that adorns. And the dress of Taqwa! that is the best. That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may be receptive to advice. O children of ‘Adam, “Do not let Satan put you in trouble the way he had your parents expelled from Paradise, having their dress removed from them, so that he could show them their shame. Indeed, he sees you – he and his company - from where you do not see them. Surely, We have made the satans friends for those who do not believe.” (Surah Al-A’raf: Ayah 26-27)

COMMENTARY

Mentioned in almost a section preceding the verses cited above was - - the event relating to Sayyidna ‘Adam and Satan, the accursed. The first outcome of the satanic instigation was that the heavenly apparel of ‘Adam and Hawwa alayhum salaam came off leaving them coverless as a result of which they began hiding their coverable body with leaves.

In the first of the present verses (26), Allah Ta’ala has addressed all children of ‘Adam and told them that the dress they wear is a great blessing the worth and value of which must be recognized by them. The address here is not to Muslims alone. It is to all children of Adam. This is a sharp pointer to the fact that the act of covering the coverable parts of the body and the wearing of dress is both a human need and a natural desire. Everyone abides by it without any distinction of religion or community. Then, giving its details, three kinds of clothings were mentioned.

First of all, it was said: (**clothing that covers your shame**). Here, the word: (yuwari) is a derivation from: (muwarat) which means to cover, hide or conceal. And the word: (sau’at) is the plural form of: (sau’ah). This is applied to body parts the uncovering of which is taken, by nature, as bad and shameful by all human beings. The sense of the statement is that Allah has sent down for people dress with which they could cover their body parts the exposing of which is a matter of shame.

After that, it was said: (**wa risha**). The dress one uses for adornment and decency is called: (Rish). The meaning is that just to cover up the cover-worthy body parts, even a simple set of clothing is enough. But, Allah has provided for you much more than simply clothing, He blessed you with dresses which make you look handsome, or decent, neat and civilized.

At this place, the word used by the Holy Qur’an is: (anzalna: We have sent down). It means to bestow or bless with. It is not necessary that it be sent down from the heavens ready to wear. This is like another expression: It means: ‘We sent down the iron,’ which is dug out of the earth as everyone can see. However, at both these places, by saying: (anzalna: We have sent down), it was indicated that the way no human planning or artifice operates as active agent in what ‘descends from the heavens,’ so it is with the essential mother element of dress, cotton or wool etc., where human ingenuity has no role to play. That is simply a gift from the great creative power of Allah Ta’ala. But, human artifice does work in efforts to make out of these materials dresses to individual taste, temperament, and the need to stay safe against heat or chill. Even the way to that artifice is shown by Allah Ta’ala. Therefore, eyes that see reality see all this as nothing but Divine gift sent from the heavens.

Two Uses of Dress

Identified here are two uses of dress: (1) To cover the cover-worthy parts of the body (sitr), and (2) protection from hot and cold weather, and decor of the body. The first use has been placed first which indicates that the

real purpose of human dress is to be able to cover the cover-worthy parts of the body (sitr al-'awrah). This also happens to be its line of demarcation from animals. The dress given to animals has been naturally made a part of their body. The purpose it serves is either to protect from hot and cold weather, or beautify them. No elaborate arrangements have been made to cover up their sitr. Nevertheless, formations of particular body parts in their bodies have been so placed that they do not remain totally exposed. Some would have a screen of a tail and many others would have other obstructions of view.

After having related the event concerning 'Adam and Hawwa' ('Adam and Eve) and how the Satan had instigated them, this mention of dress indicates that for human beings to be naked, or the exposure of their shame before others is a sign of abject disgrace and indecency at its worst. Moreover, it is an antecedent to all sorts of evils and disorders.

The Modern Obsession for Nudity: The Tempter of 'Adam and Eve still Stalks

So, the first attack of Satan came from this opening against human beings when their dress dropped off from where it belonged. Even today, when Satan wishes to confuse and waylay human beings through his accomplices, it always picks up a chic front like being trendy, hip, hot or cool and ends up pulling people out from homes into streets and alleys naked or just about. It would seem that what Satan has classified as modern advancement does not happen unless women are deprived of their sense of shame and modesty and made to parade around in the near-nude.

After 'Iman, the First Duty is to Cover your Body Properly

When Shaytan, sensing this weakness in human beings, made the first assault on their body cover, the Shari'ah of Islam acted smartly as it is responsible for the inculcation, protection and flowering of every good in its people that it took the issue so seriously that it enjoined the covering of human body as the first duty after 'Iman or faith. The Salah, the Sawm, and duties like those come after that.

Sayyidna Faruq al-A'zam radi'allahu 'anhu says that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When someone wears a new dress, he should recite the following Du'a while wearing it: "Praise be to Allah who gave me clothes with which I am to cover the cover-worthy parts of my body and look handsome with it in my life."

The Great Reward of Giving the Old Dress as Sadaqah after Wearing the New One

He ﷺ also said: If a person who wears a new dress and gives away the old one as Sadaqah (charity) to anyone poor and needy, he comes under the protection and patronage of Allah Ta'ala in all states of his life and death. (Ibn Kathir from the Musnad of Ahmad)

In this Hadith too, one is reminded of the two considerations in wearing a dress which is why Allah Ta'ala has created the human dress.

Covering of Body is Natural and the Theory of Evolution is False

The event of Sayyidna 'Adam 'alayhis salaam and the statement of the Qur'an make it clear that covering the body and using a dress is a natural desire and an inborn necessity of human beings which has been with them since the very beginning. Those who profess that the first man went around naked and it was only after having passed through stages of evolution that he invented the dress, they are patently false.

The Ultimate Dress

After having identified the dress of two kinds, that which covers the body properly and that which gives comfort and beauty, a third kind of dress was mentioned by saying: **(And the dress of Taqwa [fear of Allah] that is the best)**. In some readings (Qira'at) of the Qur'an, the word: (libas: dress) has been

rendered with a fathah on the letter: (sin) as: (libasa-taqwa) Thus, read with: (anzalna), it will mean: We have sent down a third dress of Taqwa. But, in accordance with the well-known reading of it, it means that everyone knows the two dresses mentioned, however, there is a third kind of dress, that of Taqwa - and that is the best of all dresses. The dress of Taqwa, as explained by Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbas and 'Urwah ibn Zubayr radi'allahu anhumah means right conduct, good deed and fear of Allah. (Ruh al-Ma'ani)

The sense is that the way the visible physical dress of human beings serves the purpose of covering the cover-worthy parts of the body, protecting from hot and cold weather and giving beauty and embellishment - very similarly, there is a spiritual dress, that of right and becoming conduct, good deed and fear of Allah. This libas or dress of Taqwa conceals human weaknesses and moral shortcomings. It delivers one from immediate hardships and ultimate losses. Therefore, it is the best of dresses one can wear.

Present here is the hint that an evil-doing person who has no fear of Allah and does not care for acting right, must be disgraced ultimately, no matter how he covers up - as reported by Ibn Jarh from Sayyidna 'Uthman al-Ghani radi'allahu 'anhu that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: By Allah in whose hands rests the life of Muhammad ﷺ whatever a person does in secret, Allah Ta'ala wraps his deed like a sheet around him and announces it - the good of it, if the deed is good, and the evil of it, if the deed is evil. Wrapping like a sheet on the body means that it is visible to everyone. No matter how secretly one may do something, Allah Ta'ala makes its effects become evident on the face and the body. Then, to authenticate his statement, the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited this verse: (... and dress that adorns. And the dress of Taqwa, that is the best. That is one of the signs of Allah).

The Real Purpose of Physical Dress Too is to Achieve Taqwa

The expression, 'Dress of Taqwa,' indicates that the purpose of physical dress which fulfills the function of covering the body properly, and helps beautify it as well, is really a way of achieving the ability to fear Allah, or Taqwa as in the Qur'an. This ability should manifest itself in the way one dresses. The parts of the body which must be covered should be fully covered. It should be ensured that one's modesty stays concealed. Neither should it be allowed to remain naked, nor should the dress on the body be so tight-fitting through which body parts look like being naked. Then, this dress should not have the flair of pride and arrogance, instead, it should reflect modesty and humility. Then, it should not be extravagant either. The cloth material used should be tailored to need. And neither should the dress for women be masculine, nor the dress for men be feminine, which is odious and repugnant in the sight of Allah. Also, there should be no imitation in wearing a dress like others which is a sign of deviation from the established norms of one's community.

Along with it, there is the crucial need to correct one's morals and deeds which is the real purpose of dress. At the end of the verse comes the invitation to understand: (That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may be receptive to advice).

In the second verse (27), the address reverts to all children of Adam 'alayhis salaam and the admonition given is that they should keep guarding against the deception of Shaytan in everything they do under whatever circumstance they are - lest, Shaytan puts them on another trial as he did with their parents, 'Adam and Eve 'alayhumaa salaam. He made them leave Paradise, caused them to shed their dress and render their essential cover to be uncovered. He was their eternal enemy. His enmity was something, they were never to lose sight of.

At the end of the verse, it was said: **"Indeed, he sees you - he and his company - from where you do not see them. Surely, We have made the satans friends for those who do not believe"**- (27).

DAY 13

Here, the word: (qabil) means company or group. A joined family group is called: qabilah or tribe. Common groups are known as qabil. The sense of the verse is: For you the Satan is a kind of enemy that he and his accomplices do see you but you do not see them. Therefore, the chances that you would fall a victim to their deception are fairly strong.

But, in other verses, it has also been clarified that people who keep turning to Allah Ta'ala and maintain their guard against the deception of Shaytan, for them, the wily web of Shaytan is much too weak.

Then, what has been said at the end of this verse - that 'We have made the satans friends and guardians of those who do not believe' - also indicates that those who believe should not find staying away from their web of deception at all difficult.

Some righteous elders have said that the defence against the enemy who sees us but we cannot see him is simple. Let us come under the protection of Allah Ta'ala. He sees these satans, watches how they move and act - but they cannot see Him.

And the statement, that human beings cannot see Shaytan, is in terms of general conditions and habit. If a human being were to see them contra-habitually, that would not be considered contrary to it - as is the case of Jinns coming to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who asked questions and embraced Islam, which appears in authentic narrations of Hadith. (Ruh al-Ma'ani)

“Say, “Who has prohibited the adornment Allah has brought forth for His servants, and the wholesome things of sustenance?” Say, “They are for the believers during this worldly life (though shared by others), while they are purely for them on the day of Resurrection. This is how We elaborate the verses for people who understand.” [Surah Al-Araf: Ayahs 32-33]

COMMENTARY

Warned in the first verse are those who practice excess in acts of worship and introduce self-invented restrictions into it. They would abstain from things made Halal by Allah Ta'ala and go on to make them Haram on them and call it an act of obedience to and worship of Allah - as was the case of the disbelievers of Makkah who just did not consider wearing clothes in Tawaf during the days of Hajj as permissible and who used to think of abstinence from good food made lawful by Allah Ta'ala to be an act of worship.

Such people have been sternly reprimanded in a chastising mode by inquiring as to who has made good and becoming dress created by Allah for his servants and the good and pure foods bestowed by Him Haram for people?

Abstinence from Good Dress and Tasty Food is No Teaching of Islam

It means that to determine and declare something to be Halal or Haram is the sole right of the Most Sacred Being that has created it. No one is permitted to interfere in this matter. Therefore, those who consider good dress and good food made lawful by Allah as something Haram for themselves deserve the wrath and punishment from Allah. Living in tattered rags despite having the means is no teaching of Islam, nor is it something considered worth emulation in Islam as some ignorant people think.

Many among the early righteous elders and juristic Imams of Islam whom Allah had been blessed with good means would often times wear elegant, even expensive dresses. Our own master, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him ﷺ, when his means allowed it, has adorned his body with the best of dresses. According to one narration, once when he came out, there was on his blessed body a Rida' the price of

which was one thousand dirhams. As reported by Imam Abu Hanifah rahimahullah, he had used a Rida' worth four hundred guineas. Similarly, Imam Malik rahimahullah always used decent and elegant dress. For him, someone had taken it on himself that he would provide three hundred and sixty pairs of dresses annually for his use. And a pair which adorned his body for a day would not be used again because after having been worn for one day, he would give this dress to some poor student.

The reason is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: When Allah Ta'ala blesses a servant of His with extended means, He likes to see the effect of His blessing on things around him, his dress being one of them. Therefore, to let such blessing become visible is also a form of showing gratitude. In contrast, there is the attitude of wearing worn out or untidy clothes, despite having the means, which is ingratitude.

However, it is necessary to guard against two things, that is, from hypocrisy and exhibitionism, and from pride and arrogance. It means that one should not dress well simply to show off before others or to establish that they were superior or special as compared to them. And it is obvious that the righteous elders of the early period were free from such attitudes.

As for the reported use of ordinary or patched dress by the Holy Prophet Nabi ﷺ Sayyidna Faruq al-A'zam radi'allahu 'anhu and some other Sahabah radi'allahu 'anhum among the righteous elders is concerned, it had two reasons. First of all, whatever came in their hands as their income, they would spend it out over the poor and the needy, and in the pursuit of their religious objectives. For their own person, they would be left with too little to afford a nice dress. Then, they were leaders of people. They let themselves be in that simple and inexpensive bearing as it was so that others with extended means would get the message, and that common people and the poor and needy are not overwhelmed by their financial status.

The Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Food and Dress

About food and dress, the essential way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the Sahabah and the Tabi'in is that one should not be unnaturally concerned about these. Dress and food within easy access are good enough and should be used gratefully. If the dress is coarse and the food dry, there is no need to go to the trouble of finding something better one way or the other - even if one has to borrow, or that one starts worrying about what one misses so much that one lands himself into some other trouble.

Similarly, when good dress and food are naturally available, one should not go to the extreme trouble of spoiling them or avoiding their use. Thus, the way the seeking of good dress and good food is a self-imposed constraint, very similarly, doing the opposite of it, that is, to spoil what is good and to leave it aside in favour of what is bad, is also a self-imposed constraint - and a blameworthy one.

Why should this be done? The next sentence of the verse explains the wisdom behind it. It says that all blessings, which include fine dresses and nice foods, have really been created for obedient believers. Others are enjoying these because of them - because this world is the venue of deeds not the venue of rewards. You cannot draw a line of distinction between the genuine and the counterfeit, the good and the bad in the matter of blessings available in this mortal world. Here, the feast is open to all. The blessings are there from the All-Merciful. He is Al-Rahman for this whole world. But, the arrangements in this world obey the will of Allah - and the customary practice of Allah in this world is: When the obedient believers in Allah fall short in their duties to Him, other people overcome them, grab the treasures of worldly blessings and, as a result, the believing servants of Allah become subjected to hunger and poverty.

