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STUDENT'S BOOK

**THE CHAIN
OF PROPHETS**

-I-

Osman Nuri TOPBAŞ

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PREFACE

In order to guide His servants to the truth, Almighty Allah has helped them by not only bestowing upon them certain superior traits, but also by appointing righteous people amongst them to be their guides. These righteous people who have been favoured with revelation are the prophets.

These blessed envoys, who constitute a model for the community, have been appointed with three duties:

- A. To recite the verses of Allah and to propagate them;
- B. To purify and refine the nafs¹;
- C. To teach the Book and wisdom.

This unique support from our Lord began with the prophet Adam so that all of mankind has been included. Adam was both the first human being and the first prophet.

This blessed path of guidance, supported and corroborated by the one hundred and twenty four thousand prophets who have come one after the other, has followed a path of development in accordance with the maturation of humanity – even though the creed has remained fundamentally the same - and eventually reached its perfection with the prophet Muhammad. The Holy Qur'an is humanity's guide to the truth until the Day of judgement. Its miraculous nature has incapacitated its deniers and amazed its believers. It was bestowed upon the prophet Muhammad and then through him upon all of mankind. It has been sent to humanity in order to guide them and to gain for them happiness both in this world and the next.

It realises this aim by touching on many different matters. In particular, the relating of stories of past communities is one of the most fundamental features of the Qur'an in serving this purpose.

The stories that are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an are works of wisdom which warn humanity of deviating from the truth and encourage them to servitude of Allah by the lessons that can be gained by looking at the events that took place in the lives of past peoples. In this way, unsound behaviour and the manifestations of divine justice in response, and correct action and the corresponding reward and happiness that it brings are thus exemplified.

This then becomes a warning and a lesson to others to beware of making similar mistakes and also serves the purpose of encouraging behaviour and actions that result in happiness.

The Holy Qur'an places great importance on guiding through the stories of the peoples of the past. This is shown by the fact that these stories make up one third of its content.

Jalalluddin Rumi has the following to say about the importance of these stories and learning from them:

1 The *nafs* which means the inner self, is the lowest dimension of man's inward existence. It is the animal and satanic nature of the human being that inclines towards evil (translator's note).



“The Holy Qur’an constitutes the state and characteristics of the prophets. If you read the Qur’an with deep reverence and apply its teachings you can consider yourself conversing with the prophets and the saints. As one reads the stories of the prophets the bodily cage begins to constrict the bird of soul.

It was only through these stories that we were freed from this bodily cage. There is no other cure to be freed from that cage other than this path, that is, the path of tawheed²...”

Have you not seen what the fierce winds did to the people of ‘Ad? Have you not heard what the waters did during the great Flood?

How that Red Sea destroyed Pharaoh and how Qarun was plunged into the depths of the earth...

What the ehabil birds did to the army of the elephants and how a tiny insect destroyed Nimrod...

Do you not know how stones rained down upon the indecent people of Lot and how they were buried in a dark and filthy lake?”

If I were to speak at length on how seemingly inanimate objects came to the aid of the prophets as if they were intelligent beings... then this Mathnawi would become so large in volume that forty camels would be unable to bear its load...”

In order to strengthen the creed of tawheed in the hearts, the messages of the prophets and the response of their peoples are examined.

The wisdom in these stories can be summarised as follows, in accordance with the purpose of the revelation of the Qur’an:

- To prove the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad;
- To show that all the prophets spread the message of tawheed;
- To ensure that those it addresses are able to easily learn their lesson;
- To awaken the hearts by encouraging people to admire righteous people and by warning them against sinners. The result is that the servants of Allah take heed from the difficulties and tribulations encountered by the prophets and show patience and learn to be thankful for bounties.

This book, a product of divine favour, which we have humbly attempted to write contains the wisdom and lessons to be learnt from the prophets who are mentioned in the Qur’an and their lives from the first page of the history of prophethood until the last.

We have tried to transmit these pearls of wisdom which have the ability to illuminate humanity and be a means for understanding the modern person’s convulsions of the spirit and their pain by relating the events that took place in the lives of the prophets and their peoples.

In particular we discuss the prophet Adam to whom the angels were commanded to prostrate to; the prophet Idris who bore the mysterious wonders of the heavens; the prophet Noah who cleansed the earth of unbelief with the Flood; the prophet of the people of ‘Ad whose lands of unbelief were uprooted by storms; the prophet Salih of the people of Thamud whose house’s foundations were shaken by the earthquake due to their rebelliousness and wildness; the prophet Ibrahim for whom the fire of Nimrod became a garden of roses for him due to his submission to Allah; the prophet Ismail who was an embodiment of sincerity, loyalty, reliance upon Allah and submission to Him;

the prophet Ishaq from whom all of the prophets of the Israelites came; the sorrowful prophet Lut of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah who continued to call his wild and indecent people to guidance until the last moment; the prophet Dhu’l Qarnayn who carried the banner of tawheed from the east to the west; the prophet Yaqub who burned with longing and love and became a model of patience; the prophet Yusuf who became the King of Hearts after spending his life in slavery and prison, in pain and torment and then onto Egypt; the prophet Shu’ayb who enraptured the hearts with his speech; the prophet Musa who destroyed the foolish Pharaoh in the eddies of the Red Sea with of his staff; the prophet Harun, the prophet Musa’s

2 *Tawheed* is an Arabic word which indicates the oneness and unity of Allah (translator’s note).



righteous brother and his helper at all times and places; the prophet Dawud who enraptured the mountains, the stones and even wild animals with his glorification of Allah; the prophet Sulayman who carried his kingdom outside of his heart; Uzayr who by being raised back to life after dying was an example of the resurrection on the Day of Judgement; the prophet Ayyub who was a model of patience with his deep reflection and contemplation; the prophet Yunus who overcame the darkness in a state of ecstasy by delving into the reality of istigfar, prayer and remembrance of Allah; the prophet Ilyas who was favoured with divine compliment and countenance by being addressed as 'Peace be upon Ilyas'; the prophet al-Yasa who was made superior over the worlds; the righteous prophet Dhu'l Kifl who was enveloped in divine mercy; the patron saints of both the external and inner physicians Luqman Hakim, whose wise advice has become an epic; the innocent prophet Zachariah who refrained from muttering even an 'aaa' whilst being sawn into two and who preserved his dependence upon and submission to Allah; the prophet John(Yahya) who reached his Lord as a martyr just like his father Zachariah; and the heavenly prophet Isa whose distinguishing trait was purification of the nafs and who was able to cure the ill, bring the dead back to life with his prayer and supplication.

We have also tried to illustrate how these harbingers of good news that came one after the other were responsible for preparing humanity for the arrival of the prophet Muhammad (saw), who like a blessed flame of guidance was sent as a mercy to all the worlds, and was the light of existence, the peak of perfection of the chain of prophethood and the secret of creation.

My previous book 'The chain of prophets' received great praise, and I was advised and encouraged to review it and prepare it as a 'study book' to be taught in various Islamic teaching schools.

The book has been condensed in order to increase the efficiency of students and to make it easier for them to benefit from. Also some parts have been added where necessary in order for certain matters to be better understood. The book has been enriched with pictures and maps. And some verses deemed necessary have been written in their original text in order to facilitate memorisation of them.

The book has been simplified to a certain degree; however because it is essential that our rich Islamic culture is transmitted to the next generations I have taken care to preserve certain words, terminology and expressions which are part of Islamic culture.

The verses from the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad have been revised and reordered in accordance with the importance and flow of the matter and the stories that are told.

At the end of every section there are short-answer questions, 'fill in the gaps' and 'multiple choice' questions which require explanation, interpretation, comparison, knowledge and attention. A table of answers has been included in the back of the book.

In choosing and preparing these questions we have taken into consideration the following aims: to increase the knowledge of the students and to motivate them in terms of their emotions, thoughts and behaviour; to encourage them to reflect upon the wisdom in each event; to help them make a connection with their world today; and to take heed from the events in the lives of the prophets.

I am particularly grateful to the members of the committee and my academician brothers who have helped in revising this work in this way. I pray to our Lord to accept this from them and reward them with the reward of ongoing charity.

I ask Allah to overlook and forgive any errors that may arise due to my own weakness and fault and seek refuge in His endless mercy and compassion. Success is from Allah alone.

Osman Nuri Topbaş
22.04.2004
Uskudar



INTRODUCTION

All praise be to Allah Most High and Holy for endowing us, His powerless servants with the delight and peace of faith.

Blessings and peace be upon the Master of this Universe, the prophet Muhammad (saw) who was the means for humanity arising out of darkness and being enveloped in light.

In the Holy Qur'an Almighty Allah speaks to us of the truths of divine wisdom, learning one's lesson and spreading His message by relating the lives of past communities.

He presents these in the form of stories to facilitate ease and simplicity of understanding for the human mind. This is expressed in the Holy Qur'an as follows:

'(O My Messenger) We tell you the best of stories in revealing this Qur'an to you...' (Yusuf, 12:3)

The features of the stories told in the Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an draws attention to the real meaning behind events. Hence it does not place much importance on the elements of time, place and characters in question. To go into details which do not serve the purpose of showing the lessons to be learnt from events will drown the real matter in unnecessary particulars and make it harder to understand the lesson to be learnt from the story. Whatever the reason for the story being told, the Holy Qur'an only deals with that part which relates to this purpose. Because the primary aim of the story related is to teach a religious lesson it disregards the chronological order and relates it from the beginning, from the middle or from the end.

It does not make the reader delve into the events and remain there but intersperses within the story religious guidance, wisdom and lessons to revive the heart.

The Quranic stories generally begin with an introduction which attracts the attention of the reader. The events are not presented as dry facts. On the contrary they are presented in a personified manner, with portrayals full of action and excitement. Many metaphors are also used.

The important scenes are explicitly displayed; however many of the details are left to the imagination and contemplation of the reader. For example, in the chapter Yusuf, the dream seen by the prophet Yusuf that he tells to his father Yaqub is told with an eye-catching introduction and in a lively and metaphorical manner:

'When Yusuf told his father, 'Father! I saw eleven bright stars, and the sun and moon as well. I saw them all prostrate in front of me.' (His father) said, 'My son, don't tell your brothers your dream lest they devise some scheme to injure you, Satan is a clear-cut enemy to man' (Yusuf, 12:4-5).



One of the most important features of the Quranic stories is repetition. Repetition makes itself known more so in the stories rather than in the other matters dealt with in the Qur'an.

This however, is not true repetition as each time the story is told, it is told in a different manner and with different details.

Each different version results in a different lesson to be learnt and opens up a window from the heart onto the unseen realm.

As an example of this the story of Iblis refusing to prostrate before the prophet Adam is repeated in many various verses throughout the Qur'an. However each verse draws attention to a different reason.

For instance, in the 74th verse of the chapter Sa'd, the arrogance and pride of Satan is given as being reasons for his unbelief and the sickness of pride has been shown to be a very dangerous illness, which if not cured can take a person as far as unbelief and denial of Allah.

In the 11th and 12th verses of the chapter A'raf, Satan is mentioned as being previously amongst the angels and favoured with numerous bounties but instead of being grateful for these, he was ungrateful and using these bounties as an excuse for his conceit he rebelled against the divine command.

In the 31st verse of the chapter Hijr, the pride and arrogance of Satan blinded him so much that he could only see the form of prophet Adam that was created from a sticky clay and failed to see his spiritual aspect in which his Lord had breathed into him of His spirit.

Repetition is the presentation of the essence of the matter using different styles. This is why ordinary events are not repeated. For instance the birth, youth and marriage of the prophet Musa are not repeated. However many important matters in regards to the purpose of his prophethood are repeated many times such as Musa's encounter with Pharaoh, his competition with the magicians, and the state of the rebellious Israelites.

