

# CONCEPTS OF THE QURAN

*A TOPICAL READING*

Second Edition  
Revised and with Additions

Fathi Osman

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IN THE NAME OF GOD,  
THE ALL-MERCIFUL, THE MOST GRACIOUS

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وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذِهِ الْقُرْآنِ مِن كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

*And indeed We have put forth for human beings in the Quran [examples] from all categorical situations so that they might be mindful. [39:27]*

... لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمِنْهَا جَا ۗ وَتَوْشَاهُ اللَّهُ  
لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الخَيْرَاتِ ۗ إِلَى  
اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

*To each of you We have appointed a law and a way to follow. And had God so willed, He would have made you all one single people, but [He willed it otherwise] so as to test you through what He has given you. Vie, then, with one another, in good deeds; unto God you shall return, and He will make you understand all on which you differed.. [5:48]*

وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بَيِّنَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى  
وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾ • إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ  
ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالتَّبَغْيِ ۗ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

*And We have sent down to you, step by step, this Book, to make all matters clear, and as guidance and grace and good tidings unto all who have submitted themselves to God. God commands justice, the doing of good, and giving to [one's] relatives; and He forbids all that is shameful, and that runs counter to reason, in addition to aggression; He exhorts you so that you may bear this in mind. [16:89-90]*

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ  
وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ ..... ﴿٢٥﴾

*Indeed, We sent aforesime the conveyors of Our messages with clear signs and messages, and We sent down along with them the book and the balance [to weigh right and wrong] so that people observe [in dealing with one another] justice. [57:25]*

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# INTRODUCTION

## TO THE SECOND EDITION

It is well known that the divine revelation to the Conveyor of the message of Islam, Muhammad, as represented in the authoritative collection of the Quran in the time of the third Caliph Uthman (23-35 A.H./644-56 C.E.) was not arranged topically or chronologically. The Quran is divided into units, each called a “*sura*” in Arabic, most likely from the Arabic word “*sur*” meaning fence, as each unit has its special individuality, with regard to its form and content, that distinguishes it from others. The suras were arranged in the Book according to their length. With the exception of the first sura “The Opening, ‘al-Fatiha’,” long suras come first in the Quran, followed by the medium ones, and at the end come the short ones.

Each sura has its topical themes and style presented in its verses (Arabic “*ayat*”), and the single sura -and sometimes the one verse, “*aya*”- may deal with more than one topic, especially when the sura or the aya is somewhat lengthy. The concept may be dealt with in various ways in many suras, in light of the developing practical needs or the psychological literary objectives. The “sura” is invaluable in presenting a variety of Quranic teachings through a thematic and formative harmony, thus informatively and impressively courting the hearts and minds from various angles.

The Quran has always been through long successive centuries, and will continue to be, unique in its form and content. For a better understanding and implementation of the Quranic teachings, it is essential to trace the Quranic concept topically in its totality, as well as developmentally through the life of the Prophet. It is also essential to study the general principles which control a certain topical areas of study in the Quran before studying the details which are presented.

In this book “Concepts of the Quran,” the Quranic general principles are advanced in presenting the Quranic concepts related to the areas of the faith, the acts of worship, the moral values and manners, the laws and even the supplications. In each area the concepts are topically organized. As for the developmental approach to the Quran, a list of suras according to the order of their revelation was attached to the book as an appendix, and consideration of this aspect has been taken into account in the order given to the verses related to the concept, or in the commentary. Each verse or selection of verses has been preceded by an icon that distinguishes the verses revealed in Makka (Mecca), and those revealed in Madina (Medina).

The Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad over a period of more than two decades (610-632 C.E.) in order to be conveyed to the Arabs in the peninsula . It is indispensable not only to know Arabic to understand the Quran and the oral and practical traditions of the Prophet “the Sunna”, but also to know the historical circumstances of the Arabs in the peninsula on the eve of Islam and during the life of the Conveyor of this message. The Quran may indicate the general principle which controls a certain issue,

while transitionally allowing -with restrictions- some contradictory remnants of the past, until the unwanted phenomena dies out and the Islamic principle gradually prevails.

One obvious example is the case of slavery. Not a single verse constitutes a legal rule of slavery: prisoners of war may be only temporarily kept as prisoners during the war and then they should be set free with or without something in return [The Quran 47:4]. The teachings of the Quran and Sunna prohibit all other possible sources of slavery, and secure for any existing slaves, all the needs of life equally with those who have them, through the transitional stage. Thus slavery becomes an empty shell, or even a burden not a privilege: "Those who have to serve you are your brothers whom God has put in your hands; thus one who has his brother in his hands should give him the same food as he eats, the same clothes as he is dressed; and he should not overload him with work. And when one charges his brother with a weary task, he has to help him" [a Prophet's tradition reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Hanbal, Abu Dawud, al-Termidhi, Ibn Majah]. The word "slave" should not be used, rather one has to call a slave "my boy" or "my girl." Assets from the Muslim public treasury have to be yearly allocated for the emancipation of slaves; also individuals are required to emancipate slaves to make amends for certain evil doings, and are urged to do this voluntarily and as much as possible as an act of grace and charity. From the general principles of human dignity and equality in the Quran, the prominent commentator al-Nasafi (d.710 A.H./ 1310 C.E.) stated that slavery was "a remaining track from the state of ungodliness and irreligion, '*kufir*'", and has to be considered in its nature a moral "death," It is for this reason that the Quran orders one who commits manslaughter by human error to emancipate a slave, as if he/she is bringing the slave back to life to make amendment for wrongly causing someone's death [*Tafsir al-Nasafi*, comment on verse 4:92]. Hence, according to the teachings of Islam, Muslims were supposed to have been the earliest people to abolish slavery, and ought not to have waited until Europe did so after managing to obtain cheaper work from machines as a result of the industrial revolution.

A knowledge of pre-Islamic Arabian society is necessary to recognize the gradual Islamic process in developing a practical change in the society and the legal status quos. Meanwhile a conceptual change would be caused in the hearts and minds of the people through the general moral and legal principles of the Quran and Sunna, since a radical change may not be always possible by one stroke. It could not be possible that Islam would achieve all its ideals in the Arabian society in about twenty years, and change or destroy deeply rooted customs. The Quran and Sunna sharply stressed the general principles, and allowed for the minds and customs to turn gradually in the right direction. Unfortunately, the general principles and indicators, and moral and legal ideals were ignored, and the transitional details were taken as permanent rules. Unless the pre-Islamic Arabian society is thoroughly studied, the Islamic epistemological approach and strategic mechanism can not be thoroughly conceived, and the confusion would heavily affect the understanding and implementation of the Islamic reform in our times.

Muhammad Iqbal, the outstanding Muslim poet and philosopher of India (d.1938), very thoughtfully and eloquently emphasized the importance of precisely recognizing "the pre-Islamic usages of Arabia which were in some cases left intact, and in others modified by the Prophet," and to investigate if "the usages left intact by expressive or tacit approval

of the Prophet were intended to be universal in their application.” Shah Wali Ullah [a prominent Indian Islamic scholar, d.1762 C.E.] presented a very enlightening analysis on the point which was highlighted by Iqbal :

I introduce here the substance of his (Shah Wali Ullah’s) view. The prophetic method of teaching, according to Shah Wali Ullah, is that, generally speaking, the law revealed by a prophet takes especial notice of the habits, ways and peculiarities of the people to whom he is especially sent. The prophet who aims at all-embracing principles, however, can neither reveal different principles for different peoples, nor leave them to work out their own rules of conduct. His method is to train one particular people, and to use them as a nucleus for the building up of a universal Shari’a. In doing so, he accentuates the principles underlying the social life of all mankind, and applies them to concrete cases in the light of the specific habits of the people immediately before him. [Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, New Delhi:1984, pp.171-2].

Such a developmental conception of the texts is naturally different from a direct abrogation of a previous legal text by a later one.

It is vital to maintain the dynamism of the message of Islam through an understanding of the pre-Islamic society, of the Islamic concepts in their totality and development, and through a grasp of the general principles and the detailed rules and their inter-relations. This would secure the dynamism of Islam and its ability to respond to the changing human needs of the societies in different times and places. It would also make such dynamism understandable to Muslims and non-Muslims of our time, whose life circumstances have qualitatively changed from the previous generations, through the successive centuries that have passed since Islam emerged in Arabia in the year 610 C.E. Through such an understanding, *ijtihad* can more realistically find the necessary mechanisms through observing the goals and the general principles of Shari’a, which provide an invaluable and enriching source for an open-ended dynamic law that responds to the changing social circumstances. These principles include: no exploitation nor fraud to be allowed in earning money from one another and the consent of all parties in dealing is required [4:29], any suffering of pressure should be removed [5:6, 22:78], and no harm that may be caused by one to another is tolerated, be it intentional or unintentional, initial or reciprocal [a Prophet’s tradition reported by Malik, Ibn Hanbal, Ibn Majah and al-Darqutni].