But, this law operates within this mortal world of deeds only. Once in the Hereafter, all blessings and comforts shall be reserved for the obedient servants of Allah. This is what the sentence: in this verse means,

that is, '(O prophet) you tell them that all blessings in the worldly life itself are really the right of the believers - and, on the day of Qiyamah, they shall be theirs exclusively.'

Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas radi'allahu 'anhu has explained this verse by saying that all blessings and comforts of the world are - subject to the safeguard that they do not become a source of trouble for them in the Hereafter - are the rightful share of obedient believers only. Contrary is the case of disbelievers and sinners who, though they too receive these blessing in their mortal life, rather receive more of it, but these blessings of theirs are going to become their nemesis in the Hereafter bringing punishment which will last for ever. Therefore, as the outcome shows, this is not the kind of comfort and honour one would welcome.

Some other commentators have determined its meaning by saying that all blessings and comforts of the world are laced with ceaseless striving, the apprehension of decline and never-ending anxiety. Pure blessing and pure comfort simply do not exist here. However, whoever gets these blessings on the day of Judgement, they will have them in the state of absolute purity. There will be no striving for it, no apprehension of decline or loss in it, nor any worries after it. The three explanations of the sense of this sentence in this verse as given above could be accomodated therein and that is why commentators among the Sahabah radi'allahu 'anhum and Tabi'in have gone by them.

At the end of the verse, it was said: (This is how We elaborate the verses for people who understand). This verse carries a refutation of the excessive deeds and ignorant views of people who suggested that Allah Ta'ala is pleased with the practice of abandoning good dress and good food.

DAY 14

ANSWER: Qamar (Moon)

A quick note: There are two clues in particular that distinguished the answer from 'sun'.

1. The moon orbits the earth. The earth orbits the sun. The sun does not orbit the earth.
2. The sign of the end of time that has been mentioned in the Qur'aan is the splitting of the moon by Nabi

ﷺ.

I worship Allah and I am not to be worshipped

“Have you not seen that to Allah prostrate all those in the skies and all those on the earth, and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the animals and many from mankind? And there are many on whom punishment has become due. And the one whom Allah puts to disgrace, there is none to give him respect. Surely Allah does what He wills.”

[Surah Al-Hajj: Verse 18]

COMMENTARY

By using the word “Sajdah” (prostration), it has been declared that all created things, be they living things, minerals or plants, are in obedience and thus submit to the Supreme authority of Allah Ta’ala, thereby mentioning two groups of humans in this respect of ‘submission’. One, which obeys Allah and therefore is included amongst the creatures who ‘prostrate’ to Him, and the other one which is rebellious and refuses to bow before Him, meaning, refusing to submit to His Will. The word “Sajdah” (prostration) has been used here in the broader sense of ‘submission’ to the will of Allah and obeying His commands, because all created things act upon this submission in their own way. Human beings perform Sajdah by touching the ground with the forehead, while in the case of other created things their Sajdah constitutes their faithful performance of the functions assigned to them by Allah.

The truth about all created things obeying Allah

Genetically, the entire universe and all created things therein are under the control and subject to the Will of their Creator by virtue of an inherently programmed guidance (guidance of Takwin) by Allah. The ‘submission’ in this sense is pre-determined, involuntary and instinctive. There is no created being which can escape this universal law of creation, be it a Muslim or a non-believer, a living thing or dead, mineral or plant. The smallest particle and the highest mountain cannot make the slightest movement without His Will. There is, however, another kind of submission to Allah, when a person offers homage to Him voluntarily and without constraint. This is what distinguishes a believer from a non-believer. A believer is obedient and sincere in his submission to Allah, whereas a non-believer repudiates His existence.

As this verse deals with the difference between a Muslim and a Kafir (infidel), it is more likely that reference to ‘Sajdah’ (prostration) does not refer to pre-destined and instinctive obedience alone but covers the voluntary submission as well. Let it not be supposed that only human beings and Jinns who possess intelligence can offer voluntary and unconstrained submission, and animals, plants and minerals being devoid of reason cannot exercise voluntary and intentional obedience. Indeed it can be proved from the text of the Qur’an that every created thing has reason, intellect and intent, and the difference lies only in degree. Human beings and Jinns possess a perfect level of intelligence, which makes them liable to a strict adherence to the laws governing what is permissible and what is forbidden. As regards other creatures, Allah has given them intelligence according to their needs. Animals possess the highest degree of intelligence after humans, then come plants and last of all are the minerals. The intelligence among the animals can easily be perceived, and that possessed by plants can also be observed if one applies one’s mind to the task. However, the intelligence given to the minerals is so little and concealed that it is not easily discernible, though Allah has said clearly that they not only possess intelligence but also have the capacity to decide things. The Qur’an says about the sky and the earth: (They said, “We come willingly.”41:11) that is, when Allah commanded the

sky and the earth that they must submit to His Will either by their free choice or by force, they both replied that they accepted His authority by their own voluntary choice. At another place the Qur'an says: (and there are still others which fall down in fear of Allah. - 2:74) which means that there are rocks, which fall down in fear of Allah Ta'ala. Similarly, there are numerous traditions which provide evidence of mountains conversing with one another, or other created things showing signs of intelligence. Therefore, the homage mentioned in this verse for which the word Sajdah (Prostration) has been used means the voluntary homage'. The interpretation of this verse would, then, be that except for the human beings and Jinns all other created things voluntarily and willingly submit to the Divine Authority. It is only the human beings and Jinns who are divided into two factions, namely those who bow in submission to the Will of Allah, and those who deny His authority and refuse to submit to Him and are, therefore, despised. Allah knows best.

I have been subjugated to human beings

“And He subjugated for you the sun and the moon, moving constantly” [Surah Ibrahim: Ayah 33]

COMMENTARY

‘We have subjugated the sun and the moon for you’ as they both keep moving, always in the same state. The word: (da'ibayn) is a derivation from da'b which means habit. The sense is that moving at all times and under all conditions has been made the habit of these two planets as it never happens contrary to that. The expression: (sakhkhara lakum: He subjugated for you) does not mean that they should be moving on your command. Had the sun and the moon been subjugated for human beings in a way that they would be moving under human command, then, there would have been mutual differences among them with the result that one of them would demand that the sun should better rise today two hours later than usual because he had too much work to do in the night. And the other would want to have it rise two hours earlier than usual because he had too many daytime jobs at hand. Therefore, the great Lord did, in a way, subjugate the sun and the moon for human beings, but He did so in the sense that they have been subjugated to serve human beings all the time and under all conditions under a wise Divine arrangement - not that their rising and setting and their speed become subservient to human pleasure.

But always to His command, do I resign

“Surely, your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He positioned himself on the Throne. He covers the day with night which pursues it swiftly. And (He created) the sun and the moon and the stars, subjected to His command. Beware, for Him is the creation and the command. Glorious is Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.” [Surah Al-Araf: Ayah 54]

COMMENTARY

For a reasonable person, this is an invitation to think, to think about things made by the made he observes around him all the time. Experts make machines of all sorts. Some of them would have engineering problems right from the start. Others may not have such problems, but machines are machines, no matter how strong the base material and how impeccable the design. Parts have their normal wear and tear, or need for adjustment, repairs, servicing. Machines become idle until fixed. It might take weeks, or months, to put them back to work. But, look at these God-made machines. The efficiency and the perfection with which they started working from day one is still there. They are working wonderfully non-stop. Their movement is as precise as ever, not a second fast or slow. There is no wear and tear of parts and no need to go to a workshop. The reason is that they are functioning ‘subject to His command’. In other words, they need no source of energy to move them, no engine to make them function. They are working only under Divine Command. They are subjected to that alone. Therefore, the emergence of the slightest malfunction in

them is impossible. But, of course, when the Absolute Master Himself decides to eliminate them at a time appointed by Him, this entire system would disintegrate. That day will be the day of Qiyamah.

I move constantly and do not get tired

“Allah is the One who raised the heavens without pillars. You see them. Then He positioned Himself on the Throne and subjugated the sun and the moon, each one running to an appointed time. He manages all matters, making the signs plain, so that you may be sure of meeting your Lord.” [Surah Al-Ra’ad: Ayah 2]

COMMENTARY

In the next sentence: **(and subjugated the sun and the moon, each one running to an appointed time)**, the word: ‘sakkhara’ translated as ‘subjugated’ means that they both are constantly doing what they have been assigned to do. Thousands of years have gone by but there never has been the least increase or decrease in their movement, nor do they get tired, nor do they ever start doing something else contrary to what they have been programmed to do. As for their ‘running to an appointed time,’ it could also mean that both of them are moving on to the same appointed time which stands determined as the final term called Qiyamah or Doomsday for this entire world of our experience. Once they reach that stage in time, this whole system of theirs will reach its end.

And it could also mean that Allah Ta’ala has determined a particular speed and orbit for every planet. It always keeps moving on its orbit at the speed set for it. The Moon completes its orbit in one month and the Sun does it in a year.

I am one from amongst His signs and I have more uses than one

“He is the One who has made the sun a glow and the moon a light, and determined for it stages, so that you may know the number of the years, and the calculation (of time). Allah has not created all this but for something right. He elaborates the signs for a people who understand.” [Surah Yunus: Ayah 5]

COMMENTARY

The opening statement of verse 5: **(He is the One who has made the sun a glow and the moon a light)** is a part of this very system and its management. Both words: (diya) and (nur) mean glow and light, therefore, many master lexicographers have taken these as synonyms. ‘Allamah al-Zamakhshari, al-Tibi, beside some others, said: Though the sense of light is common to both words, but nur is general. Whether strong or weak, dim or clear, every light is referred to as nur, while (daw’ and diya) refer to light that is strong and clear. One needs both kinds of light. For the usual business of life, the sharp and clear light of the day is required, while the comparatively dim light of the night is preferred for ordinary chores. If the day had nothing but the pale light of the moon, business will be affected adversely, and if the sun were to keep shining also during the night, sleep and chores that must be taken care of at that time alone would be disturbed. Therefore, nature made arrangements to provide both kinds of light by giving sunlight the degree of daw’ and diya and let it manifest itself at the time when people are busy in business, vocation or other avenues of livelihood. And the moonlight was made to be gentle, pale and pleasing and the night was appointed to be the time of its manifestation.

Another manifestation of Divine power related to the system of the sun and the moon appears in the second sentence of verse 5: **‘and determined for it stages, so that you may know the number of years and the calculation (of time).’** The word (‘qaddara’) is a derivation from (taqdir) which means to maintain something at the level of a particular quantity and measure in terms of time or place or attributes.

DAY 14

To keep the timings of the night and the day at a particular measure, the Holy Qur'an has said: (And Allah determines [the measure of the night and the day - 73:20). That spatial and travel distances have been kept at a particular measure finds mention elsewhere. In Surah Saba,' it was said about the habitations lying in between Syria and Saba'; (and We determined between them the [distance of journey - 34:18). And about quantitative measures in general, it was said: (and created everything then determined a measure for it, determining precisely – Surah al-Furqan, 25:2)

Some other commentators have said, 'though, Allah Ta'ala has determined stages for the Sun and the Moon both but, at this place, the purpose is to describe the stages of the Moon only. Therefore, the pronoun in (qaddarahu: determined for it) refers back to the Moon. The reason for this specification is that one cannot find out the stages of the Sun without the help of relevant instruments and calculations. Sunrise and sunset follow the same pattern every day throughout the year. A simple observation cannot tell anybody in what stage the Sun is on a given day. This is contrary to the case of the Moon. Its states are different every day. By the end of the month, it is just not visible. By observing such changes, even uneducated people can figure out the dates. For example, let us say the date today is March 8. Now, by just looking at the Sun, nobody can tell whether it is the 8th or the 21st. The case of the Moon is different. One can find out the date even by looking at it.

In the cited verse, the purpose is to tell people that man's own interest is also tied to these great signs of Allah Ta'ala since the count of years, months and its dates can be kept through them. No doubt, this calculation can be made from the Sun and the Moon both. Years and months, both Solar and Lunar, are universally known.

You will find me in the dream and the miracle

The first of prostration, and the second a sign of the end of time

“(It happened) when Yusuf said to his father, “My father, I have seen eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon; I have seen them all prostrating to me.” [Surah Yusuf: Ayah 4]

Moving on the verse 4, the text takes up the story of Sayyidna Yusuf 'alayhis salaam which opens with the following words: [(It happened) [when Yusuf said to his father, 'My father, I have seen eleven stars and the Sun and the Moon; I have seen them all prostrating to me.']]

This was the dream seen by Sayyidna Yusuf 'alayhis salaam interpreting which Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas radi'allahu 'anhu said: 'The eleven stars meant the eleven brothers of Sayyidna Yusuf 'alayhis salaam; and the Sun and the Moon meant his father and mother.'

According to al-Qurtubi, though the mother of Sayyidna Yusuf 'alayhis salaam had passed away from this mortal world before this event, but in her place, his father was wedded to her sister. A maternal aunt already has love and concern for her sister's children as their natural mother would normally have. Now when she, after the death of her sister, comes to be the wife of the father, she would customarily be referred to as the mother.

“The Hour (of doom) has drawn near, and the moon has been split asunder.” [Surah al-Qamar: Ayah 1]

The Phenomenon of Moon-Splitting: A Miracle

The disbelievers of Makkah asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to produce a proof in support of his

claim, and he, with the dispensation of Allah, split the moon into two parts. This miracle is verified by the concluding part of verse 1: 'and the moon has been split asunder.' The incident has been narrated successively in Traditions of reliable authority, and reported by such learned Companions as 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, Jubair Ibn Mut'im, 'Abdullah Ibn 'Abbas, Anas Ibn Malik radi'allahu 'anhum and others. 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud radi'allahu 'anhu reports that he himself was present and witnessed when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ performed this miracle. Imams Tahawi and Ibn Kathir rahimahuma'llah have stated that the reports narrating the phenomenon of 'moon-splitting' are mutawatir (i.e. it has been reported successively and uninterruptedly by such a large number of authorities that their concurrence on falsehood is inconceivable.) Therefore, this Prophetic miracle has been proved by incontrovertible evidence.

It was mentioned earlier that a large number of Traditions report the incident of 'moon-splitting', which may be summarized as follows: Whilst the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was sitting at Mina in Makkah, the pagans demanded that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ should produce a proof substantiating his claim. Allah split the moon in two parts. A part of the moon was over one mountain on the eastern side, and another part was over another mountain on the western side. Thus there was a mountain between the two parts. This incident took place on a moonlit night. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to all who were present: 'Be witnesses'. When all the people saw the miracle clearly, the two pieces rejoined. It was not possible for any person with eyes to deny this clear miracle. However, the pagans said: 'Muhammad has ensorcelled us, but he cannot bewitch the whole world; so let us wait for people to come from the neighboring parts of the country and hear what they have to say'. (Baihaqi and Abu Dawud Tayalisi) Tayalisi records on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud radi'allahu 'anhu that when travelers from the neighboring parts of the country arrived, they confirmed that they did see the moon in two parts. Some reports indicate that the miracle of 'moon-splitting' occurred twice, but more authentic reports confirm that the miracle occurred once only. (Bayan-ul-Quran).