Moreover when all of the information about an individual is brought together from different places a perfectly complete picture emerges. The true purpose of the divine grand objective is embroidered upon the hearts and the spirits. A person will better understand a matter when it is repeated in a different style and with different expression. This shows that the repetition which is found in the Book of Allah is a divine method of teaching which is in accordance with the psychology of the human being.

Sometimes the details are repeated and sometimes the essence of the meaning is repeated. In the repetition of the meanings sometimes there is a summary and sometimes there is detail.

The Holy Qur'an addresses human beings of different levels of intelligence and mentality. It addresses humanity in all of its classes, from the common man to the educated cultured class.

In this respect then, every level of human being, every stage and every class can benefit from it according to his capacity. The repetition of the words and sentences in the Qur'an are to reinforce the meaning and to add to its eloquence by cautioning the human being who is either amazed or terrified.

For instance in the chapter 'Qari'a' the word 'qari'a' ('the sudden calamity') is repeated three times, the purpose of which is to present the terrifying scene of the Day of Judgement so that it can be felt deeply.

In the chapter 'Rahman' the bounties bestowed upon the human beings and the jinn³ are listed one after the other and then the following verse is repeated 31 times throughout the chapter: **'So which of your Lord's blessings do you both then deny?'**

This then raises the veil of ignorance in the human being and compels him to admit the divine bounties that have been bestowed upon him and remind him that his duty is to give thanks for them.

As a book of guidance the Holy Qur'an is also a book of prayer and remembrance of Allah.

3 The *jinn* are a class of creation, created out of fire and capable of appearing in human and animal forms and influencing humankind for either good or evil (translator's note).



And the purpose of prayer and remembrance of Allah is made more apparent through repetition. In the quranic stories the prophets are presented as perfected human beings in all respects of humanity.



They have been chosen not on account of any of their efforts but rather by divine appointment. The Holy Qur'an says:

'...We chose them and guided them to a straight path' (An'am, 6:87).

This selection of the prophets for this divine purpose placed a great and heavy burden upon them. Almighty Allah declares that they too are in a state of powerlessness and absolutely no divinity is to be ascribed to them:

'We will question those to whom the Messengers were sent, and We will question the Messengers' (A'raf, 7:6)

Thus the verse informs us that even though they are under a form of guarantee they too will be taken to account for the care which they took in spreading Allah's message as required.

We must make it clear here that the duty of spreading the divine commands by all the prophets was limited to a certain period of time with the exception of that of the prophet Muhammad. Thus, a rich systematic code of behaviour was not handed down from them to the following generations for them to take as their example. Whereas because the prophet Muhammad (saw) was sent to all of humanity until the end of time, and his message addressed all times and all places, his every word and act was determined and recorded with the greatest of care and sensitivity and transmitted to us with a sound chain of transmission and in the greatest of detail.

This then will continue until the Day of Judgment because he was chosen to be a perfect model (uswa al-hasana) for his community until the last days of time.

The character of the prophet Muhammad is the character of the Qur'an. From the day it was revealed until today the Holy Qur'an has been a guide for all of humanity in both its worldly and otherworldly aspects. Impacting upon the hearts, it has corrected the deviant worldviews of past communities in the darkness of their unbelief and denial and thus achieved mankind's greatest revolution.

The Holy Qur'an will continue in this duty as long as mankind continues to exist.

Almighty Allah challenges both the human being and the jinn, of all times, by pointing out the impossibility of creating something with any similarity to the Holy Qur'an.

This challenge has remained unanswered until this day.



The Holy Qur'an expresses this truth as follows:

'Say: 'If both men and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could never produce anything like it, even if they backed each other up' (Isra, 17:88).

Even though Almighty Allah then limits this challenge to a mere ten chapters, human beings are yet incapable of bringing about anything like it.

In another verse it is said:

'Or do they say, 'He has invented it?' Say, 'Then produce ten invented chapters like this, and call on anyone you can besides Allah if you are telling the truth' (Hud, 11:13).

Allah Most High reduces this challenge to a single chapter so that mankind can truly realise how incapable they are and the truth that the Qur'an is divine speech.



The verse states:

‘If you have doubts about what We have sent down to Our slave, produce another chapter equal to it, and call your witnesses, besides Allah, if you are telling the truth. If you do not do that – and you will not do it – then fear the Fire whose fuel is people and stones, made ready for the unbelievers’ (Baqara, 2:23-24).



In order to understand, comprehend, hear and feel the Holy Qur’an and perceive its mysteries, one is in need of a sound heart. The Holy Qur’an opens up its mysteries according to the state of one’s heart. The verse states:

أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ أَمْ عَلَى قُلُوبٍ أَقْفَالُهَا

‘Will they not then ponder the Qur’an or are there locks upon their hearts?’ (Muhammad, 47:24).

A darkened heart will not be able to take its share from the Holy Qur’an. Just as the polytheists, who have knowledge of the outer sciences, but are deprived of knowledge of the heart are not able to derive any benefit or be guided by the Holy Qur’an nor will it disclose any of its secrets to them. Allah Most High says:

‘...If they see every Sign, they will not believe in it. If they see the way of right guidance, they will not take it as a way. But if they see the way of error, they will take that as a way. That is because they denied Our Signs and paid no attention to them’ (A’raf, 7:146)

According to the Qur’an since the greatest commentator on of the Qur’an is the prophet Muhammad (saw) all of his hadith⁴ are like a commentary on the Qur’an.

The greatest commentators after the prophet Muhammad are the friends of Allah who act upon their knowledge and have taken their share from his heart.

Jalalluddin Rumi states that when the Qur’an is read with a pure and clean heart, its wisdom and lessons will illuminate the hearts and one will thus be able to understand its mysteries and secrets:

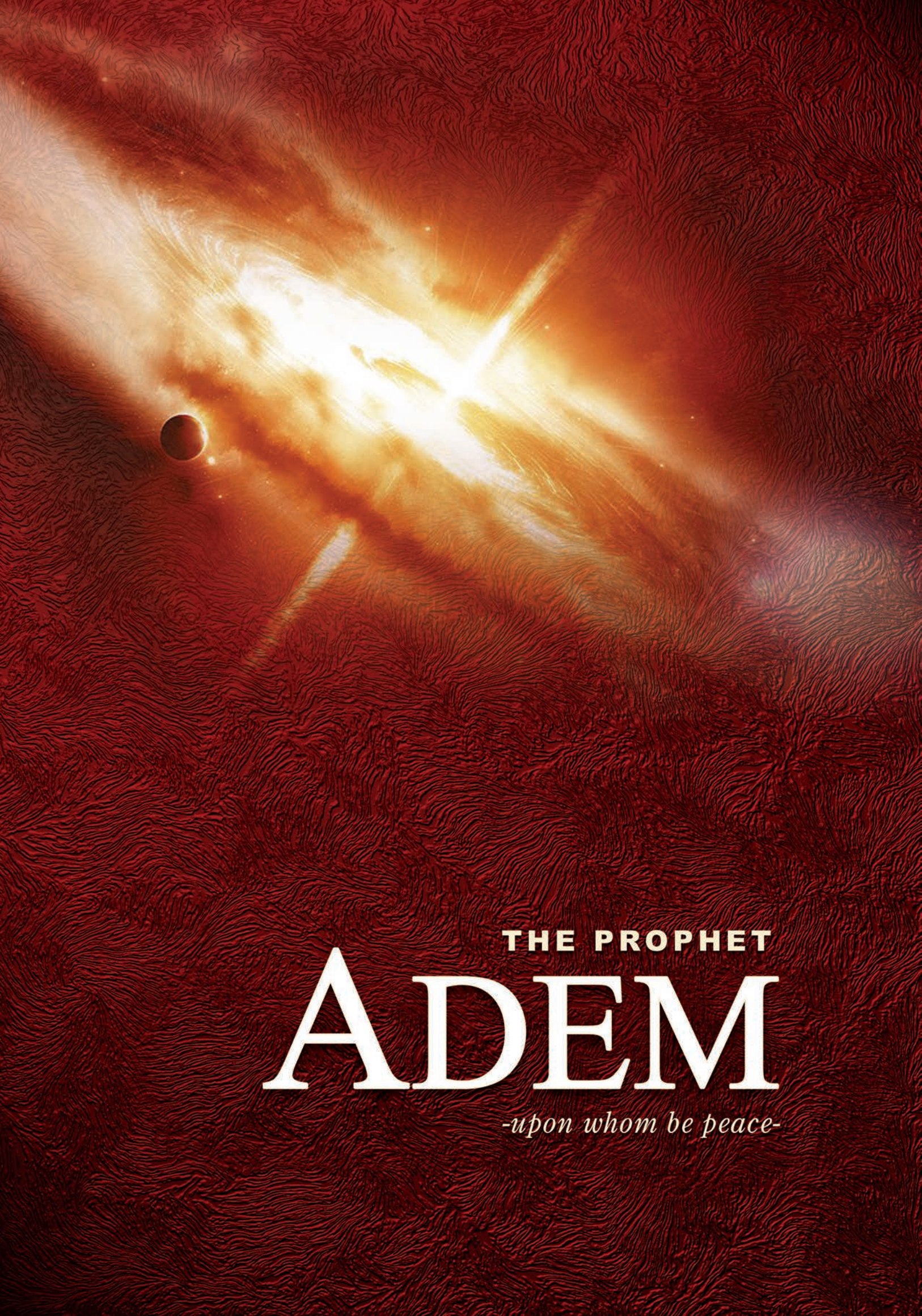
“Before you read the verses of the Holy Qur’an and the hadith of the prophet Muhammad (saw), reform yourself. If you are unable to smell the beautiful scent of the rose garden, do not find fault in the garden but rather look for it in your own heart and nose...”

Thus this Holy Qur’an, which is the subject of this book, is full of awe and profundity with its stories which contain a lesson, caution and guidance for our times.

May our Lord let us take our share from the beautiful virtues reflected in the lives of the prophets, virtues such as patience, gratitude, reliance upon Him, submission to Him, mercy, compassion, humility and selflessness. And may we live our lives in true servitude to Him Amen...

4 A *hadith* is a saying of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) transmitted from reliable narrators. The plural form is *ahadith* (Translator’s note).





THE PROPHET

ADEM

-upon whom be peace-

The Prophet Adam (upon whom be peace)

His creation

When Allah (exalted and magnified is He) was the only Being before anything else in existence, He desired to be known. He therefore created the universe as a place where His attributes would become manifest.

Almighty Allah has numerous attributes which are without limit and some of which we can perceive and others that we cannot. His attributes, both those of Beauty (*Jamali*) and those of Majesty (*Jalali*) are manifest most completely in the following places:

- A. In the universe
- B. In the Holy Qur'an
- C. In the human being



O man! You are a precious fruit of the universe!

The universe is an active manifestation of all of the divine attributes, whilst the Holy Qur'an is a verbal manifestation of them. In other words, the Holy Qur'an can be considered to be the universe in written form.

The human being is like the essence of that universe. This is because the human being is the only creature which takes its share - either in great number or a little - of all of Allah's attributes. This is also why he is mentioned as being the most noble of all creatures, since he does not only manifest the Majestic (*Jalali*) Names of *al-Mudhill*⁵, and *al-Mutakabbir*⁶, but also His Names of Beauty (*Jamali*), that is, *al-Hadi*⁷, *al-Rahman*⁸, *al-Rahim*⁹.

Consequently the human being is '*jami al-azdad*¹⁰'. That is, all attributes, both positive and negative have been gathered within him. This is why he has, within his nature, the tendency to incline toward both good and evil.

- 5 The One who misguides those who deserve to be misguided.
- 6 The One who displays greatness and sovereignty in everything .
- 7 The One who guides.
- 8 The One who is merciful to all of His creatures in this world.
- 9 The One who is merciful to the believers only, in the hereafter.
- 10 *Jami al-azdad* (in Arabic, the gathering of opposites) (Translator's note).