In addition, intellectual methods for responding to developing circumstances, such as applying the original allowance unless prohibition can be proved (*istishab*) as evidenced among Hanbali and Zahiri jurists, analogy (*qiyas*) and preference of one of two possible analogies (*istihsan*), evident among Hanafis, and consideration of the emerging common benefit that was not specified in the Quran and Sunna (*al-maslaha al-mursala*), in use among Malikis. Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni (d.1085 C.E.), a prominent Shafi’i jurist, stated centuries ago that the common need of an entire society has to be responded to in the same way as the necessity of an individual in allowing what is prohibited in principle [*al-Ghiyathi*, Doha, Qatar: 1400 A.H., p.478]. Another prominent jurist, Ibn al-Qayyim (d.1350 C.E.), a Hanbali, dedicated the third volume and over 100 pages of the fourth volume of his “*I’lam al-Muwaqqi’in*” to a very valuable chapter entitled “*The Change of*

*Fatwa (legal opinion) According to the Change of Time, Place, Circumstances, (Human) Intentions and Customs,*” in which he provided 116 examples. Near the end of the book, the author discussed the relation between the rules of Shari‘a as dictated in the Quran and Sunna on the one side, and the practice of *ijtihad* in conducting the day to day state affairs and governing the people “*al-siyasa al shari‘iyya*”, on the other, underlining the lack of comprehension in both extremes of excessiveness and restriction in this respect: “and both parties were affected by their failing to know what God has sent the Conveyor of His messages with, since God has sent the conveyors of His messages and has sent down His (revealed) books so as people would maintain justice....Thus, whenever the signs of the truth and the evidences of justice rise, and the light of justice becomes obvious in any way, there is the law of God and His religion and acceptance” [*I‘lam*, vol.4, pp.309-10].

This book “Concepts of the Quran” has been a modest contribution on this long path. This is a revised new edition with amendments and additions throughout the book. A new section “Status of the Non-Muslims in the Muslim State,” has been added to the chapter on “Law” in order to collect, augment, and clarify the several references that had been made in different places in the book.

The author is grateful for the material support that the first edition as well as this new one received from the sponsoring friends, and for the encouragement of the scholars, the students, the media, and all readers. Thanks to the devotion and persistence of my wife and life companion, Aida, in checking the text of the entire book. My daughter Ghada, in spite of being fully absorbed in her work on her Ph.D. dissertation at Harvard University and in her position as copy editor of the Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review, has been able to find some time to make her valuable contribution editing the additions of this new edition, as she did for the entire book before.

And it is from God alone that one gets the guidance to the right path and the help in accomplishing any good work.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE OPENING

### “AL-FATIHA”



*In the name of God, The All-merciful, The Most Gracious.*

*Praise and gratefulness are due to God alone, the Lord of all being, the All-merciful, the Most Gracious, Lord of the Day of Judgement.*

*You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek aid.*

*Guide us to the straight way: the way of those on whom You have bestowed your blessings, not of those who have been condemned [by You], nor of those who go astray.[1: 1-7]*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ  
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ  
إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ  
اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ  
الصِّرَاطَ الَّذِي  
أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

This short sura (chapter) which begins the Quran was revealed in Mecca after a few other short suras according to the revelation order, but it was given its place at the beginning of the Quran because of its importance, and so it is repeated in every prayer more than once. All of its verses were revealed at one time. Because it condenses the fundamentals of the Islamic faith, it was called “*Umm al-Kitab*”, the Essence of the Book, by Prophet Muhammad himself (peace be upon him). It was also called “*Fatihah al-Kitab*”, The Opening of the Book.

The Fatiha begins by mentioning the name of God, who chooses to describe Himself by two attributes derived from mercy and grace: “*al-Rahman, al-Rahim*! The All-merciful, The Most Gracious.” By describing Himself as “*the Lord of all being*” - or of the



whole creation including the universe with all its components - He emphasizes the comprehensiveness and the universality of the faith and the message, as God has not been related to any particular place or people. His relation to His creation, especially the living creatures, is based on "mercy and grace", as the sura has stressed. He is not only the All-merciful in Himself, but He bestows His mercy and grace all the time upon His creatures, and He creates mercy in the instinctive feelings and natural laws of life as is seen among birds, animals and human beings, especially in their relations with their newborns. As mentioning the name of the only God, and stressing His mercy and grace in His relation to His creation remind the believer of the fundamentals of the Islamic faith, Muslims have been taught by Prophet Muhammad to begin any considerable work with the name of God [reported by Ibn Hanbal].

The Arabic word "*Rabb*" expresses a relation based on love, care, rearing, and cherishing, combined with authority and mastery. However, the less expressive word "*Lord*" has been used as a translation for this Arabic word since most people have become used to it in the translation of the Quran and the sources of other religions. To stress this relation of care and mercy, the description of God as "*Lord of all the worlds*" was followed by repeating His two attributes derived from mercy and grace "*al-Rahman*" and "*al-Rahim*." His grace and mercy for all the living creatures in general are obvious in His gifts of instinctive guidance, and, for human beings in particular are evident in the human intellect and the divine messages of guidance.

The accountability of the human being before God, the only Lord of the Day of Judgement and the life to come, follows the statement about His love, grace, caring and mercy, since all these are inseparable, and without such an accountability the life in this world would come to an end without justice being settled for every individual.

Following these statements about God as the Lord, the All-merciful and the only Judge in the eternal life to come, the believer expresses his/her faith in the One God: worshipping Him alone and turning to Him alone for help and support. It is meaningless to believe in the One God while one is allowing himself/herself to seek any means to achieve one's goal, even if these means contradicts the teachings of the One God whom he/she believes in and worships. The believer is emphasizing several times a day that he/she will be consistent in his/her behavior and is reminding himself/herself that one's practices in the daily life have to be in accordance with one's belief in the One God and in His comprehensive guidance.

In the end, the believer asks God for His guidance to follow the straight way "of the blessed people, and to avoid the way of those who deliberately reject God's guidance and thus are condemned by Him, and of those who have allowed themselves to be illuded, by their whims or by others, from the right path and go astray. The divine guidance for the straight way is presented in God's message: "*O People of the Book, there has come to you the conveyor of Our message making clear to you much of what you have been concealing of the Book, and to dispense with much [that is now unnecessary]. Now there has come*

*to you from God a light and a clear divine writ, through which God guides all who seek His goodly acceptance to paths of peace, and by His grace leads them out of the depths of darkness into the light, and guides them to a straight way.” [5:15-16], “And this is My way leading straight; so do follow it...” [6:153], “... and you [O Muhammad] surely shall guide [people] to the straight way, the way of God, to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth...” [42:52-53].*

Thus, the believer emphasizes in these few verses his/her belief in: the One God of all being and of the whole creation who is the All-merciful, Most Gracious Lord, the accountability of the human being that will be the basis for one’s eternal life to come, and the messages of divine guidance to the right path through God’s revelation. The believer states succinctly his/her faith in all these principles, and emphasizes the sound relation between the sensible human beings and the All-caring and Most Gracious Lord. It is not a momentary and empty acknowledgement of the existence of the One God, but an expression of a dynamic relation which fills the mind and heart, and inspires all human behavior throughout life. The believer prays for God’s guidance to the right way represented in the teachings of His message, and for avoidance of the way of those who deliberately and stubbornly reject God’s guidance, or those who go astray under illusion, temptation or shortsightedness. The Fatiha is a concise, harmonious and continuous reminder of God’s almightiness and grace, the purpose and responsibility of the human being through this world’s life, and the strong and close relation between both.

It is no wonder then that this concise sura becomes the “*Opening*” of the Quran, and the basis of any prayer, and was called the “*Essence*” of the Book,. It presents a crystallized and beautifully tuned articulation of the faith, and an inspiring guidance for human behavior.

## CHAPTER TWO

# THE FAITH (I)

### FROM THE CREATION TO THE CREATOR: CALLING ATTENTION TO THE UNIVERSE AND LIFE

The Quranic approach to the faith in the One God is to call attention to the whole universe in its various physical and biological phenomena, and to its incessant laws and systematic order which maintain continuation and coordination. From these observations, the Quran conducts the argument about the One God and His attributes, and His relation to His creation.

The first Quranic verses revealed to Prophet Muhammad call attention to “*your Lord who has created [all of creation in general], and has created the human being [in particular] of a suspending mixture [of sperm and egg].*” [96:1-2]. These earliest Quranic verses start with a call for reading and comprehension, and emphasize the divine gift of giving the human the ability to learn and write, an ability that puts the “homo sapiens” above all of God’s other creations [17:70] and allows him/her to make much of the other creation subservient to him/her.