DAY 15

ANSWER: Boat

Preliminary note: This is part of the story of Musa ‘alayhis salaam and Khadir ‘alayhis salaam

When Musa ‘alayhis salaam went to find Khadir ‘alayhis salaam: Musa ‘alayhis salaam said, ‘I am Musa.’ Al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam asked, ‘Musa Bani Isra’il?’ He confirmed, ‘Yes, I am Musa Bani Isra’il. I have come here to ask you to teach me the knowledge Allah has given to you specially.’

Al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam said, ‘you will be unable to remain patient with me. O Musa, there is a knowledge Allah has given to me and which you do not have while there is a knowledge which Allah has given to you which I do not have.’ Musa ‘alayhis salaam said, ‘if Allah wills, you will find me patient. I shall not disobey you in any of your orders.’

Al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam said, ‘If you are to be with me, do not ask me about anything unless I tell you about it first.’

After having said this, they started walking by the shore. Then came a boat. A ride was negotiated. The boat people recognized al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam and let them come on board free of any charges. No sooner did he step into the boat, al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam forced out a panel of the boat with the help of an axe. Musa ‘alayhis salaam could not restrain himself. He said, ‘These people gave us a free ride on the boat. This is what you did to them in return. You tore their boat apart so that they would drown. You have really done something very bad.’ Al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam said, ‘Did I not tell you before that you will be unable to remain patient with me?’ Thereupon, Musa ‘alayhis salaam offered his excuse that he had forgotten his promise and requested him not to take him to task on his act of inadvertent omission.

“So, they both moved ahead until when they boarded the boat, he broke it. He (Musa) said, “Did you break it that you drown its people? You have done something terrible indeed.” He said, “Did I not tell that you can never be able to keep patient while with me?” [Surah Al-Kahf: Ayah 71-72]

It was said in verse 71: **(Did you break it that you drown its people?)**. About it, it appears in the Hadith of the Sahihs of al-Bukhri and Muslim that al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam had dislodged a plank of the boat with an axe because of which there was a danger that water would fill up the boat and it would capsize. Therefore, Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam had objected to it. But, according to historical reports, water did not fill into this boat. This may have happened either because al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam had somehow repaired it himself soon after - as in a report carried by al-Baghawi according to which al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam had replaced the plank with glass. Or, water just did not enter the boat in the manner of a miracle. However, the context of the Qur’an by itself is telling us that the boat did not capsize - something which supports these reports.

“As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people who worked at sea. So I wanted to make it defective as there was a king across them who used to take every boat by force.” [Surah Al-Kahf: Ayah 79]

In the first verse, it was said: **(As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people - 79)**. About the poor people to whom this boat belonged, it has been reported from Sayyidna Ka’b al-Ahbar rahimahullah that they were ten brothers. Five of them were handicapped while the other five worked hard to eke out a living for all of them by plying a boat against whatever fare they could collect.

The definition of a Miskin

A miskin has been defined as one who has nothing. But, from this verse, we learn the true definition of a miskin: Anyone who does not have the amount of wealth and property that exceed his need, basic and necessary, to the limit of legal nisab (threshold of zakah). One who has less than that is also included under the definition of miskin. The reason is that people called 'al-masakin (plural of miskin: poor people) had at least one boat the price of which will not be less than the amount of nisab (threshold). But, as it was engaged in earning what those people needed, basically and necessarily, they were still called 'masakin' (poor people). (Mazhari)

Regarding the last sentence of verse 79: al-Baghawi has reported from Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbas radi'allahu 'anhu that the direction in which this boat was sailing, there was a cruel king who used to take boats ferrying people through by force. Al-Khadir 'alayhis salaam found it expedient to pull out a plank from the boat so that the cruel king, seeing this damaged boat, would let it go and thus those poor people would remain safe from the likely mishap. Comments sage Rumi:

*"Yes, al-Khidr did break the boat while sailing at sea;
But, a hundred saving graces in his breaking we see".*

ANSWER: The dog of Ashaabul-Kahf

“And you think they are awake while they are asleep. And We turn them on their sides, right and left. And their dog has its forelegs stretched out to the doorstep. If you had a look at them, you would have fled away from them and would have been filled with awe of them.” [Surah Al-Kahf: Ayah 18]

Good Company is a Blessing - Even for a dog!

Ibn ‘Atiyyah says that his father told him that he heard a sermon of Abu al-Fadl Jawhari in the Hijrah year 469 at the Great Mosque of Egypt. Speaking on the Mimbar, he was telling everyone, ‘whoever loves good people, he too gets a share from their goodness. See when the dog of the Ashaab al-Kahf loved them and followed them closely as if appended with them, Allah Ta’ala mentioned it in the Qur’an’.

Al-Qurtubi mentions this report of Ibn ‘Atiyyah in his Tafsir. In his comments, he says when a dog can reach this station by being in the company of the righteous and the saintly, imagine how high the station of true believers and pure monotheists who love righteous men of Allah would be. In fact, there is comfort and good news in this event for Muslims who are weak in deeds but do love the Holy Prophet ﷺ fully and duly.

It has been reported in the Sahih of al-Bukhari that Sayyidna Anas radi’allahu ‘anhu said, “One day, I and the Holy Prophet ﷺ were coming out of the Masjid. We met a person at the door. He asked, “Ya Rasulallah, when will the Qiyamah come?” He said, “What preparations have you already made for Qiyamah? (In view of which you want it to come soon).” Hearing this, the man was somewhat ashamed and corrected himself by saying, “I have not collected a lot of prayers, fasts and charities for Qiyamah, but I love Allah and His Messenger.” He said, “If so, [on the day of Qiyamah] you shall be with those whom you love.” Sayyidna Anas radi’allahu ‘anhu says, “when we heard this bliss of a sentence from the Holy Prophet, we were so happy that we had never been that happy since we embraced Islam.” After that, Sayyidna Anas radi’allahu ‘anhu said, “[al-hamdulillah] I love Allah, His Messenger ﷺ, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar radi’allahu ‘anhuma, therefore, I look forward to being with them.” (Qurtubi)

The dog of the People of Kahf

At this point, we have a question on our hands. It appears in an authentic Hadith that angels do not enter a house that has a dog or picture. Then, there is a Hadith of the Sahih of al-Bukhari. There, it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidna Ibn ‘Umar radi’allahu ‘anhu that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, “Whoever keeps a dog, except the one used for hunting or guarding livestock, has two qirats deducted every day from his reward (qirat or karat is the name of a small weight).” And in the report narrated by Sayyidna Abu Hurairah radi’allahu ‘anhu there is the exception of a third kind of dog, that is, a dog kept to guard land produce.

Based on these Hadith reports, one can ask as to why did these worthy men of Allah take a dog with them? One answer to this could be that the prohibition of keeping a dog is an injunction of the Shari’ah brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and it is possible that it may not be so prohibited in the Shari’ah (law) brought by Sayyidna ‘Isa Masih ‘alayhis salaam. Then, it is reasonably imaginable that these people who had property and livestock may have kept a dog for their protection from intruders and since the faithfulness of a dog is well known, the dog followed them when they went out from the city.

ANSWER: Measuring-bowl of the king

“Later, when he equipped them with their provisions, he placed the bowl in the camel-pack of his brother. Then, an announcer shouted out, “O people of the caravan, you are thieves.” Turning towards them, they said, ‘What are you missing?’ They said, “We are missing the measuring-bowl of the king, and whoever brings it back shall deserve a camel-load, and I stand surety for it.” They said, ‘We swear by Allah, you certainly know that we did not come to make mischief in the land, nor have we ever been thieves!’ They said, ‘What is the punishment, if you are liars?’ They said, ‘It’s punishment is that he, in whose baggage it is found, shall himself be the punishment. This is how we punish the wrongdoers.” So, he started with their bags before the bag of his brother, then, recovered it from the bag of his brother. This is how We planned for Yusuf. He had no right to take his brother according to the law of the king, unless Allah so willed. We elevate in ranks whomso We will. And above every man who has knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable. They said, ‘If he commits theft, then, a brother of his has committed theft before!’ So Yusuf kept it (his reaction) to himself and did not reveal it to them. He said, ‘You are even worse in position. And Allah knows best of what you allege!’ They said, “O’Aziz, he has a father, a very old man. So, take one of us in his place. We see you are a generous man!’ He said, “God forbid that we keep anyone except the one with whom we have found our thing, otherwise we shall be unjust!” [Surah Yusuf: Ayah 70-76]

The present verses describe how Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam arranged to have his real brother, Benjamin, stay on with him. All brothers were given grains according to rules. The grains for each brother was loaded on his camel, separately and by name. In the supply of grain loaded on the camel for Benjamin, a bowl was concealed. This bowl has been called: (siqayah) at one place, and: (suwa’ al-malik) at another. The word: (siqayah) means a bowl used to drink water from, and: (suwa’) too is a utensil similar to it. That it has been attributed to ‘malik’ or king shows the additional feature that this bowl had some special value or status. According to some narrations, it was made of a precious stone similar to emerald. Others say that it was made of gold, or silver. However, this bowl hidden in Benjamin’s baggage was fairly precious besides having some special connection with the king of Egypt - whether he used it himself, or had it declared to be the official measure of grains.

In the second sentence of verse 70, it is said: **Then, an announcer shouted out, “O people of the caravan, you are thieves.”** Here, the word: (thumrna : translated as ‘then’) shows that this public announcement was not made instantly. Instead, a temporary delay was allowed for the caravan to leave. The announcement was made after that to offset the likelihood of anyone sensing a foul play. After all, this proclaimer identified the caravan of the brothers of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam as the thieves.

Verse 71 carries the response of the accused: that is, ‘the brothers of Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam turned to the announcer, as if protesting on being made into thieves, and asked him to say what is it that you seem to have lost.’ The answer given by the announcers was: We are missing the measuring- bowl of the king, and whoever brings it back shall deserve a camel-load, and I stand a surety for it.

The question which emerges here is: Why did Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam opt for this excuse to detain Benjamin with him, specially when he knew that his separation was already shocking for his father. Now, how could he bear by giving him another shock by detaining his other brother?

The other question which arises here is far more important because it involves things like accusing innocent

brothers of theft and concealing something in their baggage secretly to cause them disgrace later. These are impermissible acts. Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam was a prophet of Allah. It is difficult to visualize how would he have gone along with them.

Therefore, the correct answer to these questions is what has been given by al-Qurtubi and Mazhari. They have said: Whatever has been done and said in this connection was neither the outcome of Benjamin’s wish, nor that of the initiative of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam himself. Instead of all that, all these happenings were the manifestation of the infinite wisdom of Allah alone under whose command they came to be what they were and being completed through them was the process of the trial and test of Sayyidna Ya’qub ‘alayhis salaam. A hint towards this answer appears in this verse (76) of the Qur’an itself which says: **‘This is how We planned for Yusuf (to detain his brother).’**

In this verse, Allah Ta’ala has very clearly attributed this excuse and plan to Himself. So, when all these things took shape as Divinely commanded, calling them impermissible becomes meaningless. They would be like the incident of the dismantling of the boat and the killing of the boy in the event relating to Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam and Al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam. Obviously, these were sins, therefore, Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam registered his disapproval of them. But, al-Khadir ‘alayhis salaam was doing all this with Divine assent and permission under particularly expedient considerations, therefore, he was not committing any sin.

In verse 73, it was said: that is, when the royal announcer accused the brothers of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam of theft, they said that responsible people of the state know them and know that they had not come to create any disorder in the country, nor have they ever been thieves.

In verse 74, it was said: that is, the royal staff said to them: If it stood proved that they were liars, what do they suggest should be the punishment for the theft? The answer given was: that is, the brothers of Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam said: **‘It’s punishment is that he; in whose baggage it is found, shall himself be the punishment. This is how we punish the wrongdoers.’**

The sense of the statement is that the punishment for theft in the Shari’ah of Sayyidna Ya’qub ‘alayhis salaam allowed the person whose property had been stolen to take the thief as his slave. Thus, the state functionaries made the brothers of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam to tell them the punishment of a thief as in Jacobian law and thereby had them committed to hand over Benjamin to Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam according to their own decision following the recovery of the stolen goods from Benjamin’s baggage.

Said in verse 75 was: that is, to cover up the real plan, the state officials first searched through the baggage of all brothers. They did not open Benjamin’s baggage first lest that causes any doubts.

Then, as said in the first sentence of the next verse (76): Benjamin’s baggage was opened up last of all and recovered from it was the ‘bowl of the king.’ At that sight, all brothers were put to shame. They started chiding Benjamin for having disgraced them.

After that, it was said: that is, **‘this is how We planned for Yusuf.’** He could have not arrested his brother under the Egyptian Imperial Law because, according to their law of theft, there was a corporal punishment for the thief after which he was to be released against the payment of twice the cost of the stolen property. But, here, he had already found out the law of theft operative in the Shari’ah of Sayyidna Ya’qub ‘alayhis salaam. According to this law, detaining Benjamin with him became correct and valid. So, also granted through the wisdom and will of Allah Ta’ala was this wish of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam.

Said in the last sentence of the verse is: **(We elevate in ranks whomso We will [as in this event, the ranks of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam were elevated over his brothers]. And above every man who has knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable).**

It means that Allah has given precedence to some over others in terms of knowledge. Take the highest of the high in knowledge, there is someone more knowledgeable than him. And if there is someone with a knowledge which is superior to the knowledge of the best among the creation of Allah, then, we have the ‘Ilm of Allah jalla thana’uh which is the highest of all for ever.

It was stated in the previous verses that, while in Egypt, a royal bowl was concealed in the baggage of Benjamin, the younger brother of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam. Then, by recovering it as planned, a charge of theft was levelled against him.

As in the first of the verses cited above, when the stolen property was recovered from Benjamin’s baggage before the brothers of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam, they were so ashamed that they said in irritation: that is, if he has committed a theft, it is not much of a surprise, for he had a brother who, like him, had committed a theft before. The sense was that he was not their real brother. He was their step brother. And he had a real brother who had also committed a theft.

On this occasion, the brothers of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam accused him too of a theft, which refers to an event which took place during his childhood when the way a conspiracy was hatched here to blame Benjamin for theft, a similar conspiracy was staged against of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam at that time with him being totally unaware of it. As for his brothers, they were fully aware of the fact that he was totally free from this blame. But, being angry with Benjamin on this occasion, they have made out that event too as of theft and have put its blame on his brother, Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam.