A result of this is that the human being is responsible for ridding himself of his lowly attributes and tendencies through refining his *nafs*, and purifying his heart and perfecting his spiritual aspect to then become a perfected human being.

This can only be realised however under the guidance of the prophets and the saints.

The human being has the capacity to surpass even the angels by advancing in the journey to reach Allah (*wasil ila Allah*). This is why the station of the human being lies between ‘degrees above and over the angels’ and ‘abject ranks, even lower than the animals’

The human being when able to surpass the obstacle of his *nafs* becomes a wonderful work of art where divine elegance is on display. He is the essence of the book of the universe, its opening and the mystery of its creation.

Because beneath the outer appearance of the flesh and bones of the human being, within his spiritual existence lie hidden many secrets, lights and truths of the manifestations of the divine attributes.

Just as a grain of wheat carries within it all of the characteristics of the species of wheat, within all seeds can be found all features and characteristics of that species.

The human being, too, is a uniquely created being who contains the truths of everything in the universe.

The human being is like the essence of the universe folded up, or its seed. In a poem which explains this truth, Shaykh Galib has the following to say:

‘O man! Look at yourself through the eye of your heart for you are the essence of all created beings. You are a human being, the treasure of the universe.



Allah Most High has created many different realms. There are diverse accounts which state their number to be from 18 thousand to 360 thousand.

These realms have been divided up into two general categories: ‘*the realm of creation*’ and ‘*the realm of command*’.

The creation of the human being is considered to be both from the realm of creation and from the realm of command.

In a verse from the Holy Qur’an, it is said:

‘Both creation and command belong to Him. Blessed be Allah, the Lord of all the worlds’ (A’raf, 7:54).

This world (in which we live), which Almighty Allah expresses in the Holy Qur’an as being “*khalafa*” (‘created’), is tangible and visible, it has size and dimensions and is termed a “realm of creation”.

It is a realm made up of creatures which are limited by space and time. It is also called the realm of dominion and the realm of witnessing. Those things that we perceive with our five senses are from this realm.

This world that we see with its earth, water, air, fire etc. are all from the ‘realm of creation’.

On the other hand, the realms which have come into existence as a result of Almighty Allah’s command of ‘*kun*’ (‘be’) and which are not bound by space or time, are from the ‘realm of command’.

The metaphysical, spiritual and otherworldly realms, which are alluded to by the verse from the Holy Qur’an: ‘Say: **The Ruh is my Lord’s work**’ are also from the ‘realm of command’.



The principle reasons for our creation and the wisdom in it

1. The fundamental purpose in the creation of the human being is to worship Allah and to come to know Him.

A verse from the Holy Qur'an states:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

'I only created jinn¹¹ and man to worship Me' (Adh-dhariyat, 51:56)

The 'worship' that is mentioned here as being the aim of creation is such an honourable rank, that its elevated standing can be seen in the declaration of faith (*kalima'i shahadah*)¹². It is here that the Prophet Muhammad is mentioned as being a 'servant' first and then a 'messenger'. This shows that servanthood takes priority, and that messengership is contained within the boundary of servanthood.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) informed us of the value in being a servant and would warn those who showed him excessive reverence as follows: "Do not elevate me to a degree that is not my right. Because before Almighty Allah made me a messenger, he made me a servant" (Haysami, Majmau' az-Zawaid, IX, 21).

In another verse from the Holy Qur'an, Allah Most High says:

قُلْ مَا يَعْبُؤُا بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ

'Say; What has My Lord to do with you if you do not call on Him?' (Furqan, 25:77)

Another meaning of servanthood is '*marifatullah*' which is to know and recognise Allah.

The creation of the human being is directed towards the aim of 'fulfilling one's servanthood' and 'knowing Almighty Allah'.

Concerning the reason for our creation, the above-mentioned verse states "*Li ya'buduun*" that is, 'to worship Me' (Adh-Dhariyat, 51:56). Some commentators on the Qur'an have interpreted this word as meaning 'to know me', that is, '*li ya'rifuun*' (Ibn-i Kathir, Tafsir, IV, 255)

2. Another most important reason and wisdom in the creation of the human being is to yearn for knowledge of Allah that is, His *will* to make Himself known.

The following *hadith qudsi* supports this:

كُنْتُ كَنْزًا مَخْفِيًّا فَأَحْبَبْتُ أَنْ أَعْرَفَ فَخَلَقْتُ الْخَلْقَ لِأَعْرِفَ

"I was a hidden treasure. I wished to be known and so I created (this) universe...¹³".

As can be understood from this, there is a special bond of love between Almighty Allah and His servants. He loves His servants very much and has bestowed upon them innumerable and endless bounties. In response to this, He wishes that they show the greatest love for Allah and that the love they feel for other creatures does not overshadow the love they direct towards Him.

11 The jinn have been created from smokeless and bright fire. They can enter any form [?]; they are invisible creatures who can marry, eat and drink and multiply [procreate].

Though they have the ability to move at the speed of light in many matters, they are still not as developed as human beings and are considered below them in rank. As a unique characteristic of his, the beloved Prophet Muhammad (saw) was sent as a prophet to both man and jinn.

This is why he is called 'Rasul as-**Sakalayn**' which means the prophet of man and jinn.

12 **'I bear witness that there is no other god but Allah and that Muhammad is His servant and messenger'**

13 See al-'Ijlouni, *Kashf al-Khafa*, II, 173. The scholars of hadith have criticised its isnad [chain of narration] however Ali al-Qari has said about its narration: "its meaning is sound".



3. Another of the divine aims in the creation of the human being is Allah Most High's will to bring into existence a pinnacle which would serve as proof of the artistry and beauty in His creation. For the human being is a wonder of creation and a marvel of handiwork. The verses 20 and 21 of chapter adh-Dhariyat state as follows:

وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ

'There are certainly Signs in the earth for people with certainty; and in yourselves as well. Do you not then see?' (51:20-21).

In addition, in another verse, after stating the stages of the creation of the human being, Almighty Allah expresses His greatness as follows:

فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

'Blessed be Allah, the Best of Creators'¹⁴ (Mu'minun, 23:14).

4. Another reason for the creation of the human being, the most noble of creatures, is that Almighty Allah wished to make him the vicegerent of Allah on earth

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

'When your Lord said to the angels, 'I am putting a vicegerent on the earth.' (Baqara, 2:30).

Man being made vicegerent means the following:

"I will give him certain capabilities from My own will, power and attributes; under my authority He will have certain forms of disposal over my creatures; He will enforce My rulings in My Name; He will only be My agent in this matter, and not the authority. He will be commanded to apply My Will with his will and also My commandments and My laws. Then those who come after him, will be his vicegerent and perform the same duty and thus the mystery behind the verse: **'It is He who appointed you khalifs on the earth'** (An'am 6:165) will become apparent. (See Elmalili, Hak Dini, I, 299, 300).

In addition, another wisdom in the creation of the human being is to show the manifestation of the divine Names to a greater degree. The hadith:

"Adopt for yourself the character of Allah" (Munawi, al-Taarif, p. 564) points to this meaning. This is because amongst all creatures, the greatest manifestation of Allah's names can be seen in the human being.

Since there are no manifestations of the names of *al-kibriya* and *al-mudhill* in the angels, there is no obstacle of the *nafs* and because of this they do not commit sins.

This is why the capacity to surpass the obstacle of one's *nafs* and reach Allah and be His Khalifa was given to mankind only. Consequently, man must take his share of the attributes of Allah, with this capacity bestowed upon him, and try to manifest His Names thus attaining the mystery of reaching to Allah.

The creation of the prophet Adam (peace be upon him).

Allah Most High, the Creator and Possessor of the universe, desired that His existence be known. He wished to create the human being, the most noble of creatures, in order to obey and worship him and as His vicegerent so that the world could be rendered prosperous.

14 Because the word, '*khalk*' in Arabic, 'to create' means 'to bring something into existence, it can be applied to other creatures. However when it says: "The Best of Creators", this does not mean that there are Creators other than Allah. For instance, "*Aliyyun ahsan al tullab*" means Ali is the best of students". It does not have to be that there are other good students in the class besides Ali. Even if Ali is the only good student in the class this expression can be used and it means: "Ali is a very good student".





'From it (the earth) We created you, to it We will return you, and from it We will bring you forth a second time' (Ta Ha, 0:55)

He explained this divine will to the angels, whom He had created previously and who were appointed with the duty of worship only:

'When your Lord said to the angels, 'I am putting a *khalif* on the earth,' they said, 'Why put on it one who will cause corruption on it and shed blood when we glorify You with praise and proclaim Your purity?' He said, 'I know what you do not know' (Baqara, 2:30).

In response to this command, the angels said in one voice, thus glorifying and absolving Allah Most High:

'They said, 'Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. You are the All-Knowing¹⁵, the All-Wise¹⁶.' (Baqara, 2:32)

When the angels asked Almighty Allah 'why do you want to create a vicegerent' it was not an objection or rebellion on their behalf, but it was to learn the wisdom in the creation of the human being.

The creation of the human being

The Holy Qur'an explains the phases of the creation of Adam from earth as follows:

1. *Creation from earth*

خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

'He created him from earth and then He said to him, 'Be!' and he was' (Al'I Imran, 3:59).

2. *Clay*

كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ

'He who has created all things in the best possible way. He commenced the creation of man from clay' (Sajdah, 32:7)

3. *Sticky clay*

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا هُم مِّن طِينٍ لَّازِبٍ

'We created them (Adam and His progeny) from sticky clay' (Saffat, 37:11)

4. *Dried clay*

15 Al-Alim: The One who knows everything that was and will be, with His pre-eternal knowledge.

16 Al-Hakim: The One, all of whose commands and affairs well-ordered.





Just as the earth is revived through the spring rain, so too the human being is revived through manifestations of prosperity and mercy.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ

‘We created mankind out of dried clay formed from fetid black mud’ (Hijr, 15:26).

5. Baked clay

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ

‘He created man from dry earth like baked clay’ (Rahman, 55:4)

The episodic creation of all human beings who have descended from the prophet Adam is summarised in the following verses:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَكِينٍ
ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا
ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ لِلَّهِ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

‘...then We formed the drop into a clot and formed the clot into a lump¹⁷ and formed the lump into bones and clothed the bones in flesh; and then brought him into being as another creature. Blessed be Allah, the Best of Creators!’ (Mu’minun,14)

It is only in our age now that medicine has been able to reach this level of knowledge. Whereas the Holy Qur’an informed us of the stages of man’s creation, in accordance with scientific facts, over 1400 years ago.

‘From it We created you, to it We will return you, and from it We will bring you forth a second time’ (Taha 20:55)

Almighty Allah is speaking of the stages of creation, which have so much to teach us. Clay, which constitutes the first of these stages, that is, the stage of Adam’s creation from earth is, on the surface, a lowly

17 A lump of flesh: this expression from the verse is a miracle of the Qur’an which has been only recently discovered in our time. The stage of the *mudgha*, which is the third stage of man’s creation, has the appearance of a chewed lump of flesh with the teeth marks still on it (For more information see Osman Nuri Topbas, *Rahmet Esintileri* p 178).



substance with no fineness to speak of. The stages following this one too are vile: ejected fluid; a sticky and frozen clot of blood; a repulsive substance that looks like it has been chewed in the mouth, with no attraction whatsoever...

But then we have the formation of a human being, a wonder of art, a scene of grace and magnificence through the manifestation of divine power.

And following this...the vigour and vitality of matter and spirit and then a repetition of this journey of development in reverse and then returning back to the place one came from and rotting away in the earth.

