

DAY 23

ANSWER: The womb of a mother

SŪRAH AZ-ZUMAR: VERSE 6

He created you from a single person, then (once this person was created,) He made from him his match, and sent down for you eight pairs of the cattle. He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, in three layers of darkness. That is your Allah, your Lord. To Him belongs the whole kingdom. There is no god but He. Then, to where are you being diverted? [6]

COMMENTARY

In **verse 6**, it was said: **(and sent down for you eight pairs of the cattle.)**. The creation of the cattle has been expressed in this verse by saying that they have been 'sent down from the skies' whereby an indication has been given that a major factor in their creation is water that is sent down from sky. Therefore, it can be said that these too were as if sent down from the skies. The noble Qur'ān has used the same expression for human dress: **(We have sent down to you clothing - Al-A'rāf, 7:26)**. Then, this word also appears in relation to some minerals, for instance, iron: **(and We sent down iron - Al-Ḥadīd, 57:25)**. The purpose is to emphasize that these things were created through the intrinsic power of Allah Ta'ālā, and that they were given to human beings as His blessings. (Qurṭubī)

Towards the later part of **verse 6**, it was said: **(He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, in three layers of darkness.)** Here, some clues to the mysteries of Divine power that work in the creation of man have been released. First of all, it was well within the power of Allah Ta'ālā that He could have made the infant come to be created whole and complete in the womb of the mother within a single instant. But, such was the dictate of wisdom and expedient consideration that it was not done. Instead, a process of gradualness was opted for as indicated by: **(creation after creation)**. The purpose was to ensure that the woman in whose womb this 'mini universe' was taking shape should gradually become used to bearing its burden. Secondly, the creation of this matchless marvel of beauty and efficiency provided with hundreds of precision gadgets, hair-thin veins to carry life-blood and spiritual input was not to look like things created by common industrialists in spacious factories under glowing lights. Instead of that, this marvel of creation has reached its completion at a place shielded by three layers of darkness, a location so hidden from sight that it beats all imagination. **(So glorious is Allah, the best of the Creators - Al-Mu'minūn, 23:14)**.

SŪRAH AL-'IMRĀN: VERSES 5-6

Surely, Allah is such that nothing is hidden from Him, either in the earth or in the heaven. [5]

He is the one who shapes you in the wombs as He likes. There is no god but He, the Mighty, the Wise. [6]

COMMENTARY

Lastly, while referring to the absolute power and wisdom of Allah Almighty, **verse 6** invites one's attention to the fact that Allah shapes all men and women in the wombs of their mothers according to His supreme wisdom which has created billions of men and women with clear distinguishable features establishing the identity of each individual distinct from all others. He is, therefore, the only One who should be worshipped.

SŪRAH AR-R'AD: VERSE 8

Allah knows what every female carries and what the wombs decrease or increase. And everything has measure with Him:... [8]

COMMENTARY

In the [fourth] **verse (8)**, we see a return to the principal theme of *Tauḥīd* (The Oneness of Allah) which started appearing since the beginning of the Sūrah. Here, it was said: It means that Allah Ta'ālā knows everything about what every woman carries in her womb - a boy or girl, beautiful or otherwise, good or evil - and about why wombs of women decrease or increase, that is, about the time of delivery, whether early, in due time, or late.

Stated in this verse is a particular attribute of Allah Ta'ālā: That He is the Knower of the Unseen (*Ālim al-Ghayb*). He is aware of the minutest of this entire universe and that of everything created in it, and He is most comprehensively informed of all changing conditions of each such particle. Mentioned along with it is the fact of all-inclusive and most perfect knowledge of every stage, every change, and every trait in the complex process of human procreation. For instance, it is He alone who has the ultimate knowledge - the most sound, the most certain - of female pregnancy - a boy or girl? Or, both? Or, nothing but the accumulation of clusters of water or gas? Whatever opinion a physician gives in this matter as based on clinical indicators and educated guess cannot be taken to be any more than strong likelihood or estimate. There are times when things turn out to be otherwise. Even Xrays and more modern Imaging techniques fail to unravel the reality of this phenomena as due. We can only say that its real and certain knowledge can be credited only to Allah Ta'ālā. This is what has been stated in another verse of the Qur'ān which says: **(And He knows whatever there is in wombs – Luqmān, 31:34)**

The word: (*taghīḍu*: decrease) is used in the sense of becoming less or dried up. In the present verse, set against the word: (*tazdād*: increase), it becomes clear that, at this place, it means decrease. Thus, it means that the most correct and sound knowledge of 'what the wombs decrease or increase' rests with none but Allah Ta'ālā. This 'increase' and 'decrease' could be referring to the increase or decrease in the number of children to be born, that is, whether the womb contains only one child, or has more than one. It is also possible that it may be denoting the increase or decrease in the period of actual delivery of the child, that

is, in how many months, days, and hours, this pregnancy will translate into the outward physical existence of a human being. This too is something the absolutely certain knowledge of which cannot be claimed by anyone other than Allah Ta'ālā.