What was that event? Reports differ about it. Referring to Muhammad ibn Ishaq and Tafir authority, Mujahid, Ibn Kathir has reported that soon after the birth of of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam, Benjamin was born. This birth of his became the cause of his mother’s death. When both of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam and Benjamin were left without their mother, they were raised by their paternal aunt. Allah Ta’alahad blessed of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam from his very childhood with such an attractive personality that whoever saw him became deeply attached to him. His paternal aunt was no exception. She would not let him disappear from her sight at any time. On the other hand, no different was the condition of his father who was very fond of him. But, being a minor child, it was necessary that he be kept under the care of a woman. Therefore, he was put under the care of his paternal aunt. When he had learnt how to walk, Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam thought of having him come to live with him. When he talked to his paternal aunt, she showed her reluctance to let him go. After that, having been under compulsion, she somehow handed Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam over to his father, but she did make a plan to take him back. She had an antique waist-band which had come to her as the legacy of Sayyidna Ishaq ‘alayhis salaam and was highly valued Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam’s paternal aunt tied this band on his waist underneath his dress.

After he had gone, she spread the news around that her waist-band has been stolen by someone. When searched for, it turned out to be with young Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam. According to the Shari’ah of Sayyidna Ya’qub ‘alayhis salaam, the paternal aunt now had the right to keep him as her slave. When Sayyidna Ya’qub ‘alayhis salaam saw that the paternal aunt has become the owner of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam on the authority of the religious law of the land, he handed young Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam over to her. Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam kept living with her as long as she was alive.

DAY 17

This was the event in which the blame of theft was imputed to Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam following which the truth came to light and everybody found that he was free of even the least doubt of theft. It was the love of his paternal aunt for him that had made her conspire to keep him. The brothers knew this truth all too well. Given this reason, it did not behove them that they would attribute theft to him. But, of the series of excesses inflicted on Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam by his brothers, this too was the last.

Now in the second sentence of the first verse (77) it was said: that is, Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam heard what his brothers had to say and kept it in his heart for they still seemed to be after him and were now blaming him for theft. But, he kept his reaction to himself and did not let his brothers know that he had heard what they had said and was affected by it in any way.

Said in the next and last sentence of the verse was that is, **‘Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam said (in his heart): You are even worse in position (as you accuse your brother of theft, falsely and knowingly). And Allah knows best of what you allege (whether what you are saying is true or false).’** The first sentence has been uttered in the heart. The other sentence may possibly have been said publicly as his response to what his brothers had said.

In verse 78, it was said: It means when the brothers of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam realized that nothing seems to be working here and they have no option left but to leave Benjamin behind, they started flattering the ‘Aziz of Misr. They told him that Benjamin’s father was very old and weak (his separation will be unbearable for him). Therefore, they requested him that he should detain anyone from among them, in lieu of him. They also told him that they were making that request to him in the hope that he, as they feel, appears to be a very generous person - or, he has been generous to them earlier too.

The response Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam appears in verse 79 as: that is, he gave his reply to their request according to the regulations followed in his country by telling them that they were not authorized to detain anyone they wished. In fact, if they were to arrest someone other than the person from whose possession the lost property has been recovered, then, according to their own fatwa and ruling, they would be accused of being unjust.

The reason he gave was that they had themselves said that **‘he, in whose baggage the stolen property is found, shall himself be the punishment.’**

ANSWER: Tabut As-sakinah (wooden chest)

“Did you not see a group from the children of Isra’il after (the time of) Musa when they said to a prophet of theirs: ‘Send us a King so that we may fight in the way of Allah!’ He said: ‘Is it (not) likely, if fighting is enjoined upon you, that you would not fight.’ They said: ‘What is wrong with us that we would not fight while we have been driven away from our homes and our sons?’” But when fighting was enjoined upon them, they turned away, except a few of them. And Allah is All-Aware of the unjust. And their prophet said to them: “Allah has sent you ‘Talut’ as king. They said: “How could he have kingship over us when we are more entitled to the kingship than he? And he has not been given a wide measure of wealth!” He said: “Allah has chosen him over you and has increased his size in knowledge and physique. And Allah gives His kingship to whom He wills. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.” And their prophet said to them: “The sign of his kingship is that the Ark shall come to you having therein tranquility from your Lord, and the remains of what the House of Musa and the House of Harun had left, carried by the angels. Surely, in it there is a sign for you, if you are believers!” So, when ‘Talut’ set out along with the troops, he said: “Allah is going to test you by a river, so, whoever drinks from it is not my man, and whoever does not taste it is surely a man of mine, except the one who scoops a little with his hand.” Then, they drank from it, except a few of them. So, when he crossed it and (crossed) those who believed with him, they said: “There is no strength with us today against ‘Jalut’ and his troops!” Said those who believed that they were to meet Allah: “How many small groups have overcome the large groups by the will of Allah. And Allah is with the patient.” And when they faced ‘Jalut’ and his troops they said: “Our Lord, pour out patience on us, make firm our feet and help us against the disbelieving people!” So, they defeated them by the will of Allah, and Dawud killed ‘Jalut’, and Allah gave him the kingdom and the wisdom and taught him what He willed. Had Allah not been pushing back some people by means of some others, the earth would have been spoiled. But Allah is all-gracious to all the worlds.” (Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 246 - 251)

COMMENTARY

Verse 246: **(When they said to a prophet of theirs: “Send us a king so that we may fight in the way of Allah”).** These people from the Bani Isra’il had abandoned the injunctions given by Allah Almighty. When the infidel Amalekites were made to rule over them, they began thinking about correcting the situation. The name of the prophet mentioned here is Samuel.

The story of Talut and Jalut

The Bani Isra’il used to have the legacy of a wooden chest (also identified as the Ark of the Covenant). Moses and other prophets of Bani Isra’il would keep this chest in the frontline of the battlefield. Its barakah (blessing, benediction) used to give them victory. When Jalut (Goliath) overcame Bani Isra’il, he took this chest away with him. When Allah Almighty willed the return of the chest, it so happened that the infidels were struck by some epidemic or calamity at places where they carried this chest. Five cities were turned desolate. Nonplussed, they loaded it on two bullocks and drove them off. Then, the angels took control of the bullocks and made it reach Talut’s doorsteps. (Talut is the Qur’anic name of the king known in the Bible as Saul) When the Bani Isra’il saw this sign, they believed in the kingdom of Talut, who then mounted an attack on Jalut while the weather was very hot.

Verse 249: **(He said: Allah is going to test you by a river).** The wisdom behind this test, as perceived by this humble commentator, appears to be as follows. Not difficult to imagine is the excitement created on

DAY 18

such occasions but there are not many who would stay firm in their hour of trial. And should such a time come, the weakness shown by such people becomes contagious making others panic as well. Allah Almighty willed that such people be pruned out. This purpose was accomplished by this test, which is very appropriate, because steadfastness is necessary in fighting. So, being patient, when water is made available without asking in a state of intense thirst, is a proof of steadfastness, and dashing for water is a proof of its absence. Later on comes the unusual: Those who drank too much water became mysteriously more incapacitated. This has appeared in *Ruh al-Ma'ani* on the authority of Ibn Abi Hatim from Ibn 'Abbas radi'allahu 'anhu . Now the events and sayings mentioned in this story tell us that there were three kinds of people among them:

- (1) The weak in faith who failed to make the grade in their hour of trial.
- (2) The perfect who fully succeeded in their trial but did feel concerned about how low they were in numbers.
- (3) The most perfect who did not bother even about that.

ANSWER: She-camel of Allah ta'ala

“And to (the people of) ha mud (We sent) their brother, Salih. He said, “O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. He has created you from earth and made you settle therein. So, seek His forgiveness, then turn to Him in repentance. Surely, my Lord is near, responding! They said, “O Salih, we had hopes in you before this. Do you ask us not to worship what our fathers worshipped? And we are certainly in confounding doubt about what you are calling us to.” He said, “O my people, tell me: When I am on a clear path, and He has bestowed mercy upon me from Himself, who will then come to my help against Allah, if I disobey Him? So, you add on to me nothing but a loss. And O my people, this is the she-camel of Allah, a sign for you. So, leave her free to eat in the land of Allah and do not even touch her with evil (intention), lest a near punishment should seize you.” Then they slaughtered her. So, he said, “Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days (only). That is a promise, not going to be false.” So, when came Our command, We saved Salih and those who believed along with Him, out of mercy from Us, and (We saved them) from the disgrace of that day. Surely, your Lord is the Powerful, the All Mighty. And those who transgressed were caught by the Cry, and they were found dead in their homes, fallen on their knees, as though they had never lived there. Lo! The people of Thamud disbelieved their Lord. Lo! Curse be upon the people of Thamud.” [Surah Hud: Ayahs 61-68]

Sayyidna Salih ‘alayhis salaam, peace be upon him: He was sent to the people of Thamud, another branch of the tribe of ‘Ad. He too invited his people to believe in Tauhid, the Oneness of Allah. As customary, his people belied him and insisted that he must first make a she-camel of a specified description come out from the rock of the mountain in front of them in order to have them believe that he was a true prophet of Allah.

Sayyidna Salih ‘alayhis salaam warned them: If Allah Ta’ala shows you your custom-ordered miracles, and you still fail to believe, then, according to the customary practice of Allah, the punishment will come and destroy all of you. But, they remained obstinate and Allah Ta’ala, in His perfect power, made the miracle they demanded manifest before them. The rock of the mountain in front of them split asunder. Out from it came the she-camel bearing the features specified by them. Allah Ta’ala ordered them not to harm that she-camel in any manner, otherwise the punishment will come upon them. But, they disobeyed this order as well, and killed the she-camel. Consequently, they were seized by Allah Ta’ala. Sayyidna Salih ‘alayhis salaam and his companions were saved from the punishment, and the rest of those people were destroyed by a Sound which was severe and terrifying.

As part of this event, the people of Sayyidna Salih ‘alayhis salaam have been reported to have said to him: **(O Salih, we had hopes in you before this - 62).** It means that, before he claimed to be a prophet and started telling them to shun idol-worship, they had great hopes in him. They thought he would rise to be a great reformer and leader of their people. The reason is that Allah Ta’ala nurtures and grooms his prophets from their childhood in a way that they become models of good morals and habits. Whoever looks at them, loves and respects them. This is what happened in the case of the Last Prophet ﷺ. Before he declared that he has been sent as a prophet, the whole Arabia called him al-amin (the trustworthy one) and took him to be true and righteous. It was only when he announced his prophet-hood and prohibited idol-worship that everyone turned hostile to him.

In verse 65, it was said: **“Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days [only].”** That is, when these people killed the she-camel associated with the miracle in flagrant contravention of the Divine command, then, something serious happened. As warned earlier, **‘lest a near punishment should seize you - 64’**,

DAY 19

the punishment did come upon them in a manner that they were given a respite of three days and told that they all will be destroyed on the fourth day.

According to Tafsir al-Qurtubi, these three days were Thursday, Friday and Saturday. On Sunday, the punishment descended upon them: (**And those who transgressed were caught by the Cry** - 67). This awesome Cry was that of the archangel, Sayyidna Jibra'il 'alayhis salaam which was far more terrorizing than the combined thunderbolts of worldly lightening could ever be, something human senses could not take. All hearts were rent apart by the horrific sound resulting in the mass destruction of those people.

From this verse we learn that the people of Sayyidna Salih 'alayhis salaam were destroyed by a severe Sound, but what Surah al-A'raf says about them is: (So, the earthquake seized them - 7:78,91) which, as obvious, tells us that the punishment visiting them was that of the earthquake. Commentator al-Qurtubi has said that there is no contradiction here. It is possible that the earthquake came first and then they all were destroyed by the severe Sound. Allah knows best.

ANSWER: Cow

“And when Musa said to his people, “Allah commands you to slaughter a cow!’ They said, “Are you making us a laughing stock?” He said, “I seek refuge with Allah that I be one of the ignorant!” (Surah al-Baqarah: Verse 67)

COMMENTARY

According to Mirqat, a commentary on Mishkat, a man among the Israelites wanted to marry a girl, but her father refused. The suitor was so incensed that he killed the father, and disappeared. It is mentioned in Ma’alim al-tanzil which says on the authority of Kalbi that Allah had not yet sent down any injunction with regard to man-slaughter. If it was so, this shows that the incident happened before the Torah was revealed. Anyhow, the Israelites requested Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam to tell them how to trace the culprit. Under the commandment of Allah, he asked them to sacrifice a cow. As was their regular habit, they started raising all kinds of doubts and objections, of which the next verses give us the details.

“They said, ‘Pray for us to your Lord that He makes it clear to us what sort she be!’ He said, “He says she be - a cow neither too old, nor too young - of some middle age in between. Now, do what you are being asked to do!’ They said, ‘Pray for us to your Lord that He make it clear to us what colour she be!’ He said: “He says that she be a yellow cow, rich yellow in her colour, pleasing for all to look at.” They said, “Pray for us to your Lord that He makes it clear to us of what sort she be, for we are confused about this cow, and if Allah wills, We shall certainly take the right course!’ He said, “He says that it be a cow which is not tractable for tilling the soil or in watering the fields, sound and without blemish!’ They said, “Now, you have come up with the truth!’ Then, they slaughtered her, although it did not appear they would do it.” (Verses 68-71)

These Verses show how the Israelites were disposed to disobedience, and how this inclination expressed itself in different forms. The Hadith says that if these people had obeyed Allah’s commandment without raising so many doubts and asking unnecessary questions, such strict condition would not have been imposed on them, and the sacrifice of any cow whatsoever would have been accepted.

“And when you killed a man, and began to push and pull each other for it; while Allah was to bring forth what you were holding back. So, We said, “Strike him with a part of it!’ Similar to that, Allah revives the dead. And He shows you His signs, so that you may understand.” (Verses 72-73)

The murderer had his supporters who wanted to hide his crime, and hence began accusing different people. But Allah willed that the criminal should be brought to book, and appointed a miraculous way of identifying him -- that is, the dead body of the murdered man should be touched with a part of the flesh of the sacrificial cow. When this was done, the dead man came back to life, announced the name of his murderer, and died again.

This miraculous event is a manifestation of the omnipotence of Allah, and Holy Qur’an presents it as an argument against those who deny the Resurrection of the dead for the Last Judgment. Verse 73 says that this precedent should induce people to make use of their reason, and see that what has happened in a past instance can as easily happen in a future instance.

With regard to this event one may ask as to why Allah made the resurrection of the dead man depend upon his being touched with a part of flesh when he had the power to bring the man back to life without the intervention of any such device; or, one may ask as to why the dead man should have been brought back to life when the name of the murderer could have been revealed even otherwise. In answer to this, we shall say

that Allah is omnipotent, and does not act under any kind of compulsion, but that all His actions proceed from His all-embracing wisdom. Moreover, it is He alone who knows, and can know, the *raison d'être* of what He does. The Shari'ah does not oblige us to discover the *raison d'être* of each and every divine act, nor is it necessary or possible that we should be able to comprehend the *raison d'être* in each case. The best way in such a case is to accept what Allah or the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, and to keep quiet.