And then...coming back into existence and being resurrected from a single seed, the '*ajbu adh-dhunub*'¹⁸, which is like a drop of mercury in a rotting corpse which does not decay itself. It is as if we are watching a plant developing from a seed in fast forward motion.

With these verses, Almighty Allah invites man to contemplate on his journey through this realm of multiplicity:

'But (let them always remember that) if We lengthen a human being's days, We also cause him to decline in his powers (when he grows old); will they not then use their reason' (Yasin, 36:68).

'It is Allah who creates you (all in a state) of weakness, and then, after weakness, ordains strength (for you), and then, after (a period of) strength, ordains (old-age) weakness and grey hair. He creates what He wills; and He alone is all-knowing, infinite in His power' (Rum, 30:54)

'From it We created you, to it We will return you, and from it We will bring you forth a second time' (Taha, 20:55)

These verses show that when one considers the stages it goes through, one finds the human body in a continuous state of change.

Just as human life is mortal, the powers and capabilities that it possesses in this world are also not constant.

The human being possesses the characteristics of the earth since that is what he was created from. There comes a time when the earth dries up, is scorched by the heat and thirsts for water. For an entire season it will suffer the hardships of winter. And then with the copious spring rains it will come back to life. It displays the flow of divine power with a thousand and one forms of beauty, colours, scents and melodies. Mankind too has a similar fate to that of the earth.

He is shaken about in the maelstroms of life's greedy ambitions, like one in a desert sandstorm. He ruins himself under the tyranny of his *nafs*. It is only when he overcomes the obstacle of his *nafs* that he can reach perfection. Just as the dry earth finds life again when the spring rains come, he too will enjoy the manifestations of abundance and mercy.

In this way, for the sake of Allah, just like fertile and fruitful soil, he will present the bounties that have come to him, to those around him, in the spirit of the beauty and abundance of the blessings of spring.



Because it has been created from earth, the human being's mortal body is nourished by the soil and eventually disappears in it. Thus it returns to its origins. All of the elements found in the earth are present in the human being, in small or large quantities. This is because, in reality, the human being is merely a different form of the earth. Likewise, the prophet Adam (peace be upon him) was called 'Adam'¹⁹, because he was created from the earth.

18 This *ajb adh-dhunub* is the name given to the essence of a human being from which he will be resurrected. It is everlasting and is like a drop of mercury that does not decay in a rotting corpse.

19 The word *Adam*, comes from the Hebrew root "*Edem*" which has the meanings of earth, soil etc.



The progeny of Adam were literally created from the earth. Just as the earth from different places possesses different features, human beings too possess different traits, both physical and in terms of character and temperament.

The Prophet Muhammad (saw) expresses this truth in a *hadith* as follows:

“Allah Most High created Adam from a handful of soil taken from all over the earth. This is why, in representation of that soil, a portion of the sons of Adam are red-skinned, some are white, some black and some are a mixture of these colours; some people are soft-natured, some are harsh, some are good-spirited, some are evil-spirited (that is, diverse potentials, traits and characters) have appeared on earth” (Abu Dawud, Sunan 16).

As is known, there are many different elements in the earth like iron, copper, aluminium, phosphorous, and calcium amongst others. The type and quality of the earth is determined by the density and ratio of the elements and minerals and the ratios of the mixtures. The earth then acquires certain characteristics like hardness, softness, and colour, depending on the qualities of its elements and minerals.

Accordingly some types of soil are fertile, some are dry, and some look barren and infertile. Because the human being too, who was created from earth, possesses these elements in varying amounts and proportions, there is a relationship between the apparent features of the earth and mankind. The colour of the human being’s skin has also been determined by the colour of the soil of creation.

Again some people are very harsh and others are soft-natured just like different types of soil; some are competent enough to take in what is taught to them immediately, whilst others remain fruitless no matter how much effort we put into teaching them.

The breathing into the spirit

After creating the human body from earth, Almighty Allah bestowed the highest rank upon him from amongst all His creatures by breathing His own ‘mystery’ into him. It is only after the spirit has been breathed into it that life begins in a human being and from this aspect, the breathing of the spirit points to the worth that Allah has given to His servant and amounts to giving him life. Allah Most High explains how He breathed into the human as follows:

‘When I have formed him (Adam) and breathed My Ruh into him, fall down in prostration in front of him!’ (Hijr, 15:29).

Almighty Allah has used the expression of ‘breathing from His spirit’ figuratively. This means, in effect, that Allah Most High has given certain of His own attributes to His servant, in accordance with his capabilities and potential. It is on account of this spirit which has been breathed into him by his Lord, that the human being can know Him. That is, it is because of the blessings of this trust and the power given to him. This is how he can become His servant. He can become acquainted with His divine greatness and mystery as much as possible. And at the core of this knowledge is the heart. The heart indicated here is not the physical organ, but rather the center of our feelings and a site of manifestation.

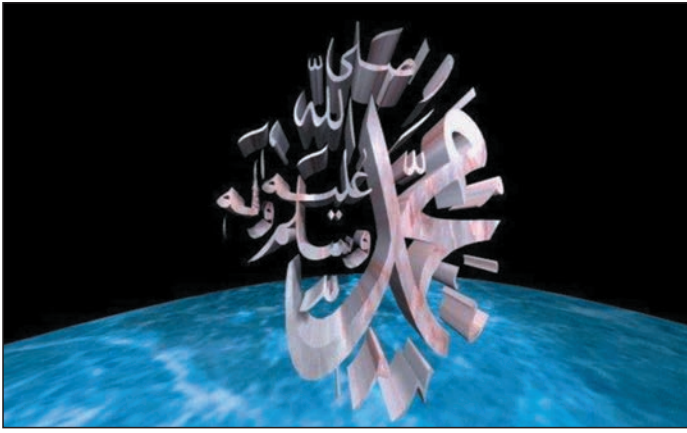
According to Sufi teachings, there are two principal centres for the positive and negative tendencies that exist in man.

These two centres are directly related to the human spirit. They are termed the “Sultanic Spirit” and the “Carnal or Animalistic Spirit”.

The Sultanic spirit

This is the spirit of the human being into which Almighty Allah breathed His own spirit and is the most important feature that distinguishes the human being from other living creatures. This spirit which is from the ‘realm of command’ exists to act positively, together with the body. It is with this spirit that the human being, clothed in his body, can carry out his servanthood and obey Allah and incline towards righteous deeds. This spirit is not affected by the rotting away and annihilation of the body. Its disposal over the body only comes to an end at death.





The carnal spirit

This is a subtle power that sustains the human being, and rules over a biological structure. It is also called 'life' or 'soul' (*nafs*). It is from the 'realm of creation'. This spirit keeps the body alive and gives it its carnal desires and diffuses throughout the body.

Its essential rule is over the blood. Its control centre is the brain. This spirit, which makes up the starting point of one's actions and deeds, can have a negative influence on a person's actions, if it has not been properly trained.

Thus a person's acts come into being as a result of the joint traits of the sultanic and carnal spirits.

The sultanic spirit is the captain whilst the carnal spirit is like his mount or horse. The rider must have good control over his horse. As long as he knows it well and can rule over it, the sultanic spirit will prevail.

The sultanic spirit renders the human being responsible for three principal duties and it ensures the necessary power and capability in order for these duties to be performed. These duties are:

1. To know oneself and one's reality, that is, to one's *nafs*.
2. To know and recognise one's Creator and Lord (*marifatullah*)
3. To recognise one's extreme poverty in the face of Allah, that is, to become aware of one's own nothingness before Him.

In accordance with this, there is a *hadith* that states:

"The one who knows himself knows his Lord" ('Ijluni, *Kashf al-Khafa*, II, 344).

The sultanic spirit is the real and eternal spirit and one's journey to either heaven or hell is taken with it. Jalalluddin Rumi says:

"Do not nourish your body with excessive fat or sugar. Because the one who nourishes his skin becomes addicted to his carnal desires and ends up being disgraced".

"Nourish your spirit with otherworldly things. Present it with mature thought, subtle understanding and spiritual nourishment so that it can go to where it is destined (the hereafter) powerful and strong".

The first thing to have been created was "*nur-u Muhammad*", that is, the light of the prophet Muhammad. And the first spirit to be created was his spirit. The other spirits are like a jewellery case to encase his noble spirit, so that his value and worth is recognised.

This is why the Prophet Muhammad (saw) is called the '*Abu al-Arwah*', ('the father of the spirits').

Abu Hurayrah (ra) narrates: "The blessed Companions once asked Allah's Messenger (saw):

"When was prophethood bestowed upon you?" He answered: "When Adam was between his body and spirit..." (Tirmidhi, *Manakib*, I).

From this respect then, he is the first in terms of prophethood, too. The secret of his being first in light and prophethood will be explained in the chapter dealing with the angels bowing down to the prophet Adam.

The five stages of the spirit:

1. *The stage of non-existence:*



'Has there (not) been an endless span of time before man (appeared- a time) when he was not yet a thing to be thought of' (Insan, 76:1).

2. *The stage of creation of the realm of the spirits (Elest Bezmi)*

"I created the spirits two thousand years before I created their bodies" (Daylami, Musnad, II, 187-188).

3. *The stage in which the spirits were sent to their bodies:*

'When I have breathed My Ruh into him...' (Hijr, 15:29).

4. *The stage in which the spirits will be separated from their bodies:*

'Every self will taste death' (Al-i Imran, '185.)

5. *The stage in which the spirits will be returned to their bodies:*

'Say 'He who made them in the first place will bring them back to life' (Yasin, 79).

Almighty Allah informs us of how the spirits will be returned to the mould of their bodies in the following verse:

'When the selves are arranged into classes' (Takwir, 81:7)

When it comes to the actual nature of the spirit, we do not have sufficient knowledge about this. Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

'They will ask you about the Ruh. Say: 'The Ruh is my Lord's work. You have only been given a little knowledge.' (Isra, 17:85)



Almighty Allah has said:

'Allah taught Adam the names of all things. Then He arrayed them before the angels and said, 'Tell me the names of these if you are telling the truth.' (Bakara, 31)

The angels repented and sought Allah's forgiveness, glorifying Him and exonerating Him. Upon this Allah Most High said:

'Adam, tell them their names.' When he had told them their names, He said, 'Did I not tell you that I know the Unseen of the heavens and the earth, and I know what you make known and what you hide?' (Bakara, 33)

What is meant by the names taught to the prophet Adam, are the names of all things on earth, their nature and their characteristics.

We cannot truly know the nature of divine artistry, or the reality of things, the secrets of creation, Protected Tablet²⁰, fate and the wisdom in it, or the divine mysteries within heaven and earth.

The truth and mystery of all things can become apparent to the degree that the heart is able to perceive. Consequently, the ability to know Almighty Allah is only possible through a life where the heart is in a state of awareness. Absolute truth can only be arrived at with the heart.

This is because the intelligence and the five senses are limited in their scope. Just like the distance that one can see with one's eyes and the ability to hear are limited, so too the limits of one's mind are bound. The journey beyond can continue only with the heart and its ability to perceive the manifestations of divine attributes, and the wisdom and mysteries in creation.

In effect the meaning of Almighty Allah's words is this:

²⁰ In Arabic '*Lawhi mahfuz*' which is a term which indicates the knowledge of Allah which cannot be apprehended by others; knowledge which is firmly protected (translator's note).



“I am going to give man a spirit which will be able to perceive the names of all things, their secrets, subtle wisdom, and beauty and My divine artistry”. It is the prophets who have been able to understand these truths and mysteries to the greatest degree and then those friends of Allah who follow in their footsteps.

The angels prostrate before the prophet Adam (peace be upon him)

After creating the prophet Adam, Allah Most High commanded the angels and the *jinn* to prostrate before him. However there was one *jinn* by the name of ‘Azazel’ known for his tendency to worship much, who did not obey. This was Satan.