The Quran calls attention to the various living creatures in the animal and plant kingdoms (e.g. sheep and cattle, camels and horses, reptiles, birds, insects, grains, fruits, grass etc.) It is not only the benefit of the animal or plant which is underlined in the Quran, but also the beauty of their appearance and structure [e.g. 16:6, 8, 13, 14, 69; 50:7, 10; 78:16; 82:7; 95:4]. Water has also been featured in the Quran as an indispensable element for life [21:30; also 25:48-49; 80:24-32].

The whole life and all living creatures, including the human being, to which the Quran calls attention, are on this planet earth. However, the Quran also refers to the cosmos with its stars and planets in their coordinated orbits, to the earth with its mountains and plains, valleys and deserts, rivers and seas, and to the climate in its different aspects: heat, winds, clouds, thunder and lightening, rain etc. It also points out that although the human mind can make many forces of nature subservient to it, the human being should

not fall into the trap of ego-centrism: “Certainly the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of the human beings, yet most people recognize not [such a significant fact]” [40:57]. The planets are separated in their places and their orbits, and any may have life or potentials for life. Contact between them may be allowed according to God’s laws and will: “And among His signs is the [very] creation of the heavens and the earth, and of all the living creatures which He has spread throughout them, and He is able to make them meet together whenever He wills” [42:29]. The Quran stresses the beauty of the universe in addition to its flawless laws and order [e.g. 16:6; 37:6; 41:12; 50:7; 67:3-5].”

An observation about natural diversity in the universe and among living creatures has been condensed in the Quranic verse that ends with an emphasis on the relation between knowledge and faith, “Are you not aware that God sends down water from the skies, whereby We bring forth [various] fruits of many hues, just as in the mountains there are streaks of white and red of various shades, as well as [others] raven black, and [as] there are in human beings and in crawling beasts and in livestock too, various [kinds and] hues? Of all His servants, only those who enjoy deep knowledge stand [truly] in awe of God ...” [35:27-28].

On these grounds of intact coordinated laws of nature, the Quran builds faith in the One God.



“Limitless in His glory is He who has created in [parallel] pairs what the earth produces, and the human beings’ own selves, and that of which [as yet] they may have no knowledge. And a sign for them is the night from which We gradually strip of the [light of] day, and so they are plunged into darkness. And the sun runs through a determined course of its own which is accurately designed by the All-mighty, the All-knowing. And the moon: We have determined its phases [that it must go through] till it becomes like an aged palm-bough [dried up and curved]. Neither may the sun overtake the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day, since all of them float through space [according to God’s laws for the universe].” [36:36-40]



“... and We caused [life] of every kind to grow on it [the earth] in a balanced manner.” [15:19]

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ  
الْأَزْوَاجَ كُلَّهَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ وَمِن  
أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمِمَّا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَآيَةٌ  
لَهُمْ اللَّيْلُ نَسْلَخُ مِنْهُ النَّهَارَ فَإِذَا هُمْ  
مُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي  
لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ  
﴿٤٨﴾ وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ  
كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ ﴿٤٩﴾ لَا الشَّمْسُ  
يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ  
سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ ۗ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا  
وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ  
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّوْزَوْنٍ ﴿١٥﴾



[25:2]

“... and it is He who creates everything and determines its nature [and function] with [his own] planning.”

الَّذِي  
لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ  
وَلَدًا وَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمَلِكِ  
وَ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا ۝



can you see any flaw?” [67:3]

“... no fault you may see in the creation of the All-merciful; turn your vision through it one time after another:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ  
سَمَوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا ۗ مَا تَرَىٰ فِي خَلْقِ  
الرَّحْمَنِ مِن تَفْوُتٍ ۗ فَإِذْ رَجِعِ الْبَصَرَ  
تَرَىٰ مِن فُطُورٍ ۝

Such indefectible order, coordination and continuation should be logically initiated and maintained by One since “*Had there been in heaven or on earth any deities other than the One God, both would surely have fallen into ruin.*” [21:22], “... nor has there ever been any deity side by side with Him; [for if this was the case] each deity would surely have stood apart [from the others] in whatever one had created, and they would surely have [tried to] prevail over one another: Limitless in His glory is God, [far] above whatever people may define” [23:91].

The Merciful God would not leave human beings unaccountable for their actions, or would He make their life in this world, where justice may not be fully secured, the only life: “*And yet they say: ‘There is nothing beyond our life in this world. We die as we come to life, and nothing but time destroys us.’ Of this they have no knowledge whatsoever; they merely conjecture*” [45:24], “*Did you, then, think that We created you in mere idle play, and that you would not have to return to Us? Then, highly exalted be God, the Ultimate Sovereign, the Ultimate Truth: there is no deity save Him, the Lord on His throne of bounty and might*” [23:115-116]; “... and their reward in the life to come will be far greater if they but knew” [16:41].

The life to come is the real life, for it is more rewarding, stable and eternal “... *this worldly life is but a brief enjoyment, whereas, behold, the life to come is the home abiding*” [40:39], “*And, the life of this world is nothing but a passing delight and a play, whereas, behold, in the hereafter is indeed the only [true] life if they but knew*” [29:64]; “... *this is the Day on which eternal life abiding begins*” [50:34].

## THE UNIVERSE



*Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, in the succession of night and day, in the sailing of the ships through the sea for the benefit of human beings, in the water which God sends down from the sky, giving life thereby to an earth that has been lifeless, and causing all kinds of living creatures to spread thereon, in the change of the winds and the clouds that run through their appointed courses between the sky and earth: [in all these] indeed are signs for people who are sensible. [2:164]*

اِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ  
 السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَآخْتِلَافِ الْاَيْلِ  
 وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفَلَكَ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ  
 بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ  
 السَّمَآءِ مِنْ مَّآءٍ فَاَحْيَا بِهِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ  
 مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ  
 الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ  
 السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ لَا يَتَّبِعُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

This one verse makes one's senses and thinking move through various aspects of nature which are referred to with accuracy and beauty. The verse begins with a concise reference to the huge cosmos with its stars and planets in general, and the earth where the addressed human beings have been living in particular. The special place and relation of the earth with regard to the sun leads to the succession of day and night, each of which has a different length during the different seasons.


The Arabic word *al-samawat* in the plural - from the verb *sama* which means "to go high" - initially means the different levels of space which appear to a person to be rising above him/her, regardless of his/her position on earth. In general, the term may be used in the Quran for the "heavens" in its wider sense, which is "the expanse of space that seems to be over the earth like a dome, usually used in the plural," according to the Webster New Collegiate Dictionary [e.g. 2:29, 33, 107, 116-7, 164, 255, 284..., also 16:49; 17:44; 19:93; 21:30; 22:18; 23:71; 25:59; 31:10; 34:3; 35:41; 40:57; 41:12; 42:29; 45:36; 59:23; 63:7 etc.] It may also mean - in particular when it comes in the singular *al-sama'* - the sky, which is, according to Webster, "the upper atmosphere that constitutes an apparent great vault over the earth," or "weather in the upper atmosphere," as well as merely the atmosphere [e.g. 2:19, 22, 164; 6:99, 125; 7:96; 8:11; 10:24; 11:44, 52; 13:17; 14:24, 32; 15:22; 16:10, 65, 79; 20:53; 21:32; 22:31, 63; 23:18; 24:43; 25:48, 61; 27:60; 30:48; 31:10; 37:6; 39:21; 41:12; 43:11; 45:5, 13; 50:6, 9 etc.] On the other hand, the word in both its plural and singular terms may be used as a theological term to mean God's presence and supremacy, the place of the angels and "the host on high" [37:7; 38:69], and the blessed abode of the righteous in the eternal life to come [e.g. 7:40; 17:95; 26:4; 27:65; 36:28; 39:67; 48:4, 7; 53:26; 55:33 etc.]

Significantly, it is often stressed throughout the Quran that God's gifts facilitate, in this life, the movement of human beings through the world. The above verse, among others [e.g. 6:97; 10:32; 14:32; 16:14; 17:66; 22:65; 27:63; 31:31; 42:32-34; 45:12; 55:24],

refers to naval transportation, while other verses in the Quran refer to land transportation and the benefit of horses and camels in this respect [e.g. 16:7-8, 36:42, 71-2, 40:79, 43:12]. Thus, the Quran emphasizes that the human being is a “moving creature” and such movement is essential for human nature, and consequently it must be secured by all means as a fundamental human right: “*We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam, and have borne them over land and sea ...*” [17:70].