Let us say a word about the arrangement and sequence of the events. Verse 72 relates how a man was murdered, and how people started accusing each other. This is the beginning of the story which has been related earlier in Verses 67-71. This chronological order has not been preserved in the narration, but inverted, and this re-arrangement has a subtle significance. This long section of the Surah (Chapter) has been dealing with the transgressions of the Israelites, and this is just what the Holy Qur'an intends to bring out in narrating different stories, the narrating of stories not being an object in itself here. The present story is meant to show two misdeeds - firstly, committing a murder and then trying to hide it; secondly, raising uncalled-for objections to divine commandments. If the chronological order had been kept up, the readers would have supposed that it was only the first of these that was really intended, while the second was added only by way of completing the story. The present arrangement clearly shows that both the misdeeds have been equally emphasized.

FROM TAFSIR IBN KATHIR

Ibn Abi Hatim recorded 'Ubaydah As-Salmani saying, "There was a man from among the Children of Israel who was impotent. He had substantial wealth, and only a nephew who would inherit from him. So his nephew killed him and moved his body at night, placing it at the doorstep of a certain man. The next morning, the nephew cried out for revenge, and the people took up their weapons and almost fought each other. The wise men among them said, 'Why would you kill each other, while the Messenger of Allah is still among you' So they went to Musa and mentioned the matter to him and Musa said,

("Verily, Allah commands you that you slaughter a cow." They said, "Do you make fun of us" He said, "I take Allah's refuge from being among Al-Jahilin (the ignorant or the foolish))." "Had they not disputed, it would have been sufficient for them to slaughter any cow. However, they disputed, and the matter was made more difficult for them, until they ended up looking for the specific cow that they were later ordered to slaughter. They found the designated cow with a man, only who owned that cow. He said, 'By Allah! I will only sell it for its skin's fill of gold.' So they paid the cow's fill of its skin in gold, slaughtered it and touched the dead man with a part of it. He stood up, and they asked him, 'Who killed you' He said, 'That man,' and pointed to his nephew. He died again, and his nephew was not allowed to inherit him. Thereafter, whoever committed murder for the purpose of gaining inheritance was not allowed to inherit." Ibn Jarir reported something similar to that. Allah knows best.

Allah mentioned the stubbornness of the Children of Israel and the many unnecessary questions they asked their Messengers. This is why when they were stubborn, Allah made the decisions difficult for them. Had they slaughtered a cow, any cow, it would have been sufficient for them, as Ibn 'Abbas and 'Ubaydah have said. Instead, they made the matter difficult, and this is why Allah made it even more difficult for them.

ANSWER: Roasted calf

“And Our messengers came to Ibrahim with the good news. They said, “Salam (peace).” He said, “Salam.” Then he made no delay in bringing a roasted calf. So, when he noticed their hands not reaching for it, he found them strange and felt a bit of fright from them. They said, “Be not frightened. We have been sent to the people of Lut.” [Surah Hud: 69-70]

Since these angels had come in human form, Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam took them to be normal guests and lost no time in offering his hospitality. He placed a dish of roasted calf before them. But, they were really angels, free of eating and drinking. Therefore, despite the food being before them, they did not extend their hands towards it. When Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam noticed this, he was concerned. They did not look like guests, may be they had come to create some problem for him. The angels scented his concern and disclosed their identity. They told him that they were angels of Allah Ta’ala. There was no need for him to be frightened. They had been sent to give him the good news of a birth in his family, as well as to accomplish another mission, the mission of bringing Divine punishment on the people of Lut ‘alayhis salaam.

The first verse (69) tells us that these angels had come to Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam with some good news. The good news has been mentioned later in the third verse (71): (so, We gave her the good news about Ishaq).

Sayyidna ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu said that the three angels were Jibra’il, Mika’il and Israfil ‘alayhimus salaam. (Qurtubi) They came in human form and greeted Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam with ‘salam.’ Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam responded to their salam greeting and, taking them to be human, offered the usual hospitality.

Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam is the first human being who introduced the custom of honoring guests by offering hospitality to them. (Qurtubi) It was his routine that he would never eat alone. Instead, when came the time for meals, he would be looking out for a guest so that he could eat with him.

Al-Qurtubi has reported from Isra’ili narratives that, on a certain day, Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam started looking for a guest at the time for meals. The man he met was a stranger. When he sat down to eat, Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam said to him, ‘say: I’ begin with the name of Allah.’ He said, ‘I do not know Allah. Who and what is He?’ Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam asked him to leave the dining-spread on the floor. When he went out, Sayyidna Jibra’il ‘alayhis salaam came in and said, ‘Allah Ta’ala says: As for him, We gave sustenance to him throughout his life despite his disbelief and as for you, you were wary about giving him even one morsel of food.’ Hearing this, Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam went after him and called him back. He said, ‘unless you tell me the reason why you turned me out first and why are you asking me to come in again, I will not go with you.’

When Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam told him the episode, the episode itself became the reason for his becoming a believer. He said, ‘the Lord who made you do this is very noble. I believe in Him.’ Then he went in with Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam, behaved like a true believer and ate his food after having recited Bismillah first.

So, Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam, true to his habit of entertaining guests, welcomed angels who had come in human form. Naturally, to him they were human, and guests. The host did his most, lost no time and placed a roasted calf before them.

In the second verse (70), it was stated that the angels had, though, come in the human form and it was also possible that they could have been given human characteristics of eating and drinking at that particular time. But, the wiser choice for them was no other but that they should not eat so that the secret that they were angels comes out in the open. Therefore, their angelic characteristics were allowed to remain, even in their human form, because of which they did not extend their hands towards the food.

According to some reports, they had some arrows in their hands. They started poking the heads of their arrows into the roasted meat. When they acted in that manner, Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam apprehended them to be his enemies, because, according to the social custom known to him, if a guest refused to eat, it was a sign of mischief to be made from his side. (Qurtubi) His apprehension was quashed when the angels themselves disclosed their identity and said that they were angels, therefore, they do not eat. So, there was no danger for him to bother about.

Some Rules for Guests and Hosts

It has been said in the last sentence of verse 69: (Then he made no delay in bringing a roasted calf).

This tells us a few things:

1. It is a part of the etiquette of hospitality that the host should, soon after the arrival of the guest, bring out something to eat, or drink, something he has on hand and which could be offered quickly and conveniently. Then, if the host is a man of means, he can arrange for additional hospitality later. (Qurtubi)
2. A host should not worry about making too many formal arrangements for a guest. Anything good available easily is good enough. Let him put it before the guest. Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam, had some domestic animals at home. Therefore, he slaughtered a calf, had it roasted quickly and offered it to his guests. (Qurtubi)
3. Receiving guests and offering hospitality to them is a part of the essential etiquette of Islam, in fact, a hallmark of high morals. This is the blessed habit of prophets and the righteous. Is it necessary (wajib) to entertain guests? Or, is it not? ‘Ulama’ have difference of opinion in this matter. According to the majority of them, it is a sunnah, and desirable, but not wajib (necessary, obligatory). Some of them say that it is wajib on village people that they should offer hospitality to a person who stays in their village because a stranger has no arrangement for his meals there. Since such arrangements are possible through a hotel in cities, therefore, it is not wajib on those who live in cities. Al-Qurtubi has reported all these different views in his Tafsir.

In verse 70, it was said: **(So, when he noticed their hands not reaching for it, he found them strange and felt a bit of fright from them).**

From here we learn that there are rules of etiquette for guests as well. A guest should accept whatever is offered. Let him partake from it a little bit to please the host, even if not willing to eat because of unfavorable taste or apprehended harm.

This very sentence also tells us that the host should not consider himself absolved after having placed the food before the guest. Instead, he should be benignly watching whether or not the guest is partaking of the food, as was done by Sayyidna Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam when he noticed that the angels were not eating.

But, this watching has to be discreet, not something like staring at the guest while he is eating. A casual look is enough, because looking at the morsels of food being eaten by the guest is contrary to the etiquette of entertainment and certainly very humiliating for the invited guest. This is illustrated by an incident relating

DAY 21

to Khalifah Hisham ibn 'Abd ul-Malik. On a certain day, the Khalifah was sharing his food- spread with a rustic Arab. The morsel of food being eaten by the Arab had a strand of hair in it. When Khalifah Hisham noticed it, he told the Arab about it. The Arab instantly rose in a huff saying, 'we never eat with a person who watches our morsels.'

Al-Tabari reports at this place: When the angels abstained from eating the first time, they had said that they do not eat free meals. If they were to accept payment for it, they would. Sayyidna Ibrahim 'alayhis salaam said, 'Yes, there is a price for it that you can pay. The price is: Say 'with the name of Allah' when you begin, and praise Him when you finish.' Hearing this, the archangel Jibra'il 'alayhis salaam told his companions, 'That Allah Ta'ala calls him His friend is correct. He deserves it.'

This tells us that saying: (bismillah: With the name of Allah) when beginning to eat, and saying: (alhamdulillah: Praise belongs to Allah) at the end of it is Sunnah.

ANSWER: The Ark of Nuh ‘alayhis salaam

“And it was revealed to Nuh that none of your people would ever believe except those who have already believed: “So, be not distressed by what they have been doing. And make an ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation. And do not speak to Me about those who crossed the limits - they are to be drowned.” And he started making the Ark. And whenever the chieftains of his people passed by him, they mocked at him. He said, “If you mock at us, we mock at you like you mock at us: So, you shall soon know to whom will come the punishment that will humiliate him and upon whom will befall a lasting punishment.” At last when Our command came and the oven overflowed. We said, “Load in it a pair of two from every kind along with your family - except those against whom the Word has already been spoken - and those who have believed.” And there were only a few who had believed with him.” [Surah Hud: Ayahs 36-40]

COMMENTARY

Allah Ta’ala had blessed Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam with long years of life extending up to nearly one thousand years. Along with it, he was given a special status in terms of his prophetic mission to invite people to Allah and make their condition better whereby he devoted these long years to keep asking them to believe in the true Faith and in Allah as One. He had to face the harshest of pains in this mission. His people would throw stones at him until he fell down and lost consciousness. But, as soon as he would regain it, he prayed to Allah for the forgiveness of his people for they did not know what they were doing. A generation was followed by the other, and the other by yet another, in a chain and he kept giving his call in the hope that they might, at some stage, accept the truth.

When centuries passed over this exercise in patience, he complained about their deplorable condition before his Almighty Lord which has been mentioned in Surah Nuh: (My Lord, I did invite my people [to the truth] night and day. But, my invitation increased them in nothing but flight [in aversion] - 71:5,6) and, after all those long years of hardship, the prayer - that this great servant of Allah made was: (My Lord, help me because they have belied me - al-Mu’minun, 23: 26,39).

When the reign of terror let loose by the people of Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam became much too excessive, he was addressed by Allah Ta’ala in the words appearing in the verses cited above. (al-Baghawi, Mazhari)

Firstly, he was told that, out of his people, those who were to believe had already believed. No one was to believe after that. Their hearts were sealed with their own obstinacy and contumacy. Therefore, he should not grieve about his people any more and feel free of any concern about their failure to believe.

Secondly, he was told that Allah was to send the punishment of flood against those people. Therefore, he should make an ark that could hold his family, as many believers as there were, and what they needed, so that they could embark it when the flood comes and be safe from it. Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam made the ark as he was ordered to. When the initial signs of the flood came before them - that water started overflowing from the earth - Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam, was commanded to embark the ark along with his family and the few believers who had believed in him, They were also asked to load a pair each of animals that serve human needs, such as, cow, ox, goat, horse, mule etc. Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam, put everyone on the ark as ordered.

At the end it was said that the believers in Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam who boarded the ark were only a

few.

This was a gist of the subject as it appears in the cited verses. Now we can turn to the explanation of each verse and deal with issues and problems that emerge therefrom.

In the first verse (36), it was said that it was revealed to Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam that those who were to believe from among his people had already believed. In future, no one else will believe. Therefore, he should not worry about how they deal with him because one feels the pinch of sorrow only when one expects something good to come from someone. Disappointment is not that bad. It has its own relief. He might as well be disappointed with them. As for the shock felt by Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam, because of all sorts of pains inflicted by his people on him, arrangements had already been made as indicated the next verse (37) - **‘they are to be drowned.’** Under these conditions came that invocation of curse for his people on the lips of Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam which has been mentioned in Surah Nuh: “My Lord, do not leave upon the earth any inhabitant from among the disbelievers. Indeed, if You were to leave them, they will mislead Your servants and will not procreate anyone but the ones wicked and disbelieving (diehards)” - 71:26,27.

In answer to this prayer, the people of Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam, were drowned en masse.

Boat-Making: The Education of a Prophet ‘alayhis salaam

When Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam was commanded to make an ark, he knew no ark, nor its making. Therefore, in the next verse (37), he got his first lesson. To orient him to the reality of boat making, it was said: **(And make an ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation).**

Hadith reports say that Sayyidna Jibra’il al-Amin ‘alayhis salaam told Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam by means of revelation all about the making of boats. He had used wood from the saul tree (shorea robusta) to build this ark.

Some historical narratives give its measurement. It was three hundred yards long, fifty yards in width and thirty yard high, almost a three storied ship. Its ventilators, as customary, opened to the right and the left. Thus, this industry, the first prototype of the ship building industry, began at the hands of Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam for the first time through Divine revelation. After that, the progress it made is current history.

All Essential Industries Originated through Revelation

It has been reported on the authority of some elders of early centuries of Islam in at-Tibb an-Nabawi of Hafiz Shamsud-Din adh-Dhahabi that all industries essential for human beings owe their origin to the process of Divine revelation through some prophet. Later, improvements kept coming as needed during different times. The first revelation that came to Sayyidna Adam ‘alayhis salaam mostly related to rehabilitation of the land and establishment of different industries. The invention of wheel carts for loading and hauling things is part of the chain of inventions.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the well-known Aligarh College, (now the Muslim University of Aligarh, India) used to say more than a hundred years ago that the world has seen inventions of all sorts in moving vehicles but its pivot continued to be the axle and the wheel. It is the common factor between a bullock-cart, a donkey-cart, rails and cars. Therefore, the greatest inventor of moving vehicles is the person who invented the wheel that is the life and soul of a lot of machines. As it was said, this invention unfolded itself at the hands of the first prophet, Sayyidna Adam, peace on him, through a Divine revelation.

From here we also learn that industries devoted to essential human needs are so important that the blessed

prophets have been taught and trained in these through Divine revelation.

Soon after instructing Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam how he would make an ark, he was told that a flood would come and his people will be drowned and that, at the time, he was not to intercede out of compassion on their behalf.