‘We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate to Adam!’ and they prostrated, with the exception of Iblis. He refused and was arrogant and was one of the unbelievers’ (Bakara, 34)

‘He said, ‘What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you to?’ (Ā’râf, 7:12)

The command of Allah Most High to the angels to ‘prostrate before Adam’ did not mean ‘worship Adam’. Rather it was done with the aim of exalting the light of the prophet Muhammad (saw), which was also borne by Adam, as he was the first of the spirits to be created.

Another commentary interprets this as being ‘Obey the command of Allah’. This is because this prostration, though it was done to Adam, was in truth, obedience to Allah personally and worship of Him.



In this command to prostrate, the prophet Adam can be compared to the *qibla*²¹ or the Ka’bah. Turning towards the Ka’bah and prostrating to it does not mean that one worships the Ka’bah. The Ka’bah is the place, indicated by Almighty Allah, where the worship of the servant is ordered and where mercy becomes manifest.

The account of how Iblis refused to prostrate to Adam is repeated in several places in the Holy Qur’an. However, in each of these repetitions, a different reason for Iblis’s refusal to prostrate is given each time and one’s attention is drawn to a different trick or wile of Satan’s.

For instance, in the 11th and 12th verses of the chapter A’raf it is explained how Satan, who was previously in the company of the angels and favoured with much bounty refused to comply with a divine command and thus did not bow down to Adam, showing ingratitude for these bounties rather than being grateful for them, and considering this to be an excuse for his superiority.

In the 116th verse of Taha, it is told how Satan, enemy to Adam and our mother, Eve, is also the enemy of the believers, and how by following Satan, Adam was consequently deprived of paradise and all its bounties and sent to the earth, the land of distress, suffering and hardship.

In the same way, those who, in this worldly life, follow Satan will meet with much distress, suffering and regret. There is here an admonition for the sons of Adam in order for them not to make the same mistake.

In the 61st verse of chapter Isra, one’s attention is directed towards the fact that Satan’s test of whether or not to prostrate to Adam, only served to increase his unbelief and fierceness.

This is because Satan’s challenging of Almighty Allah and his persistence in his rebellion and unbelief was a reason for the doors of repentance to be closed to him.

Whereas after being cast out of Paradise, Adam immediately turned towards the door of repentance, attributing his sin to himself. This then led to him being forgiven.

In the 50th verse of chapter Kahf, Allah Most high places two choices before the human being. One of these paths is the path of the angels who obeyed the Lord whilst the other path is one of rebellion to Allah

21 The Qibla is the direction in which Muslims turn when they pray. It is where the Ka’bah is located in Mecca.



and the path of Satan, a *jinni* creature, and those follow in his footsteps. Almighty Allah thus wishes us to distinguish between the path of the friend and the path of the foe and prefer the path of the friends.

The 34th verse of Baqara explains how it was that Satan became arrogant, showing disdain for the knowledge of Allah Most High, who knows everything in truth, thus falling into the pits of obstinacy, ignorance and denial.

The refusal of Satan to bow down to Adam was due to the arrogance and pride concealed within his nature. At one time he did in fact possess enough knowledge to act as teacher of the angels. Thus he once held a high standing. However he became arrogant as a result of this knowledge that he possessed, and refused to prostrate before Adam.

From here we can understand that sometimes knowledge and status can incite one's egoistical feelings and lead one to great loss. We can also conclude that knowledge is not sufficient in itself in order to obey Allah.

Satan was one of the *jinn* who are created from luminous and smokeless fire, which is why he reasoned as he did. He claimed that the smokeless and luminous fire from which he was created was much more superior than the earth from which the prophet Adam was made. He believed he had great dignity, glory and greatness. This situation illustrates how the mind is not enough in itself to reach the truth.

Satan thus displayed his ignorance and stupidity with his claim: **“I am better than him. You created me from fire and You created him from clay.”** (A'raf, 12, See also Hijr, 33; Sad, 76).

Satan saw the earthly aspect of the prophet Adam, but he failed to perceive his nobility and greatness. He only saw the mud that belonged to this world and was blind to his spiritual aspect which came from the other world. What Satan did not know was the fact that man was the 'vicegerent of Allah' (*khalifatullah*). He failed to see this because he judged the prophet Adam on the basis of his own *nafs*.

Thus he was unable to see beyond the material aspect of Adam. Rather than taking Allah as his measure he relied upon his own *nafs*. This is why he deviated and acted upon his emotions. He failed to see the superior qualities of Adam such as his spirit that was given to him by Allah or his being '*khalifatullah*'. Up until that time Satan had never encountered such a trial that would weigh down upon his *nafs*, a test that suggested he prostrate before Adam, and he was thus unable to comprehend the divine wisdom in this test. He drowned in the whirlwind of his *nafs* and rebelled against Allah in wretched fashion.

The angels and other *jinn* who did obey Allah's command saw Satan flee from prostrating, fallen and in an unsightly state. They were then very grateful for the bounty of being able to obey Allah's command and together they prostrated a second time.

Satan feared that he would lose his superiority and so he fled from prostrating to Adam and succumbed to his unbridled *nafs*. However this act led to a situation even worse than what he had feared. He was banished from the divine presence in a painful way. He was dismissed from the company of angels, over whom he was once leader, and left to wallow in the pits of misery and was disgraced...

Allah Most High has the following to say about the rebellion of Satan:

‘He said, ‘Get out from here, you are accursed. The curse will be on you till the Day of Reckoning.’ (Hijr, 15:34-35).

In this way, the claim of Satan to be superior to Adam, made him lose his high status amongst the angels. Fearing for his life, he begged Allah:

‘My Lord, grant me a reprieve until the Day they are raised again.’ (Hijr, 15:36)

By the will of Allah this permission was given to him:

‘He (Allah) said, ‘You are among the reprieved until the Day whose time is known.’ (Hijr, 15:37, 38)



Since, from then until the Day of Judgement all human beings would come to this world via the prophet Adam, all human beings take their share of his attribute of nobility. In addition, just as the prophet Adam was subject to the enmity of Satan, so will all human beings encounter his ill-will.

This is because an instigator like Satan is needed for the servant to be tested in order to bring out all the tendencies that arise from the *nafs*. The well-known event of the ‘forbidden fruit’, which was the cause of Adam being removed from Paradise, was necessary so that Satan could bring out the inclinations of the human *nafs*. Thus Satan, appointed with the duty of misguiding the human being, represents an obstacle to the development of the spirit by igniting the carnal desires of man. It is based upon this wisdom that Almighty Allah allowed Satan respite until the Day of Reckoning. On the other hand, the door of repentance for man remains open until the time of death.

However, Satan felt a sense of security at this reprieve given to him and then tried to attribute his rebellion to Almighty Allah. He said:

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

‘By Your misguidance of me, I will lie in ambush for them on your straight path. Then I will come at them, from in front of them and behind them, from their right and from their left. You will not find most of them thankful.’ (A’raf, 7:16-17).

‘My Lord, because You misled me, I will make things on the earth seem good to them and I will mislead them all, every one of them, except Your slaves among them who are sincere’ (Hijr, 15:39, 40).

In the ensuing verses, Almighty Allah informs us how to be saved from this provocation of Satan:

‘Said he: “This is with Me, a straight way; verily, thou shalt have no power over My creatures – unless it be such as are (already) lost in grievous error and follow thee (of their own will)’ (Hijr, 15:41, 42)

The creation of Eve and her marriage to the prophet Adam

Allah has the following to say in regard to the creation of Eve from the prophet Adam:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

‘It is He who created you from a single self and made from him (Adam) his spouse (Eve) so that he might find repose in her’ (A’raf, 7:189).

As explained previously, Allah was the only being that existed before time. He created all things out of a desire to be known and subsequently this realm, called the realm of diversity, came into being. Consequently the reason for the creation of all things is this divine love. This also applies to the prophet Adam (peace be upon him). The final aim of this love and desire is the tendency for the human being to return to his origins (that is, to his Lord). A type of ‘preparatory stage’ is needed to reach this aim.

It is because Allah Most High designated unity to be particular to Himself, He made all creatures in pairs, with their opposite sex and rendered them attractive to each other.



All atoms, particles, cells, plants, animals, human beings, matter, and other mysterious elements, such as the electrons and protons within the atom, are all subject to the law of ‘creation in pairs’. Almighty Allah has said:

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

‘And We created all things in pairs so that hopefully you would pay heed’ (Adh-dhariyat, 51:49)

This situation is both a natural and required tendency of creation to return to where they came from, to go from this world, the realm of multiplicity, back to Almighty Allah. Thus the inclination for opposites to come together in this world of multiplicity is natural, in order to form a bridge or backdrop back to that unity. At the same time, Allah Most High made this tendency for opposites to come together a means for the continuation of the species.

Man, who came from Allah, can be considered to be ‘homesick’ to the degree that he remains distant from Him. ‘*Ghurbah*²²’ or ‘homesickness’ has the meanings of loneliness, helplessness, sadness and sorrow and because all things other than Allah feel the need for consolation and comfort, the person in *ghurbah* feels the need for somebody to console him. All of these natural characteristics required that Adam desire a mate, from his own species, for himself, even though he was in Paradise, in infinite bounty. This is why he asked Allah for a mate. Almighty Allah then created Eve, from his own species and his own self, from below his left rib. According to a narration by Ibn Abbas and Ibn Mas’ud (ra), after Satan was removed from Paradise and Adam was settled there, Adam roamed around Paradise by himself without a mate to bring him peace. One day after waking up from his sleep, he saw a person next to him, who had been created from his left rib and he asked her:

“Who are you?” She replied:

“I am a woman”. When Adam wished to know why she had been created, she said:

“Allah created me in order for you to find peace and repose”.

According to a *hadith* narrated by Bukhari, the Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

“Treat women kindly. Women have been created from a rib and the most crooked part of the rib is in the upper region. If you try to make it straight, you will break it, and if you leave it as it is, it will remain curved. So treat women kindly” (Bukhari, Anbiya, 1).

Almighty Allah endowed women with more emotions than men. In the following verse which explains the beginnings of how a child is created, we are informed that the part that comes from the man is the ‘*sulb*’, the backbone, whereas the part coming from the woman is the ‘*taraib*’ which is the breastbone and a centre of emotions and is located near the heart.

‘He was created from a spurting fluid, emerging from between the back-bone and the breast-bone’ (Tariq 86: 6,7)

This indicates that women possess a wealth of emotions. Allah Most High gave this wealth of emotions and feelings to the woman because she is responsible for preserving and raising the new generation of children. This is why women should be treated well. The father cannot look after his children the way the mother can, nor can he take care of them as well or lose sleep for them. If a child is drowning in a flood his mother would immediately sacrifice herself for him, but the father would be less inclined to do so. The mother lives in constant suffering, anxiety and love for her child. She carries him in her womb for nine months, in her arms for two years and then in her heart for a lifetime. If her child does not eat or drink she loses sleep. If he cries, she cries. This is why a mother’s right can never be fully honoured or recompensed.

After marrying Adam and Eve Himself in the presence of the angels, Allah Most High said:

22 *Ghurbah* in Arabic means ‘absence from the homeland’, separation from one’s native country, banishment, exile; life, or place, away from home’ (Translator’s note).



‘Adam, live in the Garden, you and your wife, and eat of it wherever you like. But do not go near this tree lest you become wrongdoers.’ (A’raf, 7:19).

Adam and Eve are cast out of Paradise

Allah Most High’s examination of creatures began with the creation of the prophet Adam. The angels were tested first of all when Allah commanded them to prostrate before Adam. All of the angels passed this test because they do not possess tendencies of the *nafs*. Satan, however failed this examination when he rebelled against the command to prostrate. This is because he was from the jinn, and the jinn possess a ‘*nafs*’. Then Almighty Allah tested Adam and Eve, also giving Satan his own opportunity.