Tafsīr authority Mujāhid has said that the blood excreted by a woman in pregnancy becomes the cause of decrease in the size and health of the fetus. The Qur'ānic expression: ('**the wombs decrease**') means this decrease - and the truth of the matter is that the words of the verse cover decreases of all kinds, therefore, no contradiction exists here.

Said in the last sentence of **verse 8** is: (**And everything has measure with Him**). It means that there can be no decrease or increase from the norm set with Allah Ta'ālā. All states through which a child-to-be-born passes are also included under this statement, that is, everything pertaining to such a child lies determined with Allah who knows for how many days the child will stay in the womb, then, for how long it will continue to live in the world, and how much of sustenance it will receive. This matchless knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā is an open proof of His Oneness (*Tauḥīd*).

SŪRAH AN-NAḤL: VERSE 78

And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers' wombs when you knew nothing, and He made for you ears, eyes and hearts, so that you may be grateful. [78]

COMMENTARY

The Divine statement: (**when you knew nothing – 78**) indicates that knowledge is not an ingrained personal excellence of man. When born, man has no knowledge or skill. Then, in proportion to growing human needs, man is made to absorb some knowledge, bit by bit, directly from Allah Ta'ālā in which no role is played by the parents or teachers. First of all, man was taught to cry. This one qualification alone provides all he needs at that time. Hungry or thirsty, he cries. Feels hot or cold, he cries. If some other discomfort bothers him, he would still cry. Nature has poured a special kind of love in the hearts of the father and the mother for the needs of the infant, because of which, when they hear the sounds made by the child, they become all too eager to find out what is bothering the baby, and all too willing to remove the problem. If the child was not inducted into this act of crying as part of his or her early education from a side no less than that of Allah Himself, who else could have trained the child to employ this skill and start crying like that as and when there be some need. Along with it, Allah Ta'ālā also taught the child, inspiration-wise, that he or she should use gums and lips to suck milk, the child's energy food, from the breast of the mother... Thus, with the increase in the needs of the child, nature took care of teaching its charge directly without the intermediary link of the father and mother, in a manner almost spontaneous and self-regulating. After the passage of some time, the child starts learning a little by hearing parents and others around say what they do, or pick up a few tips by seeing a few things around. This, then, creates in

the child the ability to understand sounds heard and things seen.

Therefore, after: **(when you knew nothing)** in the verse under comment, it was said: **(and He made for you ears, eyes and hearts)**. It means: Though, human beings knew nothing about anything at the early stage of their birth, but nature had installed in their very frame of existence novel instruments to fulfil their need to learn. Out of these instruments, the first to be mentioned was '*sam*', that is, the faculty of hearing which precedes perhaps for the reason that the very first knowledge, and the most of it, comes through nothing but ears. In the beginning, eyes are closed, but ears hear. Furthermore, if we were to think about it, we shall not fail to realize that the amount of information one acquires in a whole life time is mostly what has been heard with ears. Information collected visually is much less than that.

After these two, comes information which one deduces by deliberating into things heard and seen. According to the statements of the Qur'ān, this is a function of the human heart. Therefore, stated at number three is: (*af'idah*) which is the plural of: *fu'ād* which means the heart. Scientists identify the human brain as the center of understanding and reason. But, the statement of the Qur'ān tells us that though the brain plays a role in this process of reasoning, yet the real center of knowledge and reason is the heart.

On this occasion, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned the faculties of hearing, seeing and understanding. Speech was not mentioned because speech plays no role in the acquisition of knowledge. It is, rather, a source of the expression of knowledge. In addition to that, according to Imām al-Qurṭubī, the word: '*sam*' (hearing) is inclusive of *nuṭq* (speech) as a corollary, as experience bears out that a person who hears speaks as well. A person deprived of the power of speech remains deaf in the ears as well. Perhaps, the reason why a dumb person cannot speak lies in the person's very inability to hear any sounds which could make learning to speak through hearing possible. *Wallāhu a'lam*: 'And Allah knows best' is a standard appendage to conclusions where definite knowledge about a subject in flux is not available or accessible or reliable. For a believer, this serves as a safety device against the possibility of having made any false statements, which may be a sin.