In the third verse (38), mentioned there is the total lack of concern for their sad end shown by the people of Nuh ‘alayhis salaam during the period he was making the ark. When the chieftains of his people saw him busy with his project under a Divine command, they would ask him, ‘what are you doing?’ He said, ‘a flood is to come, therefore, I am making an ark.’ They would mock at him and say, ‘we have no water to drink here and this wise man is planning to sail in a boat on this dry land.’ In response, Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam told them, ‘if you mock at us today, then remember the day is sure to come when we shall be laughing at you.’ The sense is that conditions would change and events would unfold in a manner that they themselves would become the cause of their being mocked at. For, in reality, ridicule is contrary to the spiritual station of prophets. It is simply not permissible for anyone, in fact, it is *harb* (unlawful). Says the Holy Qur’an: (O those who have believed, no people should mock at [other] people - may be, they are better than them - 49:11) Therefore, the mocking referred to here is a pragmatic response to their mockery. This is like saying, ‘when you are seized by the punishment, we shall be telling you that this was the outcome of your mockery.’ This is as it was said after that in the fourth verse (39): **‘So, you shall soon know to whom will come the punishment that will humble him, and upon whom will befall the lasting punishment.’** The first punishment refers to the punishment in the mortal world, and the ‘lasting punishment’ means the never-ending punishment of the Hereafter.

From the fifth verse (40) begins the description of the coming of the flood, related instructions and events as they unfolded. So, first it was said: **(At last, when Our command came and the oven overflowed).**

The word: (tannur: oven) is used in more than one sense. The Earth’s floor is called an oven. The oven that bakes bread is also a tannur. A raised part of the land is also referred to as tannur. Therefore, some of the Tafsir authorities have said that, at this place, ‘tannur’ means the surface of the land in that water started overflowing from it. Some of them have said that it means the tannur of Sayyidna Adam ‘alayhis salaam that was located at ‘ainul- wardah’ in Syria - and water overflowed from it. Some others said that Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam’s own tannur was located in Kufah and that was what it means. Most commentators - Sayyidni Hasan, Mujahid, Sha’bi, Sayyidna ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu and others - have gone by this view.

As for Sha’bi, he used to say on oath that this tannur was located in a secluded quarter of the city of Kufah, and that Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam had built his ark in the mosque of Kufah. This tannur was right by the entrance to this mosque. Sayyidna ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu says that Allah Ta’ala had told Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam, ‘when you see water overflowing from the oven in your home, know that the flood has come.’ (Qurtubi and Mazhari).

Commentator al-Qurtubi said: The sayings of commentators appear to be different as to the meaning of tanner, but this, in reality, is not a difference. When water began to bulge out, it overflowed from the bread baking oven, and from out of the surface of the land, and from the oven of ‘Ainul-Wardah in Syria. The Holy Qur’an has said explicitly: (Then We opened the gates of the heaven with rain pouring down and caused the earth to burst out with springs - al-Qamar, 54:11).

In his statement, Sha’bi has also said that this grand mosque of Kufah has its own distinct status after al-

Masjid al-Haram, al-Masjid an-Nabawii and al-Masjid al-Aqsa.

Later in the verse, it was said: When the flood had started, Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam was commanded: **(Load in it a pair of two from every kind)**.

This tells us that all kinds of animals were not loaded in the ark of Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam. Loaded there were animals born to a pair of male and female and which cannot survive in water. Therefore, all sea life stands excluded from here and so do land based life forms born without male-female conjunction. This leaves only domestic animals like the cow, ox, water buffalo, goat etc.

This removes the possible doubt as to how could the ark hold that many animals.

After that, Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam was asked to have his family members - other than the disbelieving ones - board the ark, as well as those who had believed in him, though they were only a few.

The exact number of those who sailed on the ark has not been determined in the Qur’an and Hadith. It has been reported from Sayyidna ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu that their total number was eighty, which included three sons of Sayyidna Nuh ‘alayhis salaam - Sam, Ham, Yafith - and the three of their wives. The fourth son had stayed with the disbelievers and was drowned with them.

“And he said, “Embark it. With the name of Allah it sails and anchors. Surely, my Lord is Most-Forgiving, Very Merciful.” [Surah Hud: Ayah 41]

Etiquette of boarding boats and other modes of conveyance

The first verse (41) teaches the etiquette of boarding boats and other modes of conveyance. One should board by saying: (With the name of Allah it sails and anchors). The word: (majra pronounced according to the reading (qira’ah) of Imam Hafsa as ‘majray with fathah on the letter mim and a major Imalah [inclination] on the letter ra) means to sail or to move, and (mum;) means to stop or anchor. The sense is that the moving of this mode of transport owes itself to the power of Allah, and is with His name alone, as well as its stopping which is also subservient to nothing but His power.

Every conveyance moves and stops only with the power of Allah Ta’ala

Even a little thought would show that no conveyance, a boat or any other mode of transport that moves on land (or flies in the air) is really within one’s own power, neither its creating and making, nor its moving and stopping. A shallow view of things leads man to assume that he is the one who has manufactured it and made it move. The reality lies elsewhere. It does not take much to realize that man has not created iron, wood, brass, aluminum etc. which serve as raw material that go into the making of these modes of conveyance. And it is also clear that it does not lie in his control to create on his own a gram of iron or a foot of wood. Then, who gave them the intelligence to design and produce all sorts of mechanical parts and instruments? How did he do that? Did he create his own intelligence? Had it been within the power of man, no one in this wide world would have remained dumb. Everyone would have been a Plato and Aristotle in his field. So, man puts together wood and iron and mechanical support from all sides, makes the body and frame for the conveyance. Now he needs to haul tons of weight easily and quickly on the land or in the air. He needs power to do that. It may come through petrol, gas or hydro-electricity. Has man created any of these? Did he create the petrol or gas, or water, or oxygen, or hydrogen?

If we were to look at things impartially, we will realize that even in this age of great scientific advancement, the helplessness of man is still visible and it is true that the moving and stopping of every conveyance rests

DAY 22

within the ultimate control of the creator of this universe.

The process of inventing things and making them work makes inventors self-centered. They start living in a hall of mirrors. They congratulate themselves to the limit that they lose touch with the reality of things on a canvass larger than what they invent. Allah Ta'ala tells them through His prophets 'alayhimus salaam that there is more to their making that they fail to see: (With the name of Allah it sails and anchors). This is the reality. A brief statement, but very comprehensive.

“And it was sailing with them amidst the waves like mountains. And Nuh called out to his son, who was at an isolated place, “O my child, come on board with us, and do not be in the company of the disbelievers.” He said, “I shall take shelter on a mountain which will save me from the water.” He said, “There is no savior today from the command of Allah, except the one to whom He shows mercy.” And the waves rose high between the two, and he was among the drowned. And it was said, “O earth, suck in your water, and O heaven, stop.” And water subsided, and the matter was over. And it (the Ark) came to rest on the Judiyy, and it was said, “Curse be upon the wrongdoers.” [Surah Hud: Ayahs 42-44]

As stated in the second (42) and third (43) verse, when the whole family of Sayyidna Nuh 'alayhis salaam had boarded the ark, a son whose name has been reported as Kin'an (Canaan) was left out. Out of his paternal compassion, Sayyidna Nuh 'alayhis salaam called out to him asking him to come on board and warning him that he should not stay in the company of disbelievers otherwise he would be drowned with them. This young man was already in league with those disbelieving enemies, in fact, was himself a disbeliever. But, in all likelihood, Sayyidna Nuh 'alayhis salaam did not know that he was a disbeliever. And even if he did know that, the good counsel he gave to his son to board the boat and leave the company of the disbelievers was in the spirit of asking him to repent from disbelief and enter the fold of faith. But, the unfortunate son still took the flood to be something that will pass away and told him not to worry about him for he would be safe from the flood by climbing a mountain. Sayyidna Nuh 'alayhis salaam warned him again that nothing was going to save anyone, not even a mountain, from the punishment of Allah on that day and that there was no way one could remain safe from it unless Allah Himself were to show mercy to him. This father-son dialogue was on from a distance when rose a wave of the flood and took him down and away. Historical reports say that the level of the Flood was fifteen yards above the highest mountain peak and according to some other reports, it was forty yards high.

In the fourth verse (44), the recession of the flood and the return of things to normal conditions has been described in a particular manner. Addressing the earth, Allah Ta'ala commanded: (O earth, suck in your water). The sense was that the amount of water which had bulged out from the earth was to be taken back in by the earth. The sky was commanded to stop raining. The water from rains that had already accumulated on the earth, nature channeled it into rivers and streams for human beings to benefit by it. (Tafsir Qurtubi, Mazhari)

In this verse, Allah Ta'ala has given His commands by addressing the heaven and the earth, although these are no sensate entities, at least outwardly. Therefore, some commentators have taken it in a figurative sense. But, the fact of the matter is that, in terms of our perception, things in the world which appear non-conscious, insensate, and lifeless are, in all reality, live and conscious. Yes, their consciousness and perception are not of a level as given to humankind and others, therefore, by declaring them to be inanimate, they were not obligated with the percepts and injunctions of the Shari'ah. Many verses of the Holy Qur'an confirm it, such as: (and there is no such thing which does not glorify Him with praises - 17:44). And it is obvious that the glorification of Allah Ta'ala depends on knowing Him, and knowing, on reason and consciousness. This tells us that everything has reason and consciousness according to its respective capacity. From it, it

DAY 22

recognizes its creator and whatever it has been assigned to do by Him. Everything knows it fully well and keeps doing it staunchly as due. The verse of the Qur'an: (gave each thing its form then guided [it] - Taha, 20:50) means exactly this. Therefore, in this verse, if the address to the heaven and the earth is taken in the real sense, it does not matter.

At the end of the fourth verse (44), it was said that the heaven and the earth obeyed the orders and the matter of the flood was all over. The Ark of Sayyidna Nuh 'alayhis salaam came to rest on the Mount Judiyy and it was declared that the unjust people have been cast far 'away from the mercy of Allah' - (which is what curse is).

Mount Judiyy still stands there by that name. Geographically, it is located on the border of Armenia near Ibn 'Umar Island north of Mousil in 'Iraq, the real home of Sayyidna Nuh 'alayhis salaam. This is a mountain range, part of which is called Judiyy. Another part of it is known as Ararat. In the present Torah, the place where the Ark came to rest has been identified as Mount Ararat. As obvious, there is not much of a contradiction in these two reports. But, well-known old historical accounts also say that the ark of Sayyidna Nuh 'alayhis salaam had come to rest on Mount Judiyy.

These accounts also mention that pieces of this ark are still there at many places in 'Iraq. These are kept and used as a relic.

According to Tafsir at-Tabari and al-Baghawi, Sayyidna Nuh 'alayhis salaam had embarked the Ark on the tenth of the month of Rajab. For six months, this ark sailed on the waters of the flood. When it reached the spot where Baytullah was, it made seven circuits. Allah Ta'ala had raised His House higher from being submerged. Then, on the tenth of Muharram, the day of 'Ashura', the flood subsided and the ark came to rest at the Mount of Judiyy. Sayyidna Nuh 'alayhis salaam observed a thanksgiving fast on that day and asked everyone on the ark to do the same. Some reports say that even animals that had shared the ark fasted on that day. (Mazhari and Qurtubi)

The importance of the day of 'Ashura', that is, the tenth of Muharram, has been recognized in all religious codes of the blessed prophets. In early Islam - before the fasts of Ramadan became obligatory - fasting on the day of 'Ashura' was fard. It is no more fard after the revelation of the obligatory status of fasting in Ramadan, but it continues to be a practice of prophets, and a source of reward forever.

ANSWER: Knife

“And women in the city said, “The wife of the governor is seducing her youthful slave. The love for him has arrested her. Surely, we see her in open error.” So, when she heard of their crafty comments, she extended an invitation to them and arranged for them a comfortable place (to sit and dine) and gave everyone a knife and said (to Yusuf): “come in before them.” So when they saw him, they found him great and (were so bewildered that they) cut their hands and said, “Oh God! He is no human being. He is but a noble angel.’ She said, “This is he you blamed me for. Yes, I seduced him, but he abstained. And should he not follow my command, he shall be imprisoned and will be disgraced.” [Surah Yusuf: Ayahs 30-32]

Said in verse 32 was: **(So, when she heard of their crafty comments, she extended an invitation to them).**

Here, Zulaikha refers to the talking of women as their ‘makr’ or craftiness - though they had obviously planned no trick against her. But, since they spoke ill about her secretly, it was identified as ‘makr.’ As for the expression: which follows immediately and has been translated as ‘and arranged for them a comfortable place’ is inclusive of the comfort of special pillows for hand and back rest placed there for relaxation.

Then, it was said: (and gave everyone a knife). It means when these women came in and sat down, different foods and fruits were served, some of which needed a knife to peel and cut, therefore, also given to each one of them was a sharp knife. The obvious purpose of this was to cut fruits. But, concealed in her heart was what comes next - that is, these women will lose their senses at the sight of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam and would go on to cut their hands with the knife.

After having made all these arrangements, to Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam, who was in some other quarter of the house, Zulaikha said: (come in before them). Since, Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam was not aware of her vain intention, he came out into this sitting.

That which happened then has been described in: ‘So, when they saw him, they found him great and [were so bewildered that they] cut their hands [that is, when cutting their fruit, they saw this object of wonder, the knife unconsciously ran over their hand - as it occasionally happens when one’s thought is diverted to something else and said, ‘Oh God! He is no human being. He is but a noble angel.’ [by which they meant that one exuding such light can only be an angel].’

Then, in verse 32, it was said: **‘She [Zulaikha] said: ‘So, [see] this is the one you blamed me for. Yes, I seduced him, but he abstained. And should he [in future] not follow my command, he shall be [surely] imprisoned and shall be disgraced [too].’**

When Zulaikha realized that her secret lay disclosed before those women anyway, she started threatening Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam right before them. At that time, according to some commentators, all these women too started telling Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam that Zulaikha was their benefactor, therefore, he should not oppose her.

And some words of the Holy Qur’an which appear later (33) also support it, for example: (yad’unani: these women invite me) and: (kaidahunna: their guile) where the statement of some women has been mentioned in the plural form.

When Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam saw that these women were also supporting Zulaikha and there remained no other visible way to stay safe against their guile, he turned to his ultimate resort, to Allah jalla thana’uh, and before Him, he said: “My Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what these women invite me to. And unless You turn their guile away from me, I shall get inclined towards them and shall be among the ignorant.”

Here, the statement of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam that ‘the prison is dearer to me’ does not reflect any desire or wish to be detained in a prison, instead of that, it is an expression which shows that he would find it easier to face this temporal hardship as compared to that of falling in sin. According to some narrations, when Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam was confined to the prison, a revelation from Allah Ta’ala told him: You have put yourself into the prison by what you yourself had said: (the prison is dearer to me) and had you asked for well-being (‘Afiyah), you would have been blessed with perfect well-being. From here we come to know that, to stay safe from a major hardship, saying in prayer that one better be subjected to some minor hardship in lieu of it is not appropriate. Instead of doing that, one should, when under the threat of any hardship, problem or distress, pray to Allah Ta’ala for nothing but ‘afiyah (well-being). Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ prohibited a man from praying for sabr (patience) saying that sabr is done when one faces distress and hardship. So, rather praying to Allah for sabr, pray for ‘afiyah. (Timidhi) The uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidna ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu asked him: Teach me a prayer I should make. He said: Pray for ‘Afiyah (well-being) from your Rabb. Sayyidna ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu says when he, after a period of time, once again asked him to be advised of some dua’ he should be making, he said: Pray to Allah Ta’ala for ‘afiyah in dunya and ‘akhirah. (Mazhari from Tabarani)

After that, said in verse 34 was: “So, his Lord accepted his prayer and tuned their guile away from him. Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.”