Allah forbade Adam and Eve from approaching the fruit of a certain tree in Paradise.

The struggle between the human being and the *nafs*, which tries to obstruct man’s obedience to Allah’s commands, first began in Paradise with the whisperings of Satan. Using Eve as a means Satan tried to impose his desires and wishes on Adam. Satan tried all manner of tricks and wiles to deceive both of them, as would be expected of him.

‘Then Satan whispered to them, disclosing to them their private parts that had been concealed from them. He said, ‘Your Lord has only forbidden you this tree lest you become angels or among those who live forever.’He swore to them, ‘I am one of those who give you good advice.’So he enticed them to do it by means of trickery. Then when they tasted the tree, their private parts were disclosed to them²³ and they started stitching together the leaves of the Garden in order to cover themselves. Their Lord called out to them, ‘Did I not forbid you this tree and say to you, “Satan is an outright enemy to you”?’ (A’raf, 7:20-22).

The approach of Adam and Eve to the forbidden fruit was a result of them coming face to face with the trial of their *nafs*. Falling for this wiles of Satan, whose aim was to enact revenge, Adam and Eve felt extreme remorse and subsequently deserted Satan. They then repented and thereafter preferred the way of the angels.

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

‘They said, ‘Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If you do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost.’ (A’raf, 7:23)

Because they repented, Allah Most High showed them and their progeny the path to salvation as follows:

‘Children of Adam! We have sent down clothing to you to conceal your private parts, and fine apparel, but the garment of *taqwa* – that is best! That is one of Allah’s Signs, so that hopefully you will pay heed’ (A’raf, 7:26)

‘Children of Adam! Do not let Satan tempt you into trouble as He expelled your parents from the Garden, stripping them of their covering and disclosing to them their private parts. He and his tribe see you from where you do not see them. We have made the satans friends of those who have no faith’ (A’raf, 7:27).

23 Amongst all creatures, *tasattur* is a condition pertaining to the human being only. A person is required to cover themselves in order to preserve the honour, dignity, modesty and seriousness of the human being that Allah bestowed upon him. Otherwise he will be deprived of these traits. He will descend to the level of creatures that are lower than him. The loss of modesty in a society is one of the most important of the signs of the end of time. In a *hadith* the Prophet Muhammad (saw) said: “Modesty is from faith” (Bukhari, Iman, 3). Because there were no other human beings in Paradise, Adam and Eve were embarrassed from each other and from other creatures. They began to cover themselves anxiously with any leaves they could find. This shows that physical covering and modesty and bashfulness, its spiritual counterpart is the most distinguishing feature of the human being.



In these verses, we are told that clothes as we know them are not sufficient to cover man's faults and deficiencies so one must don the 'garment of *taqwa*' which is 'real clothing' that preserves the servant's heart from negative emotions and thoughts and allows the servant to perceive his responsibility toward Allah.

Almighty Allah created Adam (peace be upon him), the father of mankind in Paradise as the most noble of all creatures. However as a result of his 'slip', he was removed from Paradise, and sent to this world. Some of the aspects of wisdom in this are as follows:

* Allah Most High desired that Adam and Eve descend to earth and propagate the human species there until the end of time.

* Allah willed that they appreciated the value of the bounty of Paradise in which they were created and rush to do good deeds in this world, the world of examination, in the hope of being reunited with those bounties.

* Allah desired to distinguish those sons of Adam who would not be worthy of Paradise and instead deserving of Hell.

* Allah desired that human beings apply His will and command on earth and render it prosperous and that the human being become His *khalifa*.

* As a requirement of the honour bestowed upon the progeny of Adam, Allah Most High willed that he and his progeny be bestowed with Paradise not merely on account of His grace, but at the same time on the basis of merit, that is, as a reward, in return for a certain price. The prophet Adam had to make this mistake in order for the Divine will to be realised, and as a result of this apparent cause he was taken out of his original homeland and sent to this world, the realm of examination.

Despite all of these aspects of wisdom, the removal of Adam from Paradise and his being sent to this world remains a mystery of fate, the true nature of which cannot be comprehended by the human mind.

Man must rid himself of his defects and turn towards his Lord

By his nature, the human being is bound to incline towards and attach himself to something. Either he will be a servant to the tendencies of his *nafs* or he will serve his Lord. If man allows his *nafs* to pass through a process of purification, he can become a wonder of art and attain the elixir of eternal happiness, despite all of his flaws. Consequently if man wishes to be freed of the faults mentioned above and turn towards his Lord and be a servant worthy of Him, he must overcome the obstacle of his *nafs* and remain true to his covenant. This means he must reply 'yes, *You are our Lord!*' to the question "Am I not your Lord?" asked in '*bezm-i elest*²⁴'.

When the human spirit made this covenant, everything was clear and evident. He could see the angels and observe the greatness of Allah. According to the hadith, this spirit is breathed into the embryo, by means of the angel Gabriel, when it is 120 days old. However, after coming to this world and then continuing its existence in the body, the spirit encounters the obstacle of the *nafs* which is bounded by the five senses. So it goes from a state of fineness to opacity and then it becomes veiled. But if man refines these five senses with his spiritual potential in the direction desired by Allah, he easily overcomes the obstacle of his *nafs*.

Thus, it is only through the purification of the *nafs* that man can lessen its opacity, increase its fineness and make his heart reach a state of being able to realise and discover the truth.

The spirit mentioned in the following verse: '**When I have formed him and breathed My Ruh into him...**' (Hijr, 29) is the sultanic spirit, which comes from the realm of command. It has now entered the mortal body.

Jalaluddin Rumi gives the following analogy to explain how the sultanic spirit can avoid showing weakness in the face of the bodily powers and how it can then rule over the body:

24 *Bezm'i elest* is a term referring to the time before the creation of this earth, when all souls were created by Allah who then asked them: "Am I not your Lord"? whereby they all replied "Yes, indeed You are our Lord" (Translator's note).



“Just as the butter cannot be seen in buttermilk, so too is the spirit in the body...In order for the butter to appear, the buttermilk must be whipped...”

“Likewise, the sultanic spirit must take control over the body. Essential for this is struggle, abstinence and being patient when certain things are lacking.”

Almighty Allah informs us in the Holy Qur’an of how it is not possible to be saved and delivered without purifying one’s *nafs*:

‘He who has purified himself will have success, He who invokes the Name of his Lord and prays...’ (A’la, 87:14-15).

**‘By the sun and its morning brightness,
and the moon when it follows it,
and the day when it displays it,
and the night when it conceals it
and the sky and what erected it
and the earth and what extended it.
and the self and what proportioned it
and inspired it with depravity or taqwa,
he who purifies it has succeeded
he who covers it up has failed’** (Shams, 91:1-10).

The aim of religion is to produce human beings who are beautiful, elegant, sensitive and profound in their emotions and thoughts.



This can occur only when one is a proper servant of Allah. This maturity can only take place in those who are able to reach elevated ranks through *tafakkur* (contemplation) and *tahassus* (feeling).

Almighty Allah describes those people who have perfected their faith as follows:

‘The [true] believers are those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, faith is increased when His Signs are recited to them, and who put their trust in their Lord’ (Anfal, 2).

‘...whose hearts quake at the mention of Allah, and who are steadfast in the face of all that happens to them, those who establish salat and give of what We have provided for them’ (Hajj, 22:35).

‘Remember your Lord in yourself humbly and fearfully, without loudness of voice, morning and evening. Do not be one of the unaware’ (A’raf, 7:205).

‘Remember the Name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him completely’ (Muzzammil 73: 8).

‘Those who have faith and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace’. (Ra’d, 13:28).

If a heart is filled with love for Allah then His pleasure will be sought at the beginning and end of each deed. In this way, a person can begin to become competent at understanding the wisdom in his creation, and to find one’s path towards understanding the truths of the Qur’an. Allah Most High does not love those ignorant and ill-hearted people who fail to achieve this profundity and gracefulness.

‘Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah! Such people are clearly misguided’ (Zumar, 39:22).

In this verse we are told that the person who distances himself from remembrance of Allah will not attain the honour of true humanity, that is, they will fail to arrive at the state of *‘ahsan-i taqwim*²⁵.

‘Have you seen him who has taken his whims and desires to be his god? Will you then be his guardian?’ (Furkan, 25:43)

The *nafs* covets all worldly pleasures and tries to possess them. It is only possible to be free of this state by purifying one’s *nafs* and in this way can love of this worldly life be removed from one’s heart. To achieve this it is necessary to be constant in one’s remembrance of Allah, keep company with the righteous and abstain from worldly delights. Just as the centre of the jewel of faith is in the heart, so the centre of remembrance of Allah is in the heart. True servanthood begins when this *dhikr* moves from the tongue to the heart. One will then have embarked upon the path of overcoming the obstacle of the *nafs*.

The result of continuing in one’s remembrance of Allah is that all of the illumination and benefits of *dhikr* will manifest in all of the acts of the one who performs the *dhikr*. Once all things other than Allah have been removed from the heart, the servant is left alone with his Lord. Having attained the feeling of *ihsan*²⁶, he can continue to worship and obey his Lord as if he sees him.

The descent of Adam and Eve to the earth

Opposing the command of Almighty Allah after being deceived by Satan, Adam and Eve were subsequently removed from Paradise and sent to this world. Adam was taken by the angels to the island of Ceylon in the south of India whilst Eve was sent to the town of Jeddah on the coast of the Red Sea. They were separated from each other for a very long period of time. Even though the prophet Adam and his wife Eve continued to repent and seek forgiveness, they remained unforgiven. They finally sought refuge in the spirit of the Messenger of Allah (saw) and as a result of his blessings they were forgiven by Allah. This event is explained in a *hadith* as follows:

“When Adam (upon whom be peace) committed the mistake that caused him to be removed from Paradise, he realised his mistake and prayed as follows:

“O my Lord. I ask that You forgive me for the sake of Muhammad”. Allah Most High responded:

“O Adam! How do you know of Muhammad whom I have not yet created²⁷?” Adam replied:

“O my Lord! After you created me and breathed into me of Your spirit, I raised my head and saw the following sentence written on Your Throne: “La ilaha illallah Muhammadun Rasulullah”. Then I realised that You would only attach to Your Own Name the name of one most beloved to You”.

Allah Most High then said:

25 Literally ‘the best mould or form’ (Translator’s note).

26 The word *ihsan* has the meanings of “perfection” or “excellence. It is a matter of taking one’s inner faith and showing it in both deed and action. It is responsibility to obtain perfection, or excellence in worship, such that Muslims try to worship Allah as if they see Him, and although they cannot see Him, they undoubtedly believe that He is constantly watching over them (translator’s note).

27 When Almighty Allah was the only Being that existed before time He created *masiwa*, that is everything that is other than Him as He wished to be known by the human beings and the jinn in accordance with their perception. The first of these things to be created was the light of the prophet Muhammad (*nur’i Muhammad*). This is why Allah’s Messenger said: “I was a prophet when Adam was yet between his spirit and his body” (Tirmidhi, Manakib, 1). Accordingly the ‘light of Muhammad’ which is the jewel of the prophet Muhammad, which was the first thing to be created was then encased in a body and sent as the final in the chain of prophets. In the above expression, what is indicated here is the person of the prophet Muhammad, with all of his human characteristics, and not the light of Muhammad.





“You have spoken the truth o Adam. He truly is the most beloved to me out of all of creation. Pray to me for his sake. (Since you have done so) I forgive you. Had there been no Muhammad I would not have created you” (Hakim, Mustadrak, II, 672).

Remembering this event the prophet Adam (peace be upon him) pondered on the honour and worth of the prophet Muhammad (saw) in the sight of Allah and he then asked His forgiveness for his sake.