The human being is universal by nature, and no barrier should restrict his/her movement to different places or mixing with different peoples [49:13] in order to exchange knowledge and develop civilization. In another significant verse in which the Quran mentions the gift of God in making the sea subservient to the human being through the sailing of ships, it follows this directly by referring that He makes subservient to the human being and mind: “*what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, all together, from Him ...*” [45:12]. Here “the heavens” may refer to, or include, the atmosphere as well as the space, through which the human being may “navigate” in the future as he had been doing through the sea at the time of revelation. Surely, such a reference could not have been explicitly presented in the time of the revelation of the Quran, since it could not be understood or even imagined during that time, although it may be obvious now when we think deeply about the context.

Alluding to the sea brings to mind “water,” which is a link between the physical and biological aspects of nature: “*and We made out of water every living thing*” [21:31]. Water is sent down to the people from the atmosphere in different forms, and it brings life to earth and to every living creature there. This water comes through a process of evaporation and condensation which lead to the formation of clouds, and wind, in its different courses that are appointed by certain natural laws, has its essential role in this process. Such relations, order, balance and coordination in the various natural phenomena and laws, show that these cannot occur haphazardly, but that there is a supreme wisdom and omnipotence that has created and is maintaining the cosmic order in its vastness and complexity. The possessor of this wisdom and omnipotence is One since a plurality would allow contradiction [see for example the verses 21:22, 23:91, and 4:82, which is also relevant but with regard to the Quran].

 Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the alternation of night and day, there are indeed signs[and messages] for people who really have minds. Those who remember and invoke God when they stand and when they sit and when they lie down on their sides, reflecting upon the creation of the heavens and the earth, [and saying,] “O our Lord! You have not created this in vain [without meaning or purpose]. Glory be to You! Keep us safe, then, from suffering through the fire.” [3:190-191]

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَأَخْتَلَفِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِأُولِي  
الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ  
قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ  
وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا سُبْحَانَكَ قَفْنَا  
عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾

The various wonders of creation in this huge cosmos should invite those who comprehend to practice deep contemplation and serious thinking, they then would realize that the Creator is the One God, and that His creation in general and the human being in particular have their meaning and purpose. The recognition of the Creator and the belief in the accountability of the human being, inspire morality and justice in this worldly life, and provide hope for full justice and requital for the good-doers and the evildoers in the eternal life to come.



*[He is] the One who causes the day to break [from the dark], and He has made the night for a repose, and the sun and the moon for a reckoning [of time as they rise and set]; that is the design of the Almighty, the All-knowing. And it is He who has set up for you the stars so that you might be guided by them through the deep darkness of land and sea; clearly We indicate our signs for people who know.” [6:96-97]*

قَالِقُ الْأَصْبَاحِ وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا  
وَالشَّمْسِ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ  
تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي  
جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي  
ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۗ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا  
الآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

The above verse does not refer to the mere succession of day and night in general, but instead specifies how the day breaks after the night repose, bringing light and life and enabling people to earn their living [see also 3:27, 10:67, 22:61, 25:47, 30:23, 35:13, 36:37, 39:5, 40:61, 57:6, 78:10-11]. Besides this, the apparent daily and yearly changes of the sun’s place in relation to the earth have provided human beings with a way to reckon the time of day and the four seasons throughout the year, while the monthly movement of the moon and its phases allow the reckoning of the months. The stars provide light in the darkness, and some of them can be used at night by travellers on land and sea as a guide for directions. How perfect is this design that allows human beings to benefit from the light of the sun, the moon and the stars, as well as to reckon the time and determine directions. Those who recognize these facts in God’s creation and seriously think about them would come to the conclusion that there is a Creator, and that He is the One, the Almighty, the All-knowing.



*It is He who has made the sun [a source of] radiance and the moon a [reflected] light for which phases are determined, so that you might know the counting of years and the making of calculations; none of this has God created except according to that [order] which is right; [thus] does He spell out His signs one after another, to people who know! Surely, in the succession of night and day, and*

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ  
الشَّمْسَ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا وَقَدَرَهُ  
مَنَازِلَ لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ  
وَالْحِسَابَ ۗ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذَٰلِكَ إِلَّا  
بِالْحَقِّ ۗ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ  
﴿٩٦﴾ إِنَّ فِي اخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ



*in all that God has created in the heavens and on earth, are signs for those who are conscious of Him. [10:5-6]*

وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
لَا آيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦﴾

The first of the above verses makes the distinction between the light of the sun which is described in Arabic as *diya'*, and that of the moon which is described in Arabic as "*nur*". Such a distinction during the time of the revelation of the Quran is significant. As some philologists put it, "*diya'*" is meant to describe a light which stands by itself, such as that of fire [see verses 2:17, 20], while the word "*nur*" is more general and may include a light that is a mere reflection or is drawn from another source, such as the light of faith or the light of God's guidance, e.g. 2:17, 3:15, 44, 46, 7:157, 24:35, 39:69, 42:52, 57:12-13, 28]. God is described as the source of all light, *nur*, so this confirms the case and by no means contradicts it [e.g. 24:35; compare 4:174; 5:15; 6:1, 122; 24:40; 39:22, 69:64:8]. In other suras, the sun is described in the Quran as a "radiant lamp or source of light" [25:61, 17:16], and "a blazing lamp" [78:13]. Besides, the heat and the light, and the sun and the moon, in their apparent change of place with regard to the earth, have become means for determining the time during the day or throughout the month, and for distinguishing the four seasons of the year, providing a basis for various calculations that are essential for development and civilization [e.g. in production, consumption, income, services, surveying, etc.]. Day and night succeed one another regularly and gradually in a certain order [e.g. 3:27, 22:61, 31:29, 35:13, 39:5, 57:6]. The length of each of them differs throughout the four seasons, thus allowing human beings a shorter day and a longer night in the winter and vice versa in the summer, and an equal day and night in spring and autumn/fall. All these represent signs of a consummate creation of the cosmos and of enormous care for the human beings.



*It is God who has raised the heavens without any visible support that you can see; then He established Himself on the throne [of power and control over all His creation]. It is He who has subjected the sun and the moon [to His laws and for your benefit]; each one runs through [its course] for a term appointed [by Him]. He does organize and direct all affairs, showing you clear signs one after another, so that you might believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord [in the life to come]. And it is He who has spread the earth wide, and set thereon firm mountains and running waters; He created in pairs [male and female] every kind of plant produce; and [it is He who] draws the night gradually to spread*

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ  
السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ  
اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَخَّرَ  
الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ  
مُّسَمًّى يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَهُوَ  
الَّذِي مَدَّ الْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ  
وَأَنْهَارًا وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ جَعَلَ فِيهَا  
زُوجِينَ مَثَلِينَ يُغْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ

over the day. Surely, in all these are signs for those who reflect. [13:2-3]

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

The “heavens,” mentioned in the Quran as a plural, may include what we physically know as the atmosphere and space, and what may be beyond this physical existence, where the “host on high” or the “exalted gathering” exists [37:8, 38:69] and where the angels assemble. These heavens, especially the physical part that we know about, are raised up by means of certain natural laws [i.e. pressure, density etc.], but without any visible columns or pillars. God’s throne in its exact meaning, whether literal or metaphorical, is beyond our perception. In the Quran, the throne is only described as “mighty” or “glorious” and as “noble” or “bountiful” [9:129, 23:86, 27:26]. The expression “established Himself on the throne” [see in addition to the above verse 7:54; 10:3; 20:5; 25:59; 32:4; 7:4] comes after mentioning that He created the cosmos: the heavens in its wider sense including the material side of the numerous galaxies, stars, planets, and supernatural concept. God is on His throne - whatever or however it may be - governing His creation with all power, knowledge, care and grace and practicing His almightiness, with mercy and compassion, not just manifesting His ultimate supremacy and omnipotence [10:3, 25:59, 57:4].

The first of the above verses refers to God’s keeping of the sun and the moon subservient to His laws and order, and for the human benefit “each one runs through [its course] for a term appointed [by Him] [also 36:38-40]”. Accordingly, we have day and night of different lengths in the four seasons, and we receive varying degrees of the sun’s heat every season. We see the moon in various phases through the month, and we receive differing amounts of light as a result. All these signs of God’s almightiness and wisdom are presented in the Quran so that people may conceive that this world and the human beings in it have not been created without meaning or purpose, but that all that God has provided the human being with physically, intellectually and spiritually is connected with responsibility, and that every individual will meet Him and face His judgement and requital in the life to come.

In addition to heat and light from the sun and the moon, the Quran calls attention to the earth, and how it has been created to accommodate the human being providing him/her with sustenance as well as other essential needs of life. Any part of the earth appears to be stretched flat to the people who live on that part, although it is shaped as a globe in its entirety. It has been provided with firm mountains, sources of running water, and different plants in which male and female organs are found together to secure the reproduction of flowers and various plant produce. Most plants benefit from the succession of day and night, since they usually undergo photosynthesis during the day and respiration at night. All these are clear signs of a marvelous creation of the All-knowing, the All-wise, the All-mighty.