To protect him from the guile of these women, Allah Ta’ala made his own wise arrangements. Though the ‘Aziz of Misr and his inner circle was already convinced of the great spiritual qualities of Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam, his piety, fear of Allah and chastity, but rumours of the incident had started circulating in the city. To put a check on this, they found it expedient to confine Sayyidna Yusuf ‘alayhis salaam into the prison for a certain period of time so that there remains no source of any doubt in the concerned family, and that the talk of the town too dies out in due course.

So, said at the end of the verse (35) was: “Later on, even after having seen the signs, they [the ‘Aziz of Misr and his advisers] deemed it proper [or expedient] to imprison him for a time.” Thus, to the prison he was sent.

ANSWER: Makkah

Some phrases which are used in the Qur'aan to refer to Makkah include:

1. Makkah

“And He is the One who restrained their hands from you and your hands from them in the valley of Makkah after He had let you prevail over them, and Allah is watchful over what you do.” [Surah Al-Fath: Ayah 24]

COMMENTARY

(**...in the valley of Makkah..** .) The Arabic word used here is *batn* which means ‘belly’ and in relation to a city, it refers to its center. However, in the present context it is used for Hudaibiyah, because of its close proximity to Makkah. This supports the Hanafi view that some parts of Hudaibiyah are included in the haram. The relevant details may be found in our commentary on the verse 2:196.

2. Bakkah

“The first house set up for the people is surely the one in Makkah having blessings and guidance for all worlds.” [Surah Al-Imran: Ayah 96]

COMMENTARY

The above verse points out to the distinction and superiority of the House of Allah, the Ka’bah, as compared to the houses, and even mosques, of the whole world. There are several reasons for this status, which have been mentioned in this verse, namely:

1. Among the true houses of worship in this world, the Ka’bah enjoys the distinction of being the first.
2. It is full of blessings.
3. It is a source of guidance for the entire world

The gist of the words used in the verse is that the first House designated for people by Allah is none other than the one which is in Makkah. It means that the Ka’bah of Makkah is the first House of Worship in this world.

Here the word ‘Bakkah’ means ‘Makkah al-Mu’azzamah’. It does not matter whether you say that the letter *mim* has been substituted for *baa* since, in common Arab usage, *mim* is substituted for *baa*, or simply say that ‘Bakkah’ is an alternate name for ‘Makkah.’

3. Al-Balad

“I swear by the Fig and the Olive, and by Tur, the mount of Sinai, and by this peaceful city” [Surah at-Tin: Ayahs 1-3]

COMMENTARY

(I swear by the Fig and the Olive ... 95:1). This verse takes an oath by four objects. Two of them are trees, the fig tree and the olive tree. [The third object] is Tur, the mount of Sinai, and the fourth object is the City of Makkah. The two trees have been specified because they possess abundant blessings and advantages in the same way as Tur and the City of Makkah possess abundant blessings. Some authorities say that the ‘fig’ and the ‘olive’ symbolise, in this context, the lands in which these trees predominate: that is, the countries bordering on the eastern part of the Mediterranean, especially Palestine and Syria. Most of the Prophets lived and preached in these lands, including Holy Prophet Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam. The latter Prophet ﷺ was made to migrate from here to Makkah. The oaths, in this way, comprehend all the holy

places where Allah-inspired men were born and raised as Prophets ‘alayhis salaam. Syria was the land and home of all the Prophets. Mount Sinai stresses specifically the messengership of Musa ‘alayhis salaam where Allah spoke to him. ‘Peaceful City’ refers to Makkah, the birth-place and residence of the Final Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

“I swear by this city” (Surah Al-Balad: Ayah 1)

COMMENTARY

(I swear by this city.. .90:1). The particle la (‘no’) in the beginning of this sentence has no meaning here. Such particles in Arabic language are commonplace. However, the more appropriate view is that when a Surah begins with a 16 (no) followed by an oath, it was revealed in refutation to a false assumption of the opponents. In other words, Allah is saying, ‘No, what you [the unbelievers] are saying or thinking is not correct, but the truth is what We are swearing about...’. The word al-balad ‘the City’ refers to the Holy City of Makkah, as in Surah At-Tin [95:3] where Allah swears an oath ‘by this peaceful City [of Makkah].

The adjective attached to the ‘City’ is ‘peaceful’. This shows the superiority and honour of Makkah over other cities. Sayyidna ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Adiyy radi’allahu ‘anhu reports that when the Holy Prophet of Allah ﷺ was migrating from Makkah to Madinah, he addressed the city of Makkah and said: “By Allah, you are dearer to Allah than the entire earth. If I was not forced out of this place, I would never have abandoned you.” [Transmitted by Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah vide Mazhari].

4. Umm-ul-Qura

“And thus We have revealed to you an Arabic Qur’an, so that you may warn the town that is the mother of all towns, and those around it, and warn (them) of the Day of Gathering, about which there is no doubt-(when) one group of people will be in Paradise, and another group in the blazing Fire.” [Surah Shura: Ayah 7]

COMMENTARY

Umm-ul- Qura (mother of all the towns) means the origin and foundation of all habitations and cities which is Makkah. This title has been given to this city because, to Allah Almighty, it is more distinguished and more excellent than all other cities, habitations and the whole earth. Imam Ahmad has narrated in Musnad, with the authority of Sayyidna ‘Adiyy Ibn Hamra’ Az-zuhri radi’allahu ‘anhu that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ at a market of Makkah when he ﷺ was migrating from the city. He was addressing Makkah in the following words: “To me, you are better and dearer than the whole of Allah’s earth; if I had not been expelled from your vicinity, I would never have left it of my own accord.” (At-tirmidhi, An-Nasa’i, Ibn Majah - rated as ‘hasan sahih’ by Tirmidhi)

ANSWER: Scriptures of Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam

“Indeed this is (written) in the earlier divine scripts, the scripts of Ibrahim and Musa.”

[Surah Al-A’la: Ayahs 18-19]

(Indeed this is [written] in the earlier divine scripts, the scripts of Ibrahim and Musa..

..87:18, 19) In other words, either all the themes of this Surah or its last theme, that the Hereafter is much better and much more durable than this life, was written in the earlier Divine scriptures. It is further explicated that this theme was written in the scriptures of Prophets Ibrahim and Musa ‘alayhimus salaam. Probably, it refers to other scriptures that were given to Prophet Musa ‘alayhis salaam before Torah. It is also possible that it refers to Torah itself.

Themes of the Scripts of Prophet Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam

Ajurri transmits a narration from Sayyidna Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari radi’allahu ‘anhu that he inquired from the Prophet ﷺ as to the contents of the scripts of Prophet Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam and the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that they contained educating parables. A story is told in it about a tyrant king where he is addressed and told: You haughty, arrogant and oppressive ruler! I did not give you kingdom so that you may amass wealth, but I had given you power so that you may let the supplication of the oppressed against the oppressor reach me, because my law does not reject the supplication of an oppressed, even though it may be uttered by an unbeliever.

Another parable addresses the general public thus: A wise person should divide his time into three parts. One part should be reserved for the worship of his Lord and supplication to Him. The second part should be reserved for self-assessment of his deeds, and reflection on the Omnipotence and creation of Allah. The third part should be allocated for acquisition of livelihood and fulfilling the natural needs. It further imparts that a wise person should keep himself abreast of the circumstances of his time, and keep himself busy in performing his intended work. He should take care of his tongue. He who takes speech as one of his works, his speech will be confined only to the things of real need.

DAY 26

ANSWER: The Calf

“And when We parted the sea for you; then We rescued you, and drowned the Pharaoh’s people as you were looking on! And when We appointed forty nights for Musa, then you took to yourselves the calf thereafter, and you were unjust!” (Surah Al-Baqarah: Verses 50-51)

Verse 50 refers to certain things which had happened in the days of Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam (Moses). He, in his capacity as a messenger of Allah, continued efforts for a long time to make the Pharaoh and his people see Truth, but when they persisted in their denial, Allah commanded him to take the Israelites along with him and leave Egypt surreptitiously. On their way, they came across a sea while the Pharaoh was behind him with his army in hot pursuit. Allah commanded the sea to split, and make way for Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam and his people. So, they went over smoothly. But when the Pharaoh and his army followed them into the sea, it gathered the water back so that the Pharaoh and his men were drowned then and there.

Verse 51 refers to other incidents in the same story. When the Pharaoh had been drowned, the Israelites, according to one report, went back to Egypt, or, according to another, began to live somewhere else. Having at last found a peaceful existence, they now wished they could receive a Shari’ah, or a religious code of laws, from Allah which they should follow. Allah answered the prayer of Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam, and promised that if he came to the Mount Tur (Sinai) and devoted himself to worship for a month, he would receive a Divine Book. He gladly obeyed the Commandment, and was granted the Torah. But he was ordered to continue to worship for ten days more, because he had broken his fast after a month and thus lost the special odour which rises from the mouth of a fasting person and which is very pleasant to Allah; so Allah commanded him to fast for ten additional days and regain that odour. Thus, Sayyidna Musa ‘alayhis salaam completed forty days of total fasting and devotion. While he was on Mt. Sinai, something very odious happened to the Israelites. Among them there was a man called Samiriyy. He fashioned the figure of a calf out of gold or silver, and put into it some of the dust which he had picked up from under the hooves of the horse of Jibra’il ‘alayhis salaam (the Archangel Gabriel), at the time when the Pharaoh and his army had been drowned by the Archangel. The golden calf immediately acquired life. The ignorant among the Israelites were so impressed that they started worshipping it.

Verse 51 calls them “unjust” for having committed this sin, for ‘injustice’ lies in putting things in the improper places, and idolatry is essentially just that.

ANSWER: Covenant of Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam

“Has he not been told of what was (revealed) in the scriptures of Musa and of Ibrahim who fulfilled (his covenant)?” (Surah An-Najm: Ayahs 36-37)

COMMENTARY

(Has he not been told of what was [revealed] in the scriptures of Musa and of Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam who fulfilled [his covenant]? ... 53:37- 38) In verse [37], the Prophet Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam has been described by the expression waffa which is derived from the root word wafa’ and it means to fulfil faithfully the covenant one has made with someone.

Special Characteristic of Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam: fulfilment of Covenant

Holy Prophet Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam had a covenant with Allah that he will obey Him and convey His Message to all the people. He fulfilled faithfully the covenant: He obeyed Allah and delivered His Message to His creatures. As a result, he was made to pass through severe trials and tribulations. This is the interpretation placed upon the expression waffa (fulfilled) by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Kathir and others.

Several narratives describe particular works of Holy Prophet Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam as a purport of the expression waffa, but the two versions are not contradictory, because fulfilment of covenant is general. It comprehends acting upon all the Divine injunctions, obeying Allah in all actions, fulfilling the duties of Prophet-hood and messenger-ship and reforming the creation of Allah.

Let us consider the narrative which Ibn Abi Hatim has reported on the authority of Sayyidna Abu ‘Umamah radi’allahu ‘anhu that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the verse 37, and asked: Do you know what is the meaning of waffa (fulfilled)? Sayyidna Abu ‘Umamah radi’allahu ‘anhu replied: Allah and His Rasul know best. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: “He fulfilled the day’s work by starting it with the performance of four rak‘at [that is, salat-ul-ishraq].”

This is supported by the Tradition recorded in Tirmidhi on the authority of Sayyidna Abu Dharr radi’allahu ‘anhu according to whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: “O Son of ‘Adam! Perform four rak‘a of prayer in the early part of the day, I shall take of you in all your affairs till the end of the day.”

Ibn Abi Hatim reports another Tradition from Sayyidna Mu‘adh Ibn Anas radi’allahu ‘anhu that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: “Do you know why Allah gave Ibrahim ‘alayhis salaam the title of al-ladhi waffa (the one who fulfilled)? Then, he said, ‘Because he used to recite the following dhikr every morning and evening:

فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ حِينَ تُمْسُونَ وَحِينَ تُصْبِحُونَ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَعَشِيًّا وَحِينَ تُظْهِرُونَ

“So exalted is Allah when you reach the evening and when you reach the morning. And to Him is [due all] praise throughout the heavens and the earth. And [exalted is He] at night and when you are at noon.” (Surah Rum: Ayahs 17-19) [Ibn Kathir]

ANSWER: The throne of Bilquis

“He said, “O chieftains, which one of you will bring her throne to me before they come to me submissively?” An ‘ifrit (stalwart) from the Jinns said, “I will bring it to you before you rise up from your place, and for this (task) I am powerful, trust-worthy”. Said the one who had the knowledge of the book, “I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you!’ So when he saw it (the throne) well-placed before him, he said, ‘This is by the grace of my Lord, so that He may test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful. And whoever is grateful is grateful for his own benefit, and whoever is ungrateful, then my Lord is Need-Free, Bountiful”. He said, ‘Disguise the throne for her, and we will see whether she discovers the truth or she is one of those who have no guidance.” So when she came, it was said (to her), Is your throne like this?’ She said, “It seems to be the same, and knowledge (of truth) was given to us even before this and we have already submitted.” [Surah An-Naml: Ayahs 38-42]

Bilqis’s appearance in the court of Sulayman ‘alayhis salaam Qurtubi has reported, giving references of historical record, that Bilqis’s envoys returned from the court of Sulayman ‘alayhis salaam totally dumb-founded and awe-struck, and conveyed his declaration of war to the queen. Then Bilqis said to her people that she was already of the view that he was no ordinary king, but was on some special assignment from God, and that fighting with His messenger is like fighting with God, for which they did not have the strength. After making this statement, she started getting ready to go to Sayyidna Sulayman ‘alayhis salaam. She took along with her twelve thousand chiefs, commanding an army of hundred thousand men each.’ Allah Ta’ala had graced Sayyidna Sulayman ‘alayhis salaam with such awe and majesty that no one had the courage to speak before him. One day he saw a cloud of dust at some distance. So he asked from those who were present as to what that was. His people answered ‘O messenger of Allah! Queen Bilqis is coming with her people’. Some narrations relate that at that time she was about three miles from the court of Sulayman ‘alayhis salaam. At that moment Sayyidna Sulayman ‘alayhis salaam turned to his courtiers and asked them:

He said, “O chieftains, which one of you will bring her throne to me before they come to me submissively?” 27:38.