Allah Most High accepted this request of Adam’s and appointed an angel to guide him to Mecca. As a result of the blessings of this prayer, Eve who was living in Jeddah, headed out in the direction of Adam, under the guidance of another angel. They were reunited with each other on the Day of Arafah, on the Mountain of Arafah at the time of *asr* (the late afternoon), where, in tears, they once again repented and sought the forgiveness of Allah. Almighty Allah, whose bounty and grace is infinite, not only accepted their prayers but also the prayers of those from their progeny who come there, seeking his forgiveness on the same day and at the same time every year until the Day of Judgement. This is the wisdom in the pilgrims going to Arafah on the Day of Arafah and seeking Allah’s forgiveness. After this meeting and by the command of Allah, the prophet Adam and our mother Eve settled in the city of what is now Mecca. This is why Mecca is known by the name of “*Ummu al-Qura*”, that is the mother of all cities. Here human beings began to multiply rapidly. The wisdom in this rapid increase in population is that our mother Eve was able to bear more than one child in the one womb. Those children who were born in the same womb (that is, from the same pregnancy) were considered siblings and it was forbidden for them to marry. They could only marry those who were born from different pregnancies.

The first crime committed on earth

Cain, one of the sons of the prophet Adam wished to marry his sister who was born from the same womb, that is, from the same pregnancy. However his brother Abel, warned him that this was not compatible with the *shariah* and that he would have to marry a sister who was born at a different time. Cain ignored this warning and insisted that what he was doing was correct. Upon this, Abel suggested to his brother that they make a sacrifice to Allah to determine who was right. At that time, *qurban* (the sacrifice to be made) was made from what one had in their possession as a result of their profession. These things to be sacrificed were placed on the tops of mountains and after a little while when people came to check them, the sacrifice would have burned from the fire of the mountain and disappeared. This was a sign that Almighty Allah accepted the sacrifice. Abel was a shepherd and had herds of sheep. He chose the fattest and most portly of rams to sacrifice. Cain however, was occupied with agriculture. He set aside the puniest bunch of wheat to sacrifice.

After a short while, Cain and Abel went to observe the sacrifices they had made on the mountain. The ram that Abel sacrificed had been accepted whereas the puny bunch of wheat remained as it was. Cain was filled with rage. He then murdered his brother as we are informed in the verse:



‘Recite to them the true report of Adam’s two sons when they offered a sacrifice and it was accepted from one of them but not accepted from the other. The one said, ‘I shall kill you.’ The other said, ‘Allah only accepts from people who have taqwa’. (Maida, 5:27)

‘Even if you do raise your hand against me to kill me, I am not going to raise my hand against you to kill you. Truly I fear Allah, the Lord of all the worlds’ (Maida, 5:28)



‘I want you to take on both my wrongdoing and your wrongdoing and so become one of the Companions of the Fire. That is the repayment of the wrongdoers’ (Maida, 29).

‘So his lower self persuaded him to kill his brother, and he killed him and became one of the lost’ (Maida, 5:30)

‘Then Allah sent a crow which scratched at the earth to show him how to conceal his brother’s corpse. He said, ‘Woe is me! Can I not even be like this crow and conceal my brother’s corpse?’ And he became one of

those who suffer bitter remorse’ (Maida, 5:31)

Lessons to be learnt from the story of Cain and Abel

In the story of Cain and Abel a comparison is made between a mind enlightened by the light of revelation and a mind which has not been able to free itself of the tyranny of the *nafs* and the result arising from this struggle is on display with its living examples.

There is a place for the intelligence in revelation. A mind that is in service to revelation and that accepts its guidance will increase in wisdom. The mind that is deprived of the guidance of revelation however will not be able to protect a person from the calamities of the *nafs*. Just like a sharp knife, the mind can be used for all manner of purposes. Whosoever wishes will cut their bread with it, and whosoever wishes will commit murder with it.

The mind of Cain contested knowledge that was based on revelation. His mind thus misguided him and destroyed his hereafter. The mind of those who are not pious or sincere will only serve to increase the injustice done both to themselves and others. Like with the example of Cain it can even lead a person to murder their own brother. However because Abel was a sincere servant he acted out of fear of Allah and thus advised Cain using the mind given to him by Allah, in accordance with the direction provided by revelation.

Those who are afflicted with the disease of envy and jealousy fail to see the favours bestowed upon them, and ever covet what other people have. Envy and jealousy, two of the disagreeable traits of the *nafs*, will make the one they rule over perform all manner of evil. In fact, this person may not even hesitate to murder his own brother. Envious and jealous people are not content with the divine decree. As a result they are disgraced in this world, and their conscience remains in pain and full of regret. Moreover, they will meet with a painful punishment in the hereafter. The solution to this sickness is training and purifying the *nafs*, freeing oneself from one’s ‘*nafs al ammara*²⁸’ and attaining to a ‘*nafs al-mutmainna*²⁹’ and being content with what Allah has decreed (in order to reach the level of *radhiya*³⁰)

28 The inciting *nafs* incites us to commit evil: this is the *nafs* as the lower self, the base instincts

29 The *nafs* at peace. This is the ideal stage of the *nafs*. On this level one is firm in one’s faith and leaves bad manners behind. The soul becomes tranquil, at peace.

30 The pleased *nafs*. This is the stage after the *nafs al mutmainna*, where the *nafs* is pleased with whatever comes from Allah and does not live in the past or future, but in the moment (Translator’s notes).



In the personalities of Cain and Abel we find a polarization reminiscent of that between the angels and Satan. Like Satan, Cain looked for his own faults in the 'other'. Like the angels, Abel refrained from succumbing to the anxieties of his *nafs*, and did not fall into despair about falling into disrepute. He acted only out of fear of Allah. That is, one of them was persistent in his sin, just like Satan whilst the other turned towards Allah.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) had the following to say about this blood-spilling event that occurred for the first time in human history:

“There is a portion from the blood (sin) of every person unjustly murdered and it is on the hands of Adam’s first son. This is so because he was the person who first paved the way to the murder of a human being” (Bukhari, Anbiya, 1).

Again the Messenger of Allah (saw) said :

“There is a reward for the one who innovates a good deed in Islam. He will share in the reward of those who followed him in that and neither will their reward be diminished in any way. And there is a sin recorded for the one who innovates an evil act. He will also be allocated a share of the sin of those who followed him in that act, but their sin will not be diminished in any way” (Muslim, Zakah 69; Nasai, Zakah, 64).

This hadith shows that whoever initiates a righteous act will share in the good of that act committed by those who come after, and whoever initiates an evil act will take their share of the evil of that act committed by those who come after.

Tawbah and Istighfar (Repentance and Seeking Forgiveness (from Allah))

Since this world is a place of trial, human beings have the potential to tend towards both good and evil. A person’s character assumes its identity depending on which of these is put into action, encouraged and supported. When a person offers another person a glass of water, without being obliged to do so, this makes the other person obligated to offer thanks. This is considered to be a humane and civilised conscientious act. Now this standard should remind us with what manner of gratitude and thanks we should be feeling in the face of all of the endless bounties bestowed upon us by Almighty Allah.

That being the case, the inclinations of ignorance, passion, pride, greedy ambition, selfishness, envy, waste and anger which are found in the nature of the human being, and, in short, being ungrateful in the face of all divine bounties and following the desires of one’s *nafs* is a great deception that casts a shadow over the natural honour and nobility he has been given. This deception which is born of the sins arising from heedlessly inclining towards the bounties of the world will, in time, diminish the nobility and honour of a servant and be a means for the spirit to become tainted in the darkness of sin. People commit sins when they are defeated by their carnal feelings and when they lose the lights of prosperity that are borne of faith. When the moral support from their conscience also lessens, they lose their subtle understanding and spiritual depth and this is a serious flaw in the path of becoming a person of right direction. In this way, sins become like sweet music to the *nafs* and can be committed without feeling their weightiness.

A person arrives in this world pure with the scent of innocence at their birth. Religion is then a manifestation of grace and mercy bestowed upon man by Allah in order to preserve this innate purity. Consequently if the servant, with the help of these two incentives, can uncover a little the veil of ignorance he will feel the weight of the sin he has committed within his conscience. The virtuous feelings hidden in his inner world will be awakened. His heart will burn with much regret and he will open up his heart to his Lord in tears; this burning up and regret is called ‘*tawbah*’. The supplication that pours from one’s heart when one then subsequently raises one’s hands to ask for forgiveness from one’s Lord is called ‘*istighfar*’.



It is considered wisdom for the servant to know that his sins and even his ignorance is a crime. To ask for forgiveness from his Lord is a debt of the conscience. To recognise that one's sin is a crime and then fail to perceive the necessity of turning away from it is a sign of foolishness, bankruptcy of the heart and a pathway to Hell.

A *hadith* states:

“Regret felt at the sins that one has committed is tawbah. The one who repents for his sins is like one who had never committed them” (Ibn Majah, Zuhd, 30).

It is not enough for the acceptance of *tawbah* that one merely utters the word “*Astaghfirullah*” (“I seek forgiveness from Allah”). There is also a requirement that the heart must quiver and a resolve never to make the same mistake again. Jalalluddin Rumi explains ‘*tawbah*’ as follows:

“Repent with a heart full of the fire of regret and moist teary eyes. This is because it is in the sun and moist places that flowers bloom”...

‘*Tawbah*’ and ‘*istighfar*’ bring peace to both individuals and nations. They eradicate potential future misfortune and calamities.

A believer must live their life between the states of ‘*khawf*’ and ‘*reja*’ that is, fear and hope.

If it is said: “One person will enter Hell”, out of fear, a believer should ask: “Could it be me?” and if it is said: “One person will enter Paradise”, a believer should ask in all hope: “Could it be me?”. Even prophets were allowed to make slips, or mistakes, and were left to live with the resulting pain and feelings of repentance and seeking forgiveness. They were thus allowed to experience human weakness and frailty. This is so because absolute superiority belongs to Allah alone. Only He is free and above weakness.



The prophet Adam (peace be upon him) was the first prophet to repent. The following prayer of repentance he made together with Eve is well-known:

“Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If you do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost” (A'raf 7:23).

This prayer serves as an example of ‘*istighfar*’ for their future children until the Day of Judgement.



Some of the verses from the Holy Qur'an in which Almighty Allah invites His servants to repent, and ask for forgiveness are as follows:

‘...except for those who make *tawbah* and have faith and act rightly: Allah will transform the wrong actions of such people into good – Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful – (Furkan 25:70)

“...for certainly all who make *tawbah* and act rightly have turned sincerely towards Allah” (Furkan 25:71)

‘Allah desires to turn towards you, but those who pursue their lower appetites desire to make you deviate completely’ (Nisa 4:27)

However, *tawbah* must be from the heart and sincere.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا
عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ



‘You who have faith! Make tawbah to Allah. It may be that your Lord will erase your bad actions from you...’ (Tahrim 66: 8)



Even if one tries to completely stay away from committing sins, which amounts to opposing divine commands, nobody is free of the responsibility of *tawbah* since it is not possible to fully appreciate and thank Allah for all the bounties He has bestowed upon them.

The human weakness considered here applies to every human being. Even if one is able to properly thank Allah, the success of being able to do so is also a favour from Allah and requires thanks. In this way the debt of gratitude is upon the human being until the end of time.

In truth, the bounties and favours of Almighty Allah are too numerous for us to properly thank Him.