*He sends down water from the sky,  
and the river-courses run high, each  
according to its measure, and the*

أَنْزَلَ مِنَ  
السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا

torrent carries scum that mounts up to the surface. Likewise, there is a scum [that rises], from that [ore] which they heat in the fire, to make ornaments or utensils therewith. Thus does God set forth the parable of the true and the false: as for the scum, it passes away like anything cast out, and that which is of benefit for people abides on earth. Thus does God set forth parables. [13:17]

فَأَحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَابِيًا ۖ وَمِمَّا  
يُوقَدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ ابْتِغَاءَ حُلْيَةٍ  
أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِثْلَهُ ۗ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ  
الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ ۗ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ  
جُفَاءً ۗ وَأَمَّا مَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ  
فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ  
الْأَمْثَالَ ﴿١٧﴾

The above verse presents many parables which make use of natural facts. The first is about water that God sends down in rain from the skies which fills river valleys: each according to its measure. Similarly, human beings are exposed to knowledge and guidance provided by God or any other source created by Him, and each individual achieves according to his/her potential. Since there is always a chance for presenting true or false information to others, parables are presented to assure that the truth prevails in the end. False information is like the foam which comes over a stream of water and soon vanishes, and like the scum which rises in the process of purifying a metal by heating it, and both are thrown away in the end. The same happens in the struggle of ideas between those who have different stands, and by time “which is of benefit for people who abide on earth”. However, truth and rightfulness prevail in time through the support of people who believe in them: “And if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, corruption would surely spread over the whole earth” [2:251].

 Have, then, they never seen that We gradually reduce the earth in its extremities? Whenever God commands none could repel His command; and He is swift in reckoning. [13:41, see also 21:44]

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي  
الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ  
يَحْكُمُ لَا مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ سَرِيعُ  
الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤١﴾

The verse may be referring to the geographic and/or demographic changes in the earth's shape and/or in its population, a phenomenon that is supported by various scientific observations (e.g. astronomical factors; erosion factors such as heat, wind, humidity and rain, decline of population and civilizations due to geographic, economic, and sanitary problems) have their impact on the earth and/or the population, as people may die or migrate from deteriorating areas to others with more potential. These changes show how natural and social laws are working in coordination, and point to the All-mighty and All-knowing power behind physical and human developments.



It is God who has created the heavens and the earth, and who sends down water from the sky wherewith He brings forth [various] plant produce to be your sustenance; it is He who has made the ships subservient to you, so that they may sail through the sea at His command; and has made the rivers subservient to you [through His laws]. Besides, He has made subservient to you [through His laws] the sun and the moon both diligently pursuing their courses; and the night and the day have been serving you. He gives you of all that you ask Him, and if you [try to] count God's blessings, never will you be able to number them; behold, the human being is most persistent in wrongdoing, stubbornly ungrateful. [14:32-34]

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ  
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ  
السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ  
رِزْقًا لَكُمْ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفَلَكَ لِتَجْرِيَ  
فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الْأَنْهَارَ  
(٢٢) ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ  
دَائِبَيْنِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ  
(٢٣) ۗ وَءَاتَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ  
وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ لَا تَحْصُوهَا ۗ إِنْ  
أَلَّا نَسْنَنَ لظُلُومٍ كَفَّارٌ (٢٤)

The above verses refer again to the fascinating signs of God's creation in different ranges: in the atmosphere and space, and the heavens in its theological sense behind them, where "the host on high" or "the exalted gathering" exists [see 37:8, 38:69], in sending the water down from the skies and bringing forth plant produce for human sustenance, in making ships and rivers subservient to human beings, who are also served by the heat and/or light of the sun and moon, by the day and night in their succession, and by the differing lengths of the seasons. Moreover, God grants people all they ask of Him, and thus His bounty is beyond counting, whether it is offered for the entire human race, or for a particular individual who may ask Him for help in a time of hardship or to grant him/her some of His bounty and blessings. [2:186]. However, the human being may hastily forget or deny God's favors when he/she faces a difficulty or enjoys ease [e.g. 7:189-190; 10:12, 22-23; 17:83; 30:33; 31:32; 39:8, 49; 41:49-51]. Faith in God and the life to come aids the human being in having self-control and balance. According to a Prophet's tradition, whenever the believer meets with good in life, he/she does not waste his/her energy in arrogance and boasting but is grateful to the Lord, and whenever he/she faces difficulty he/she does not become paralyzed but is patient, firm and persevering in overcoming it [reported by Ibn Hanbal and Muslim]. Therefore, faith secures humanity with balance, stability and thus productivity.



And We let loose the winds that fertilize [plants and cause condensation in the clouds] and We send down water from the skies, which We let you drink, and you are not its treasurers [nor controllers of its sources]. [15:22]

وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيْحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ  
السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمُوهُ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ  
لَهُ بِخَازِنِينَ (٢٢)

The Arabic adjective *lawaqih* which is used to describe the winds in this verse means “impregnating” or “fecundating,” and it refers to the role of the winds in helping the reproductive process of plants or the condensation of the accumulated vapor in clouds that develops into rain which provides water, the essential for life. People may store water in tanks or behind dams, but they have no control over its original factors and sources: the natural forces of evaporation and condensation which the winds facilitate. Thus water is in fact distributed over the world’s surface according to certain laws and orders.



*And it is He who has subjected to you the night and day, the sun and the moon [according to His laws], and the stars which are subservient to His command; surely, in these are signs for people who use their minds. And that which He has spread for you on earth with diverse hues; surely, in that is a sign for people who are mindful.*

*And it is He who has subjected to you the sea, so that you might eat of its meat that which is fresh and tender, and that you might bring forth out of it ornaments that you wear. And you see the ships therein ploughing through the waves, so that you might seek His bounty and so haply you will be grateful [to Him].*

*And He has set up on earth firm mountains, lest it should shake with you; and rivers and paths, so that you might find your way; and [other] landmarks and means of direction, and by the stars [also, people] are guided. Is He Who creates as one who creates not? Will you not then, be mindful? If you try to count up the blessings of God, never would you be able to number them; surely, God is All-forgiving, Most Gracious. [16:12-18]*

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ  
وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۗ وَالنُّجُومَ  
مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ  
لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَمَا ذَرَأْنَا لَكُمْ فِي  
الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ  
لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي  
سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لِتَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا  
وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا  
وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَازٍ فِيهِ وَتَلْتَبَتُّوهُ مِنْ  
فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَعَلَّكُم تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَأَلْقَى  
فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ  
وَأَنْهَارًا وَسَبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥﴾  
وَعَلَّمَتِ ۗ وَالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٦﴾  
أَفَمَنْ يَخْلُقُ كَمَنْ لَا يَخْلُقُ ۗ أَفَلَا  
تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا  
تُحْصُوهَا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾

The succession of night and day, and the state and activities of the sun, moon, and stars, all follow certain laws and orders which are beneficial to humanity, as has been repeatedly emphasized in previous verses. The earth has rocks, sand and soil of different colors and qualities and this same variety is found in minerals, gems, plants, and all creatures on land and sea. The earth has its high and low levels, its peaks and valleys, its mountains, rivers and paths, and its landmarks and other means of orientation. At night, people may also be guided by the stars. In all these, human beings find benefits, and they can also find signs that invite serious thinking if they use their reason and do not overlook these wonders of nature passively or thoughtlessly. Such a marvelous and useful creation points to a superiority and power which should make observant people think. However,

they may simply disregard it or submit themselves to some creation other than, or in addition to, the One Creator. This Creator, who can be recognized through serious thinking, must be thanked for His incalculable gifts and favors to the human being if that human being is reasonable and is blessed with good judgement. Nevertheless, the human being, who benefits most from God's bounty and favors, may fail to thank Him, but there is always a chance for self-correction, and God is All-forgiving, Most Gracious.



*And it is God who has granted you shade out of what He has created, and has granted you in the mountains places of shelter [and protection]; and He has granted you garments to protect yourselves from heat [and cold], and others to protect yourselves from your own violence. Thus does He grant in full measure His blessings towards you, so that you might submit yourself to Him [and His guidance]. [16:81]*

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِمَّا خَلَقَ  
ظِلَالًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ أَكْنَانًا  
وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ سَرَابِيلَ تَقِيكُمُ الْحَرَّ وَالسَّرَابِيلَ  
تَقِيكُم بِأَسْكُمْ كَذَلِكَ يُتِمُّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَسْلَمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

Hills, mountains, caves and trees provide people with their natural shade and shelter, while the human mind, gifted by God, can design and build walls and roofs for shade and shelter. Similarly, people first used animal skins to protect themselves from heat and cold, then were able to make better clothing when they discovered how to make use of the wool of animals, the products of silkworms and plants, and how to spin and weave. They also learned how to make armor in order to shield themselves against the attacks of one another.