SŪRAH AL-ḤAJJ: VERSE 5

O men, if you are in doubt about the Resurrection, then (recall that) We created you from dust, then from a drop of semen, then from a clot, then from a piece of flesh - shaped or unshaped - so that We manifest (Our power) to you. And We retain in the wombs whatever We will to a specified term. Then We bring you out as babies, then (We nourish you) so that you reach your maturity. And among you there is one who dies, and among you there is one who is carried to the worst part of the age, so that he knows nothing even after having knowledge. And you see the land dry. Then when We send down water on it, it stirs and swells and puts forth every kind of good looking growth. [5]

COMMENTARY

Different stages in the development of foetus in mother's womb

(We created you from dust - 22:5.) This verse deals with the different stages through which the foetus passes in its mother's womb before taking a human form. There is a detailed *ḥadīth* on this subject, which is reproduced in *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn Masūd raḍī'allāhu 'anhu to the effect that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, *"Human matter retains its original form in the woman's womb for forty days after which it becomes a clot of blood. After a further period of forty days it becomes a lump of flesh. Thereafter an angel is sent by Allah Ta'ālā who breaths a soul into it and records four things about it, namely how long it will live, how much sustenance it will receive, what acts he will do, and finally whether its end will be wretched or fortunate.* (Qurtubī).

There is another narration which has been related by Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Jarir, also on the authority of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd raḍī'allāhu, that when the seed becomes a lump of flesh after passing through different stages, the angel responsible to watch the progressive development of each individual then seeks guidance from Allah Ta'ālā saying: That is, whether it is His will that the lump of flesh should be allowed to grow and become a living human being. If Allah says it is: (unshaped) then the womb aborts the foetus and it does not reach the higher stages leading to a live birth. On the other hand, if Allah says that it is: (shaped) then the angel asks Him whether it is to be a boy or a girl, wretched or fortunate, how long it will live, how it will spend its life and when it will die. The angel is given information on all these matters then and there. (Ibn Kathīr) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās raḍī'allāhu 'anhu has also interpreted the words (shaped or unshaped) in a similar manner. (Qurtubī)

(shaped or unshaped - 22:5). It is evident from the *ḥadīth* referred to above that the human seed which completes its full term in the womb and is destined to be born as a normal human being is meant by (shaped), whereas a seed which is destined to be aborted is (unshaped). However, there are other commentators who have explained these two words differently. According to them a foetus which completes all the stages of growth and development and whose limbs and other organs of the body are healthy, normal and proportionate is (shaped). On the other hand, a foetus whose limbs are deformed or disproportionate is (unshaped). The latter interpretation is close to the translation adopted above. Allah knows best.

(Then We bring you out as babies - 22:5) Then Allah brings forth the baby from its mother's womb as a totally helpless thing. Its body is weak and so are its other faculties, such as hearing, vision, senses, brain function, and overall physical movements including its grasp. All these faculties grow strong as time passes until they reach their full capability. This is the meaning of the words **(Then [We nourish you] so that you reach your maturity - 22:5)**. The word *Ashudd* is the plural of *Shiddah*, just as *An'um* is the plural of *Ni'mah*. The meanings of these words are that the process of gradual development continues until

all the faculties reach their peak and this happens when a person is in the prime of his youth.

(The worst part of the age - 22:5). It means the stage of life when human faculties and senses begin to degenerate. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had sought Allah's protection from such life. Nasā'ī has quoted Sayyidnā Sa'd raḍī'allāhu 'anhu as saying that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to repeat the following prayer very frequently. (Qurtubī)

(O Allah! I seek Your protection from miserliness, and I seek Your protection from cowardice, and I seek Your protection from that I am carried to the age of helplessness, and I seek Your protection from the seductions of this world and the chastisement of the grave.)

An account of the different stages of human life after birth

Musnād of Aḥmad and Musnād of Abū Ya'lā quote Sayyidnā 'Anas Ibn Mālik raḍī'allāhu 'anhu that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said *"The good deeds of a minor child are recorded in the account of his father or both his parents, but his evil deeds are not recorded, neither in his parents' account nor in his own. After he has attained majority, an account is opened in his own name and the two angels who are attached to him are commanded to afford him protection and provide him strength. When he reaches the age of forty years and is still a Muslim, then Allah Ta'ālā grants him immunity from three diseases: insanity, leprosy and leucoderma. When he reaches the age of fifty years, Allah eases and abates his record. At the age of sixty, Allah Ta'ālā creates in him an urge to turn his thoughts towards Him. At seventy, all the inhabitants of the sky begin to love him. When he is eighty, Allah Ta'ālā records his good deeds but ignores his lapses. At ninety, Allah writes off all his sins, and grants him permission to intercede on behalf of his relatives and also accepts his intercession. He is then given the titles of Amīn Allah (Allah's trustee) and Asīr Allah fī al-Arḍ (that is the prisoner of Allah on earth, because at that age all his strength is gone, he loses interest in his surroundings and spends his life like a prisoner). And when he reaches the worst of age, then all the good deeds which he used to perform when he was strong and healthy continue to be recorded in his account while his sinful acts remain unrecorded."*

Having reproduced this tradition from Musnād Abū Ya'lā, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr says: *This ḥadīth is gharīb (i.e. reported by one narrator only), and is extremely munkar (i.e. reported by a weak narrator against the authentic traditions).*

He then adds: *And in spite of all this Imām Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal has related it in his Musnād both as a saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and as a saying of a Saḥābī, that is traced.*

This concludes the commentary for Day 23.