Sayyidna Sulayman ‘alayhis salaam was already informed that Bilqis was coming to him to submit after having been impressed by his invitation. So he decided that, apart from royal grandeur, she should also witness a prophetic miracle, which should help her convert to faith. Allah Ta’ala had bestowed the miracle of control of jinns to Sayyidna Sulayman ‘alayhis salaam. After receiving the cue from Allah Ta’ala, he fancied to have Bilqis’s throne brought to his court even before her arrival. So he commanded the jinni, who was also present in his court, to bring her throne. Selection of throne was presumably made on the basis that it was the most secured object of her treasure, which was kept in the impregnable inner most hall of the seven castles, one within the other, properly secured under lock. So much so that her own people could not reach there. Shifting of such a huge and secured object without breaking the lock or door to a place so far away from where it was placed, could not have been possible without the help and will of Allah Ta’ala. This was an ideal way to make her see and realize the unlimited power and control of Allah. At the same time it was also intended to make her realize that the high position and status of Sulaiman ‘alayhis salaam was actually bestowed by Allah Ta’ala, which had enabled him to perform such super-human things. (Ibn Jarir)

(before they come to me submissively - 27:38). The word (muslimin) is the plural of Muslim, the literal meaning of which is obedient or submissive. In conventional expression, ‘Muslim’ is equivalent of ‘believer’. According to Sayyidna ibn ‘Abbas radi’allahu ‘anhu, here Muslimin is used in its literal meaning, that is, obedient or submissive. It is so because it was not established at that time that Queen Bilqis had

converted to Islam. She actually converted to Islam after talking to Sayyidna Sulaiman 'alayhis salaam as is evident from the verses to follow now.

(Said the one who had the knowledge of the book - 27:40). The question is as to who was this person? One possibility is that he was Sulaiman 'alayhis salaam himself, because his knowledge of the book of Allah was most extensive. In that case this incident happened as a miracle. The objective was also that Bilqis should have an experience of the prophetic miracle, so that no doubt was left in her mind. But Ibn Jarir has reported from many commentators of the Qur'an, like Qatadah, that he was a person from the companions of Sayyidna Sulaiman 'alayhis salaam. Qurtubi has declared it to be the view of the majority. Ibn Ishaque has mentioned his name as 'Asif Ibn Barkhiya, and has opined that he was a friend of Sayyidna Sulaiman 'alayhis salaam. Some other narrations say that a cousin of Sayyidna Sulaiman 'alayhis salaam had the knowledge of Al-Ism ul-A'zam, (a particular name of Allah Almighty) the speciality of which is that whatever blessing is invoked from Allah Ta'ala by reciting this name, it is accepted, and anything requested is delivered from Him. It does not prove that Sayyidna Sulaiman 'alayhis salaam did not have the knowledge of Al-Ism-ul-A'zam. Rather it is quite likely that he considered it prudent to have the manifestation of the miracle by one of his people, which should have deeper impression on Bilqis. Therefore, instead of performing the miracle himself, he addressed his people in the above manner. In such a situation, this incident was a Karamah, which was performed by 'Asif Ibn Barkhiya.

The story of Bilqis has ended in the above verses on the statement that she converted to Islam after coming to Sayyidna Sulaiman 'alayhis salaam.

FROM TAFSIR IBN KATHIR

How the Throne of Bilqis was brought in an Instant

Muhammad bin Ishaq reported from Yazid bin Ruman: "When the messengers returned with word of what Sulayman 'alayhis salaam 'alayhis salaam said, she said: 'By Allah, I knew he was more than a king, and that we have no power to match him, and that we can gain nothing by being stubborn with him. So, she sent word to him saying: "I am coming to you with the leaders of my people to see what you will instruct us to do and what you are calling us to of your religion." Then she issued commands that her throne, which was made of gold and inlaid with rubies, chrysolite and pearls, should be placed in the innermost of seven rooms, one within the other, and all the doors should be locked. Then she told her deputy whom she was leaving in charge, "Take care of my people and my throne, and do not let anyone approach it or see it until I come back to you." Then she set off to meet Sulayman 'alayhis salaam with twelve thousand of her commanders from the leaders of Yemen, under each of whose command were many thousands of men. Sulayman 'alayhis salaam sent the Jinn to bring him news of her progress and route every day and night, then when she drew near, he gathered together the Jinns and humans who were under his control and said:

(O chiefs! Which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me surrendering themselves in obedience (as Muslims))."

(An 'Ifrit from the Jinn said:) Mujahid said, "A giant Jinn." Abu Salih said, "It was as if he was a mountain."

(I will bring it to you before you rise from your place.) Ibn 'Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Before you get up from where you are sitting." As-Suddi and others said: "He used to sit to pass judgments and rulings over the people, and to eat, from the beginning of the day until noon."

(And verily, I am indeed strong and trustworthy for such work.) Ibn 'Abbas said: "Strong enough to carry it and trustworthy with the jewels it contains. Sulayman, upon him be peace, said, "I want it faster than

that.” From this it seems that Sulayman wanted to bring this throne as a demonstration of the greatness of the power and authority that Allah had bestowed upon him and the troops that He had subjugated to him. Power such as had never been given to anyone else, before or since, so that this would furnish proof of his prophethood before Bilqis and her people, because this would be a great and wondrous thing, if he brought her throne as if he were in her country, before they could come to it, although it was hidden and protected by so many locked doors. When Sulayman said, “I want it faster than that,

(One with whom was knowledge of the Scripture said:) Ibn `Abbas said, “This was Asif, the scribe of Sulayman.” It was also narrated by Muhammad bin Ishaq from Yazid bin Ruman that he was Asif bin Barkhiya’ and he was a truthful believer who knew the Greatest Name of Allah. Qatadah said: “He was a believer among the humans, and his name was Asif.”

(I will bring it to you within the twinkling of an eye!) Meaning, lift your gaze and look as far as you can, and before you get tired and blink, you will find it before you. Then he got up, performed ablution and prayed to Allah, may He be exalted. Mujahid said: “He said, O Owner of majesty and honor.” When Sulayman and his chiefs saw it before them,

(he said: “This is by the grace of my Lord...”’) meaning, ‘this is one of the blessings which Allah has bestowed upon me.’

(to test whether I am grateful or ungrateful! And whoever is grateful, truly, his gratitude is for himself;) This is like the Ayat:

(Whosoever does righteous good deed, it is for himself; and whosoever does evil, it is against himself.) (41:46)

(and whosoever does righteous good deed, then such will prepare a good place for themselves.) (30:44).

(and whoever is ungrateful, certainly my Lord is Rich, Bountiful.) He has no need of His servants or their worship.

(Bountiful) He is Bountiful in and of Himself, even if no one were to worship Him. His greatness does not depend on anyone. This is like what Musa said:

(If you disbelieve, you and all on earth together, then verily, Allah is Rich, Owner of all praise.) (14:8). It is recorded in Sahih Muslim:

(Allah, may He be exalted, says: “O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, mankind and Jinn alike, were all to be as pious as the most pious among you, that would not add to My dominion in the slightest. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, mankind and Jinn alike, were all to be as evil as the most evil one among you, that would not detract from My dominion in the slightest. O My servants, these are deeds which I am recording for you, and I will judge you according to them, so whoever finds something good, let him praise Allah, and whoever finds otherwise, let him blame no one but himself.”)

(41. He said: “Disguise her throne for her that we may see whether she will be guided, or she will be one of those not guided.”) (42. So when she came, it was said, “Is your throne like this” She said: “As though it were the very same.” And he said, “Knowledge was bestowed on us before her, and we had submitted to Allah (as Muslims).”) (43. And Saddaha that which she used to worship besides Allah has prevented her (from Islam), for she was of a disbelieving people.) (44. It was said to her: “Enter As-Sarh,” but when she saw it,

she thought it was a pool, and she (tucked up her clothes) uncovering her legs. Sulayman said: “Verily, it is a Sarh Mumarrad of Qawarir.” She said: “My Lord! Verily, I have wronged myself, and I submit, together with Sulayman to Allah, the Lord of all that exists.”)

The Test of Bilqis

When Sulayman brought the throne of Bilqis before she and her people arrived, he issued orders that some of its features should be altered, so that he could test her and see whether she recognized it and how composed she would be when she saw it. Would she hasten to say either that it was her throne or that it was not So he said:

(Disguise her throne for her that we may see whether she will be guided, or she will be one of those not guided.) Ibn `Abbas said: “Remove some of its adornments and parts.” Mujahid said: “He issued orders that it should be changed, so whatever was red should be made yellow and vice versa, and whatever was green should be made red, so everything was altered.” `Ikrimah said, “They added some things and took some things away.” Qatadah said, “It was turned upside down and back to front, and some things were added and some things were taken away.”

(So when she came, it was said: “Is your throne like this”) Her throne, which had been altered and disguised, with some things added and others taken away, was shown to her. She was wise and steadfast, intelligent and strong-willed. She did not hasten to say that this was her throne, because it was far away from her. Neither did she hasten to say that it was not her throne, when she saw that some things had been altered and changed. She said,

((It is) as though it were the very same.) This is the ultimate in intelligence and strong resolve.

(Knowledge was bestowed on us before her, and we had submitted to Allah.) Mujahid said, “This was spoken by Sulayman.”

(And Saddaha that which she used to worship besides Allah has prevented her, for she was of a disbelieving people.) This is a continuation of the words of Sulayman -- according to the opinion of Mujahid and Sa`id bin Jubayr, may Allah be pleased with them both -- i.e., Sulayman said:

(Knowledge was bestowed on us before her, and we had submitted to Allah.) and what stopped her from worshipping Allah alone was

(that which she used to worship besides Allah, for she was of a disbelieving people.) What Mujahid and Sa`id said is good; it was also the view of Ibn Jarir. Then Ibn Jarir said, “It could be that the subject of the verb.

(And Saddaha) refers to Sulayman or to Allah, so that the phrase now means:

(She would not worship anything over than Allah.)

(for she was of a disbelieving people.) I say: the opinion of Mujahid is supported by the fact that she declared her Islam after she entered the Sarh, as we shall see below.

(It was said to her: “Enter As-Sarh” but when she saw it, she thought it was a pool, and she (tucked up her clothes) uncovering her legs.) Sulayman had commanded the Shayatin to build for her a huge palace of

glass beneath which water was flowing. Anyone who did not know the nature of the building would think that it was water, but in fact there was a layer of glass between a person walking and the water.

Verily, it is a Sarh Mumarrad of Qawarir Sarh means a palace or any lofty construction.

Allah says of Fir`awn -- may Allah curse him -- that he said to his minister Haman:

(Build me a Sarh that I may arrive at the ways.) (40:36-37) Sarh is also used to refer to the high constructed palaces in Yemen. Mumarrad means sturdily constructed and smooth.

(of Qawarir) means, made of glass, i.e., it was built with smooth surfaces. Marid is a fortress in Dawmat Al-Jandal. What is meant here is that Sulayman built a huge, lofty palace of glass for this queen, in order to show her the greatness of his authority and power. When she saw for herself what Allah had given him and how majestic his position was, she submitted to the command of Allah and acknowledged that he was a noble Prophet, so she submitted to Allah and said:

(My Lord! Verily, I have wronged myself,) meaning, by her previous disbelief and Shirk and by the fact that she and her people had worshipped the sun instead of Allah.

(and I submit, together with Sulayman to Allah, the Lord of all that exists.) meaning, following the religion of Sulayman, worshipping Allah alone with no partner or associate, Who created everything and measured it exactly according to its due measurements.

ANSWER: Sidrat Al-Muntaha (The Lote Tree)

“By sidrat-ul-muntaha (the lote-tree in the upper realm), near which there is Jannat-ul-ma’wa (the Paradise of Abode), when the lote-tree was covered by that which covered it.

[Surah An-Najm: Ayahs 14-16]

(And indeed he saw him another time by sidrat-ul-muntaha [the lote-tree in the upper realm]. . .53:13-14). Here too there are two views regarding the antecedent of the pronoun hu (him): [1] that it refers to seeing Allah; or [2] that it refers to seeing Jibra’il ‘alayhis salaam. The adverb (nazlatan ‘ukhra [another time or at another descent], according to overwhelming majority, this nuzul refers to the second descent of Jibra’il ‘alayhis salaam. The first vision was experienced in this world on the uppermost horizon of Makkah. The second vision was experienced on the seventh heaven near the Lote-Tree of the Uppermost Realm. Obviously, the Holy Prophet ﷺ went up to the seventh heaven on the Night of Mi’raj. Thus it is possible to determine the approximate time of the second experience, which took place on that occasion. The word sidrah literally denotes lote-tree and muntaha means the place of intiha’ [end]. Thus sidrat-ul-muntaha is the Lote-Tree on the seventh heaven under the Throne of the Gracious Allah. According to a narration in Muslim, the Tree is on the sixth heaven. Reconciliation is possible between the two apparently conflicting versions in that its root is on the sixth heaven and its branches are spread on the seventh heaven (Qurtubi). Generally the access of angels ends at this point, and therefore, it is called muntaha (the end). Some Traditions inform us that the Divine injunctions first descend from the Divine Throne to the sidrat-ul-muntaha which are handed over to the relevant angels. Similarly, angels going up from the earth to the heaven with Books of Deeds etc. convey them to this point. Then there may be some other way for their presentation to Allah Almighty. This subject is reported from ‘Abdullah Ibn Mas’ud radi’allahu ‘anhu as recorded by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad.

(near which there is Jannat-ul-ma’wa [the Paradise of Abode], ... 53:15) The word ma’wa means ‘abode’ and a place where one resides or reposes comfortably. The Jannah (Paradise) is called ma’wa because this is man’s original abode. This is where ‘Adam and Hawwa’ ‘alayhimas salaam were created; from here they were sent down to the earth; and this is where the people of Paradise will be sent back to reside permanently.

(when the lote-tree was covered by that which covered it.. .53:16) Sahih of Muslim records a Tradition on the authority of Sayyidna ‘Abdullah Ibn Masud radi’allahu ‘anhu who said: “Golden butterflies were at that time falling on sidrat-ul-muntaha from all sides, and it seemed as if it was specially decorated for that occasion in honour of the most revered guest, the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.”

FROM TAFSIR IBN KATHIR

Allah said, (When that covered the lote tree which did cover it!) We mentioned before, in the Hadiths about Al-Isra’ that the angels, Allah’s Light, and spectacular colors covered the Sidrah. Imam Ahmad recorded that ‘Abdullah bin Mas’ud said, “When the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was taken on the Isra’ journey, he ascended to Sidrat Al-Muntaha, which is in the seventh heaven. There everything terminates that ascends from the earth and is held there, and terminates everything that descends from above it is held there,

(When that covered the lote tree which did cover it!) He said, “Golden butterflies. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ was given three things: He was given the five prayers, he was given the concluding verses of Surat Al-Baqarah (2:284-286), and remission of serious sins for those among his Ummah who do not associate anything with Allah.” Muslim collected this Hadith.