All these divine gifts and blessings, especially that of the human mind which continuously faces challenges and works out solutions, thus inspiring human development, should guide us to the One who gives and provides, and make us recognize and feel grateful to Him for His creation and care. He is in no need of our thanks, but our direction and devotion to Him will enable us to enjoy genuine freedom within ourselves, towards all others, and attain stability and peace through the varying and successive vicissitudes of life.



*Have not those who stubbornly deny the truth, beheld that the heavens and the earth were [once] a mass joined together [as one entity of creation] before, then we parted them asunder? And We made out of water every living thing. Will they [still yet] not [contemplate and thus] reach faith? And We have set on earth firm mountains lest it should shake with them, and We have made therein broad paths so that they might find*

أَوَلَمْ يَرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ أَسْمَوَاتٍ  
وَ الْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا ط  
وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا  
يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِهِمْ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيهَا  
فِجَاجًا سَبِيلًا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

their way.

And We have made the sky roof-like, well-secured; yet they [stubbornly] turn away from its signs.

It is He who has created the night and the day and the sun and the moon; all of them floating through space. [21:30-33]



And it is He who created the heavens and the earth in six [immeasurably long] periods, and his throne was upon the water [as He willed to create life] in order to test you as to who will act more righteously. And if you say, "You shall surely be raised up after death, those who are bent on stubbornly denying the truth will say, "This is naught but a clear delusion." [11:7]

وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَقْفًا مَحْفُوظًا ۗ وَهُمْ

عَنْ آيَاتِنَا مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

خَلَقَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ

وَالْقَمَرَ ۗ كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي

سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ

لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۗ وَلَئِن

قُلْتُمْ إِنَّكُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ


لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ

مُبِينٌ ﴿١١﴾

The development of the human knowledge of the universe reveals how its creation and maintained order have been following well-designed and coordinated systems. We realize now that the earth was once within the mass of the sun and then split from it. Subsequently, the earth rotates in relation to the sun, as is implied in the verse [21:30], resulting in the alternation of day and night and the succession of the four seasons. The next verse [21:31] suitably refers to the mountains as a factor for maintaining relative stability for the earth, a speedily rotating planet, the interior of which undergoes cooling processes which lead to hardening of the crust. This cooling proceeds "from the surface to the center of the presumably molten or perhaps even gaseous matter of which the earth's interior seems to be compared," as Asad rightfully indicates. "It appears," in Asad's words, "that part of this interior is kept solid only by the enormous pressure of the overlaying material, of which the mountains are the most vivid evidence, and this explains the Quranic reference to mountains as pegs; *awtad* [78:7], i.e. symbols of the firmness and relative equilibrium which the surface of the earth has gradually achieved in the course of its geological history. Notwithstanding the fact that this equilibrium is not absolute (as is evidenced by such phenomena as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions), it is the solidity of the earth's crust as contrasted with its very unstable interior which makes life on earth possible ...." In this way, Asad sees in the repeated reference in the Quran to the firmness of the mountains as keeping the earth from shaking and swaying with the human population living on it as "an allusion to the fact that the mountains owe their rise to the gradual balancing process to which the solid crust of the earth is subject" [note number 11 on the verse 16:15]. However, the mountains which have their effect on the relative stability of the earth's crust by the enormous pressure of their overlaying mass do not hinder the human beings from moving around the earth [17:70], since these mountains have paths


that enable people to pass through these huge material masses.

Just as the earth has a secure relatively stable surface, it also has a roof-like structure over it. The Quran uses the Arabic word "sama' " singular, "samawat" plural for both of what we call "skies" i.e. the atmosphere and space, which are visible, and what we call "heavens" in their spiritual significance. The "roof-like" structure that is referred to in the above verse can be understood as "the cosmic space in which the stars, the solar systems (including our own) and the galaxies pursue their course" [Asad, note number 4 on the verse 13:2]. The sun and the moon, like the earth, each float along their own orbits, and the human beings benefit from this intact order since it results in the advantageous sequence of day and night.

 *Have you not seen that God causes the clouds, to move onwards, then joins them together, then forms them as a mass, then you see rain coming forth from within it? And it is He who sends down from the skies [whatever He determines] out of mountainous masses [of clouds] wherein is hail, striking therewith whomever he wills and turns it aside from whomever He wills; the flash of its lightning well-nigh almost takes one's sight away. It is God who causes night and day to alternate. In [all] these there is surely a lesson for all those who have eyes to see. [24:43-44]*

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْجِي سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ  
بَيْنَهُ ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ رُكَّامًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ  
يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ وَيُنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ  
مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيهَا مِنْ بَرَدٍ فَيُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ  
يَشَاءُ وَيَصْرِفُهُ عَنِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ يَكَادُ  
سَتَابْرُقُهُ يَدْمِبُ بِالْأَبْصَرِ ﴿٤٣﴾ يُقَلِّبُ  
اللَّهُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً  
لِأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٤﴾

This verse gives an image that is both artistic and scientific of the condensation of clouds, from the early stages until the provision of rain, a process that also holds the possibility of the emergence of clashing lightning or hail. Such a process of evaporation, condensation, and sometimes freezing, thunder and lightning, is representative of the dynamism of nature, with all its perpetually changing and transforming aspects that are going on every time a cloud is formed, in the same way as the daily change from the sunlight of day to the darkness of night. However, such changes and the intact laws and order behind them often pass unnoticed except by those who enjoy an observing eye and a fine esthetic and intellectual appreciation. These individuals can feel that such a fascinating, systemized, vast and compound creation that has been made subservient and beneficial for him/her, points directly to the Creator who is All-mighty, All-wise.

 *Have you not seen how your Lord does cause the shadow to stretch [towards the sunset], while had He willed, He could have made it stand still! We*

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ  
مَدَّ الظِّلَّ وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَجَعَلَهُ سَاكِنًا ثُمَّ



have made it connected with the sun in indication. Then We gradually draw it to Us [with our power and according to our laws].

And it is He who makes the night as a garment for you, and [your] sleep a repose, and makes the day a time for rising again.

And it is He who sends forth the winds bearing good tidings for His approaching grace and mercy, and we [subsequently] send down pure water from the sky so that We may bring life to a dead land thereby, and give to drink of it, many of what We have created: livestock and people. [25:45-49]

جَعَلْنَا الشَّمْسَ عَلَيْهِ دَلِيلًا ﴿٤٥﴾ ثُمَّ  
 قَبَضْنَاهُ إِلَيْنَا قَبْضًا يَسِيرًا ﴿٤٦﴾ وَهُوَ  
 الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَالنَّوْمَ  
 سُبَاتًا وَجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُورًا ﴿٤٧﴾  
 وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ  
 رَحْمَتِهِ ۗ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً  
 طَهُورًا ﴿٤٨﴾ لِنُحْيِيَ بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَيْتًا  
 وَنُسْقِيَهُ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا أَنْعَامًا وَأَنْوَاسًا  
 كَثِيرًا ﴿٤٩﴾

We become so used to the various natural phenomena that we do not appreciate the marvelous intactness of the universal laws and the order behind them, the coordination of these natural phenomena and laws in their correlation, and the human benefits of any phenomenon. The occurrence of the shadow, with its different lengths during the day, is a daily phenomenon which is connected with the sun, and thus of the sun and the shadow each becomes an indicator of the other. In a hot land, like Arabia, the shade is of great benefit for the human being. Its change of length according to what appears to be the movement of the sun on the horizon, but which is really a result of the rotation of the earth around itself in front of the sun, is part of the cosmic dynamism. The shade is inseparable from the phenomenon of light just as the "echo" in relation to sound, and this correlation is basic in the study of the light - or the sound in case of the echo - in the fields of theoretical and applied physics. In the past, people tried to know the passing of time during the day by measuring the shadow of any particular object, and the times of noon and afternoon prayers were appointed in this way. The sundial was brought out to show the time of day by the shadow of a gnomon - a pointer - on a surface, usually horizontal. The position or length of the shadow of this object on the surface would serve as an indicator of the time - especially the hour - of the day.

The change of the length of the shadows according to the sun's place on the horizon, calls to mind the succession of day and night, and how the human being benefits from both: from the day in working and earning his/her living, and from the night in resting and sleeping. The darkness of the night may provide suitable circumstances for certain human activities that are easier to carry out in the absence of crowds and/or scorching sun, such as crossing the desert or constructing roads and bridges. The majority of people retire at night and get up in the morning to resume their work, and signs of human life can be seen again during the day after their substantial suspension at night.

The movement of winds is another phenomenon of universal dynamism. Winds' relations with evaporation and condensation make them, in certain cases, the carriers of good news about coming rain, which brings with it life to extensive land, with its plants,

animals and human beings. Changes in light and darkness (or shade), day and night, quiescence and action, and dryness and wetness underline the huge, ceaseless, correlated, and faultless cosmic activity which is beyond any imagination, even after all modern scientific discoveries, and point to the wonderful plan of creation, and the Omnipotent Planner behind it.



*And it is He who has let forth the two bodies of water: one sweet and thirst quenching, and the other salty and bitter; yet has He made a barrier between them and a ban that blocks each from the other.*  
[25:53]

وَهُوَ  
الَّذِي مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ  
وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا  
وَحِجْرًا مَحْجُورًا ﴿٥٣﴾



*He has allowed the two great bodies of water [the sweet and the salt] to meet together, [yet] between them there is a barrier which they do not overpass.*  
[55:19-20]

مَرَجَ  
الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيَانِ ﴿١٩﴾ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا  
يَبْغِيَانِ ﴿٢٠﴾

Two huge bodies of water exist in the world: one of sweet water as in rivers, lakes, springs or underground water resources, and another of salty water as in seas and oceans. The latter bodies of salty water can themselves supply sweet water through the process of evaporation and condensation which may end in rain or snow. Although these two types of bodies may meet, as when a river ends in a sea where we see the sweet water poured through the mouth of the river into the sea, an isthmus or an invisible barrier keeps each body of water distinct in its original character, in spite of such meeting points. Therefore, despite the perfectly coordinated interrelations between the two bodies of water, and the meeting and mingling of their waters at certain points, they remain distinct, each benefiting human beings with its specific characteristic in providing drinking water or salt or in facilitating navigation. Beyond such an obvious understanding of the verse based on scientific or concrete facts, there has been a mystic "sufi" understanding - as rightfully pointed out by Asad in his note about it - that sees in the verse a symbolization of the sweet human spirituality and the salty environment of the world, between which a natural and healthy correlation ought not go beyond certain bounds.



*And you see the mountains which you may suppose firm and fixed, while they pass by like clouds; a work of God who has perfectly created all things.*

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ  
تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ  
السَّحَابِ ۗ صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَتَقَنَ كُلَّ

Surely, He is fully aware of all that you do.  
[27:88]

شَيْءٌ إِنَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

The above verse may refer to the dynamism of the nature of this world through each atom of a substance, despite the consistency of matter. This may occur even with regard to enormously massive and solid matter, an example of which may be well represented by the stability of enormous mountains. These move with the earth in its daily and yearly movements, and are also affected by erosion factors such as heat, wind, rain and snow. The theory of relativity indicated that all motions are relative; thus a person in a car is with the car in motion with respect to the earth, and the earth is in motion with regard to the sun and the center of the galaxy. In addition, every atom of the mountain has its positively charged nucleus surrounded by electrons, which are elementary particles of negative electricity that rotate about the nucleus in orbits. A strong force binds the electrons with the protons, the positively charged particles in the nucleus, and such a binding force must be great enough to overcome the repulsive force existing between several protons .

The mountains also have an unfelt function as a factor of stability on the crust of the earth which balances the stresses and disturbances that come from the unstable center of the earth towards the surface [see the previously mentioned verse 16:15 and the commentary on it]. Enormous elimination of forests and hills for urban expansion in many parts of the world has contributed to the looseness of the soil and erosion. One can truly appreciate the perfection of God's creation in such a balanced equation between motion and stability. Since the above verse follows another that describes some features of the Day of Resurrection, it was understood by classical commentators on the Quran as referring to the qualitative change of the nature of this world in the life to come.



*And among His signs [and wonders] is your sleep at night and in the daytime, and your [ability for] seeking of His bounty; surely in that are signs for people who listen.*

*And among His signs [and wonders] is that He shows you the lightning that bears [both] fear and hope, and that He sends down water from the sky, giving life thereby to the earth after it had been lifeless; surely in that are signs for people who use their minds. [30:23-24]*

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ مَتَاعُكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ  
وَأَبْتِغَاؤُكُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ  
لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُسْمِعُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَمِنْ  
آيَاتِهِ يُرِيكُمْ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا  
وَيُنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَيُحْيِي بِهِ  
الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ  
لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

The succession of sleep and wakefulness followed by activity in earning one's living shows a biological and intellectual ability for the human being to live in harmony with the cosmic design of day and night in general, with the exception of those whose work is at night and thus they must sleep during the day, but such people are substantially fewer in their numbers. The following verse states that the same natural features, such as the lightning that accompanies thunder, can have beneficial and/or harmful effects on

different people, and thus can raise hope, with its ensuing rain as well as fear of possible damage to homes or lives, in the human being, who is challenged to find protection from the harm through the human intellect. As a result of the challenge to the human intellect to find protection from lightening, the lightning rod was invented in the eighteenth century. Through such contrasting messages, the human being ought to think deeply about the creation and the Creator; about this life with all its pleasures and insecurities as well as the eternal pleasures of the life to come. Nature in its various phenomena represents an open and comprehensive exposition of knowledge throughout the world for all those who may perceive and contemplate.



*It is God who sends forth the winds that stir up clouds which He spreads in the sky as He wills, and shatters them and thus you see rain dropping out from within it and as soon as He causes them to reach whomsoever He wills of His servants, behold, they do rejoice; although just before it was sent down on them, they had been in full despair! Behold, then [O human being], these signs of God's grace, how He gives life to the earth after it was lifeless; surely, He is the same who will bring the dead back to life, and He has the power over everything. [30:48-50]*

اللَّهُ

الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا  
 فَيَبْسُطُهُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ  
 وَيَجْعَلُهُ كِسْفًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ  
 خِلَالِهِ ۗ فَإِذَا أَصَابَ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ  
 عِبَادِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَإِنْ  
 كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ  
 لَمْبَلِسِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَانظُرْ إِلَى آثَارِ  
 رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ  
 مَوْتِهَا ۗ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى ۗ  
 وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

The above verses refer to the formation of clouds and the falling of rain, and how these natural phenomena of wind, evaporation and condensation result in rain which brings life to the earth and to people's hopes about their gains in agriculture and animal breeding, in addition to the preservation of human life through food and water. The Quranic logic in presenting the fact is obvious. Just as God has created life in this world and has constantly secured its continuation through such intact laws, He can bring people back to life through His power and according to His will, as He brings life to earth after being lifeless.



*Nor are the two great bodies of water alike, the one: sweet, thirst quenching, and pleasant to drink, and the other: salty and 'bitter. Yet, from each do you eat fresh and tender meat, and bring forth out of it ornaments for you to wear; and you can see the ships therein ploughing through the waves, so*

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرَانِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ  
 سَائِغٌ شَرَابُهُ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ أُجَاجٌ ۗ  
 وَمِنْ كُلِّ تَاكُلُونَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا  
 وَتَسْتَخْرِجُونَ حِلِيَّةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا ۗ وَتَرَى

that you might seek [thus] of His bounty and so haply you will be grateful.

He merges night gradually into day and He merges day gradually into night, and He has made the sun and the moon subservient [to His laws], each running its course for a stated term [by Him]. That is God, your Lord; to Him belongs all dominion, and those whom you call upon, apart from Him, possess not so much as the husk of a date-stone. [35:12-13]

أَفَلَا فِيهِ مَوَآخِرَ لَتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ  
وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي  
النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَسَخَّرَ  
الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ  
مُسَمًّى ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ  
وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مَا يَمْلِكُونَ مِنْ  
قَطْمِيرٍ ﴿١٣﴾

This is another reference to the two distinctive bodies of water, and the way they are of benefit to human beings, by providing drinking water, food, ornament and transportation that contributes to the quest of God's bounty and economic development. All these material benefits for human beings should lead them logically to be grateful to the One who provides these benefits. The next verse calls attention once again to the succession of day and night with their different lengths throughout the four seasons, and the relation of the sun and the moon to the earth and its population. Wherever one contemplates the cosmic phenomena, one sees that their perfect scientific order and their subsequent benefit for human beings, point to the One Creator and Lord of all dominion, and invoking any beside Him or with Him ought to be seen as senseless for all who are sensible.



Have you not seen that God sends down water from the sky, and therewith We bring forth plant produce of diverse hues, and in the mountains there are streaks of white and red of various shades, as well as [others] raven black. And so human beings and beasts and cattle, diverse are their hues. Of all His servants, those who feel truly in awe of God are those who have knowledge; surely, God is All-mighty, All-forgiving. [35:27-28]

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ  
أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ  
ثَمَرَاتٍ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهَا وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ  
جُدَدٌ بَيْضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا  
وَعَرَابِيٌّ سَوْدٌ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ  
وَالدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ  
كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ  
الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

The vast diversity in the universe and the intact coordination of its laws and phenomena provide a constant manifestation of God's power and oneness. The above verses refer to the diverse natural hues of rocks, plants, plant produce, and living creatures including human beings and all animals. The Quran requires for true faith in the One God, a proper observation and recognition of His creation. The Quran guides the human senses and wisdom to contemplate the various phenomena of this creation and to consequently develop the concept of, and belief in, a mighty power and wisdom behind the

whole universe in its vastness, diversity and coordination; “Of all His servants, those who stand truly in awe of God are people who have knowledge”. There are those who may attack others’ belief in God without genuine knowledge and serious thinking, and who suppose that it is only ignorant people who believe, but they are in reality the ones who are ignorant, or who restrict their powers of observation and thinking to the material benefits of the universe in spite of being exposed to its marvelous phenomena, laws and order.



*And a sign for them is the night from which We gradually strip off the [light of] day, and, so, they are plunged into darkness.*

*And the sun runs through a determined course of its own, which is accurately designed by the All-mighty, the All-Knowing. And the moon, We have determined its phases [that it must go through] till it becomes like an aged palm bough [dried up and curved]. Neither may the sun overtake the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day, since each floats along in [its own] orbit through space [according to God’s laws for the universe]. [36:37-40]*

وَءَايَةٌ

لَهُمْ أَلَيْلٌ تَسْلُخُ مِنْهُ النَّهَارَ فَآذَاهُمْ  
مُظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي  
لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ  
﴿٣٨﴾ وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَرْتَهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ  
كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ ﴿٣٩﴾ لَا الشَّمْسُ  
يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ  
سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ ۗ وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ  
﴿٤٠﴾

The gradual change from day to night and vice versa, and the different lengths of the two in different seasons, are repeatedly referred to in the Quran as a daily sign exposed to every human being wherever he/she lives and whatever his/her intelligence and knowledge may be. Such a perfect order of nature manifests, over and over, the power of God and His wisdom in planning the universe and its interrelated and coordinated laws on one side, and His care for His creatures in these plans on the other. This daily phenomenon is often described as “making the night gradually enter [or merge] into the day [and vice versa]” or “making the night grow longer by shortening the day, [and vice versa]” [the verses 3:27, 22:61, 31:29, 35:13, 57:6]. In two other verses, the phenomenon is described as “covering the day gradually with the night” [7:54, 13:3]. In another verse [39:5] the covering of the day by the night and vice versa is described as occurring in a spherical way, a description that may refer to the spherical shape of the earth. As this phenomenon is connected with the sun and the place of the earth in relation to it during the day and night and throughout the year, it is usually followed in the Quran by a reference to the sun which gives light in the daytime and the moon which gives light at night.

In the above verse, the same phenomenon is presented as the taking, pulling or gradual withdrawing of one from the other, and the reference in the verse is specifically about gradually withdrawing the day and letting the night proceed, so that people are not suddenly thrust into towards the darkness of the night. The above verse [36:38] indicates both the swift motions and developments within the sun, as well as its stability in spite of these swift, ongoing evolvments. However, according to al-Zamakhshari, ‘Abd Allah ibn

Mas'ud, the knowledgeable Companion of the Prophet, who is reliably reported to have read the Arabic phrase "*li-mustaqarrin laha,*" which is interpreted above in a different way, as "*la mustaqarra laha,*" which refers to a ceaseless running through its course without any stop. Just as the earth rotates around itself and around the sun, resulting in the succession of day and night and the change in their lengths, the moon goes through different phases in its monthly movements around the earth. Motion and change are obvious in the various phenomena of the universe, but the arrangements and coordination of these multifarious activities and their functioning cannot be secured except by the One Almighty since "Had there been deities on earth or in heaven other than the One God, they would surely have gone to ruin" [21:22].



*Certainly the creation of the heavens and earth is greater than the creation of human beings; yet most people recognize not [such a significant fact].* [40:57]

لَخَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ  
خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا  
يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

The above verse puts the human being, as a phenomenon in perspective with regard to the gigantic cosmos with its huge galaxies, solar systems, stars and planets. Such an enlightenment gives the human being a balanced view of his/her place in the universe, since he/she may be inclined towards over-estimating himself/herself as a result of the natural forces which the Creator has made subservient to his/her human mind, although this is also a divine gift. The Quran refers to the creation of the whole cosmos and its perfect order, and to the human being and the spiritual, intellectual, moral and physical powers granted by God to him/her which have to be used in totality to develop the human being and maintain and further develop the resources of the universe made subservient to him/her. In this balance, a human-centered view of the world appears to be obviously nonsense. On the other hand, a view that sees the human being as a helpless creature in such a gigantic universe is no less mistaken. Through the belief in God and by following the guidance of His message, harmony is secured within the whole creation, and the human being can avoid both arrogance and defeatism.



*And among His signs is the [very] creation of the heavens and the earth, and of all the living creatures which He has spread throughout them, and He is able to make them meet together whenever He wills.* [42:29]

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ  
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَثَّ فِيهِمَا  
مِن دَابَّةٍ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ  
قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

Life may exist in any form and in any place in this gigantic cosmos, and it may not be only restricted to the earth. God is able to allow these various creatures from different places in the cosmos to be gathered whenever and wherever He wills. This is an early reference to the space era in which current space voyages may be constituting a modest beginning.



Surely, in the heavens and the earth, are signs for those who [are willing to] believe. And in the creation of your own selves, and in the spreading of living creatures [throughout the earth], are signs for those who [are willing] to reach certainty. And in the succession of night and day, and in what God sends down as sustenance from the sky, giving life therewith to the earth after being lifeless, and in the turning about [in different directions] of the winds, [in all these] are signs for those who use their minds. [45:3-5]

ان فِي السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣﴾ وَفِي  
خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِن دَابَّةٍ ء آيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ  
يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾ وَآخْتَلَفَ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ  
وَمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِن رِّزْقٍ  
فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا  
وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ ء آيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥﴾

The above verses sum up some signs of God's power, wisdom and grace which are manifested in the universe, in life in general and in the human life in particular, in the succession of day and night and their varying lengths throughout the seasons, and in the driving of the winds in different directions and the consequent sending down of rain that brings out life with it to all living creatures. All these natural phenomena and signs of divine power and grace have been repeatedly referred to in the previously mentioned Quranic verses.

The above verse [45:5, also 2:164] uses the phrase "turning about or driving the winds [in different directions]." The wind is driven in a certain direction according to the development of high and low air pressure. The distribution of land and water bodies has its effect on the wind and its dryness or wetness. Rain brings out different plants in different soils and climates. The Quran repeatedly stresses in various ways of expression how diverse the cosmos is, and how organized and coordinated.



It is God who has made the sea subservient to you, so that ships might run on it at His commandment [through His laws], and that you might seek of His bounty, haply so you will be grateful. And He has made subservient to you, what is in the heavens and what is on the earth, all together from Him; in that are signs indeed for people who reflect. [45:12-13]

اللَّهُ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمُ  
الْبَحْرَ لَتَجْرِي أَلْفُكُ فِيهِ بِأَمْرِهِ  
وَلَتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ء وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ  
﴿١٢﴾ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِّنْهُ ء إِنَّ فِي  
ذَٰلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

The above verses sum up the benefits of bodies of water, a subject that has been elaborated on in previously mentioned verses. Here, the first verse refers to the bodies of water provided to human beings all over the world with their potential for universal trade routes and means of economic exchange and exploration of world resources. The next verse refers to making subservient to the human beings "the heavens" in its general sense,



which may allude to enabling them to go through space and reach other planets, especially when one notices that the previous verse refers to making the bodies of water, on which human beings sail ships, subservient to people.

In addition to emphasizing universality in human relations and economic development in both verses, the last one states a highly significant principle in Islamic faith and law: that God “*has subjected to you [human beings], what is in the heavens and what is on the earth: all together from Him.*” Another verse states that God “*has created for you [human beings] all that is on earth*” [2:29]. The jurists have inferred an essential principle in Islamic law: that the general rule about any substance is that God has allowed its use, as long as no specific rule in the divine law has stated that it is forbidden. The divine laws in the Quran and Sunna are not comprehensive with regard to all that is allowed, but they comprehensively and specifically indicate what is forbidden. All what is not indicated in the divine sources as forbidden is considered allowed and lawful as long as it is not harmful, since whatever causes harm is forbidden. If anything shares the properties of something forbidden in the Quran and Sunna, it may be considered forbidden through a convincing analogy.