A verse from the Holy Qur’an states:

“He has given you everything you have asked Him for. If you tried to number Allah’s blessings, you could never count them. Man is indeed wrongdoing, ungrateful” (Ibrahim, 14:34)

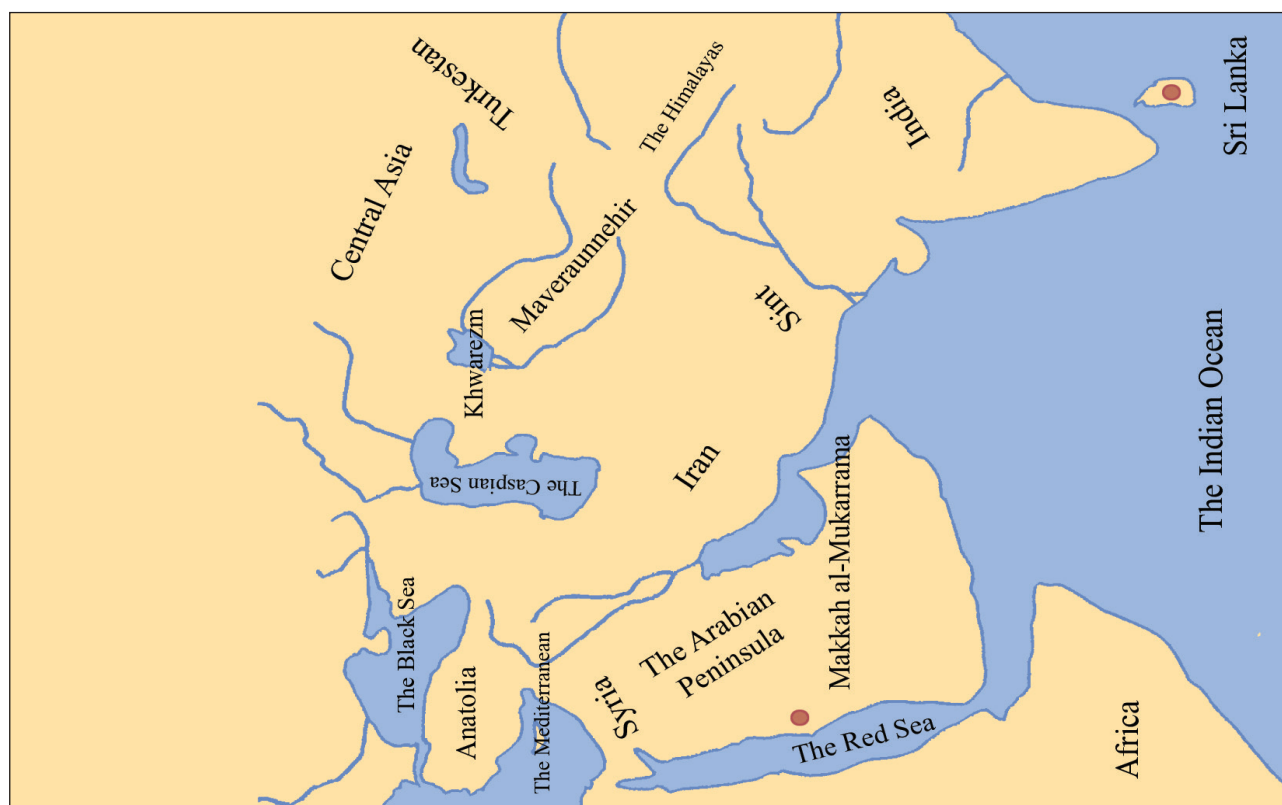
The Prophet’s wife, Aisha (ra) once said to the prophet:

“O Messenger of Allah! “Allah has forgiven you your past and future sins. Do not tire yourself out so...”

The Messenger of Allah (saw) replied:

“O Aisha! Shall I not then be a grateful servant?” (Bukhari, Tahajjud, 6; Muslim, Munafiqun 81)

Most of the time the *tawbah* and *istighfar* of the Messenger of Allah (saw) did not arise out of a mistake on his part, but rather in order to move nearer to Allah, to show more gratitude and to gain His good pleasure. In addition since the Prophet was in a continual state of spiritual development, his previous state and rank were at a lower level than his later state and he consequently sought forgiveness for the previous state and rank.



The most precious times for *tawbah* are the predawn. Just as how after daybreak, the dawn arrives and the darkness becomes distant, the *istighfar* carried out in the predawn are times of mercy, when we are freed of the darkness of our sins and reunited with the dawn of glowing forgiveness. May Almighty Allah give us all hearts that are awake and then bestow on us the happiness of being forgiven and pardoned!

Lessons to be learnt from the story of the prophet Adam (peace be upon him)

1. We must be constantly aware and careful of the tricks of Satan, man's open enemy and urger of evil.
2. We must place importance on purifying our *nafs* and cleansing our hearts in order to be rid of unpleasant traits such as pride, envy, greedy ambition, and haste that lead man to eternal loss.
3. Whenever we make a mistake, like the prophet Adam did, we must turn away from that mistake and immediately repent and ask for forgiveness.
4. Even if we have not fallen into error we must admit our incapacity to thank Allah as He should be thanked for all of the bounties He has bestowed upon us and we must turn to *istighfar*.
5. According to the result of the prophet Adam and Eve approaching the forbidden fruit, the spirituality of the servant that is lost when he commits a sin is returned to him after he repents and asks for forgiveness. Thus we too must immediately turn to the door of *tawbah* without despairing that our sins will not be forgiven.
6. Like the prophet Adam we must resort to using the Messenger of Allah (saw) as a means when we pray. We should remember him constantly, both in our times of ease and distress, and never remove him from our hearts.
7. Like Abel, we must allow our sultanic spirit to overcome our carnal lives and try to attain to the mystery of '*ahsan al-taqweem*'
8. We must never forget that the one who is the cause of other's doing good will have his share in the reward of those who come after him and do that same good deed and similarly, the one who causes others to do evil will load onto himself the sin of those who commit that same crime. Abel set the example for doing good while Cain set the example for evil.

In summary, the prophet Adam:

- * was the first person and the first prophet.
- * the first person to live both in Paradise and in this world.
- * the first person to make a mistake and the first person to repent.

Peace be upon him!...



QUESTIONS

A. Answer the following questions

1. The lives of the prophets and their peoples are related as stories in the Holy Qur'an. Explain the reasons for and the wisdom in this?
2. Explain the terms 'marifatullah' and 'muhabbetullah'.
3. Explain the stages of the creation of the human being in the light of the verses from the Qur'an.
4. What were the reasons that prevented Satan from prostrating to the prophet Adam?
5. Explain the nature of the prostration made by the angels and the jinn to the prophet Adam.
6. What is the connection between *istighfar* and gratitude demonstrated in the following conversation between Aisha, the prophet's wife and the prophet Muhammad (saw):
Aisha: "Allah has forgiven your past and present sins so why do you tire yourself so the prophet Muhammad (saw): "Should I not then be a grateful servant?"
7. Why was the sacrifice of Abel accepted but that of Cain rejected?
8. In what ways does maturation of the human being, who is inclined to both good and evil, take place?
9. List the five stages of the spirit.
10. The spirits of mankind met together in the '*elest bezm*' and replied to their Lord "Indeed you are our Lord", making their covenant of servanthood. What are the reasons for mankind forgetting this covenant in this world?

B. Fill in the blanks

1. There are three sites of the perfect manifestation of the divine attributes of Almighty Allah, both those that are known and those that are unknown to us. At the head of these come
2. Even though the prophet Adam was the first person to be created in flesh, the spirit of the prophet Muhammad (saw) was created before this. This is why the prophet Muhammad (saw) is known as.....
3. The burning in the heart and regret that a person feels after committing a sin is called The supplication that arises in the heart to ask for forgiveness from one's Lord is called
4. What is the name given to the knowledge given by Allah that one cannot obtain just by mere struggle but is a result of one's spiritual training and in accordance with one's potential?
5. Even if a person manages to avoid committing sins completely, it is impossible for them to properly thank Allah for all bounties. Consequently no person should consider himself above *istighfar*. The most precious times for performing *taubah* and *istighfar* are:



C. Choose the correct option from the following four options

1. Which of the following is not a feature of the stories of the prophets in the Holy Qur'an?
 - A. Events are told without being inundated with detail, and in accordance with the aim of teaching a lesson.
 - B. The order of events and the dates of the stories that are related are mentioned.
 - C. None of the aspects of the events in the stories remains a mystery to the reader
 - D. Amongst the events of the stories that are told, are placed lessons and guidance that nourish the hearts and that can be easily understood by the reader.
2. There are three sites where the Divine Names are manifest in a perfect sense. The human being forms the centre of these. Which of the following is not a reason for the human being to be a site of perfect manifestation of the Divine Names:
 - A. The fact that the human being is a site where divine grace is on display and a wonder of creation.
 - B. The fact that the human being is a mystery of the universe and considered to be its essence.
 - C. The fact that the human being was created from earth
 - D. The fact that the human being has a mind and a *nafs*.
3. In the address to the angels by Allah Most High in which He said: "**I am putting a *khalif* on the earth**" (Baqara, 30), which of the following meanings does the word '*khalif*' include?
 - A. The human being is a superior creature to the angels and the jinn on account of the substance of his creation
 - B. The human being is a site of manifestation of Allah's names and a representative of His will on earth.
 - C. All human beings worship Allah.
 - D. All human beings know and recognise Allah.
4. Which of the following outlines the common features of the sultanic spirit and the animalistic spirit?
 - A. They are both from the realm of command.
 - B. They continue their existence in the body
 - C. Both of them come to an end with the death of the human being.
 - D. They are what determine the acts and desires of the human being.
5. In the verse: '**We said to the angels, 'Prostrate to Adam!' and they prostrated, with the exception of Iblis. He refused and was arrogant and was one of the unbelievers'** (Baqara, 1:34), what is indicated by the command to 'prostrate' ?
 - A. The acceptance of the superiority of Adam's creation
 - B. The honouring of the fact that the spirit of Adam bore the 'light of Muhammad'
 - C. The requirement of serving Allah who created him which is what is indicated to by commanding to prostrate to Adam
 - D. The requirement to be grateful for his creation by prostrating to Adam.
6. In which of the following options has the expression '*jami al azdad*' been used correctly?
 - A. Satan has gathered together all evil within him.
 - B. The human being carries both positive and negative aspects within him.
 - C. The angels overlook nature.
 - D. The human being has accumulated all manner of evil with himself.



7. **What is the most effective way to remember and be true to the covenant that the spirits made with their Lord when they were asked: “Am I not your Lord?”**

- A. To frequently repeat this covenant and always remember it.
- B. To try and annihilate the animalistic soul within our body.
- C. To refine our carnal feelings and purify our hearts and rise above the obstacle of our nafs.
- D. To gain deep knowledge of the rules of religion and unveil the divine mysteries.

8. **Which of the following is not a requirement in purifying one’s nafs?**

- A. To keep company with the righteous people in religious talks.
- B. To remember Allah with one’s heart and one’s tongue.
- C. To continue to abstain from worldly things.
- D. To delve into *ilm’i ledunn*.

9. **In which of the following options is the relationship between ‘intelligence’ and ‘revelation’ in respects to serving Allah properly, given correctly?**

- A. Intelligence is always superior to revelation because intelligence is a manifestation of Allah’s attribute of ‘Alim’.
- B. Revelation always takes priority because intelligence without revelation is rendered out of action.
- C. Intelligence and revelation are equal. Neither is superior to the other.
- D. Intelligence is only of any value when it is qualified by revelation. Revelation is a guide that directs the intelligence which is dependent on revelation.

10. Which principle for repenting and seeking forgiveness from Allah can we not conclude from the repentance of the prophet Adam and Eve: **‘Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If you do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will be among the lost’** (A’raf, 23).

- A. A servant should recognise a sin he commits as being due to his own nafs.
- B. To sin is to wrong oneself.
- C. Repetance is not accepted immediately. Allah first punishes His servants for a period and then forgives them.
- D. The human being has no other solution than to seek refuge in Allah’s mercy and forgiveness no matter how great a sin he has committed.





THE PROPHET
IDRIS

-upon whom be peace-



THE PROPHET
NOAH

-upon whom be peace-

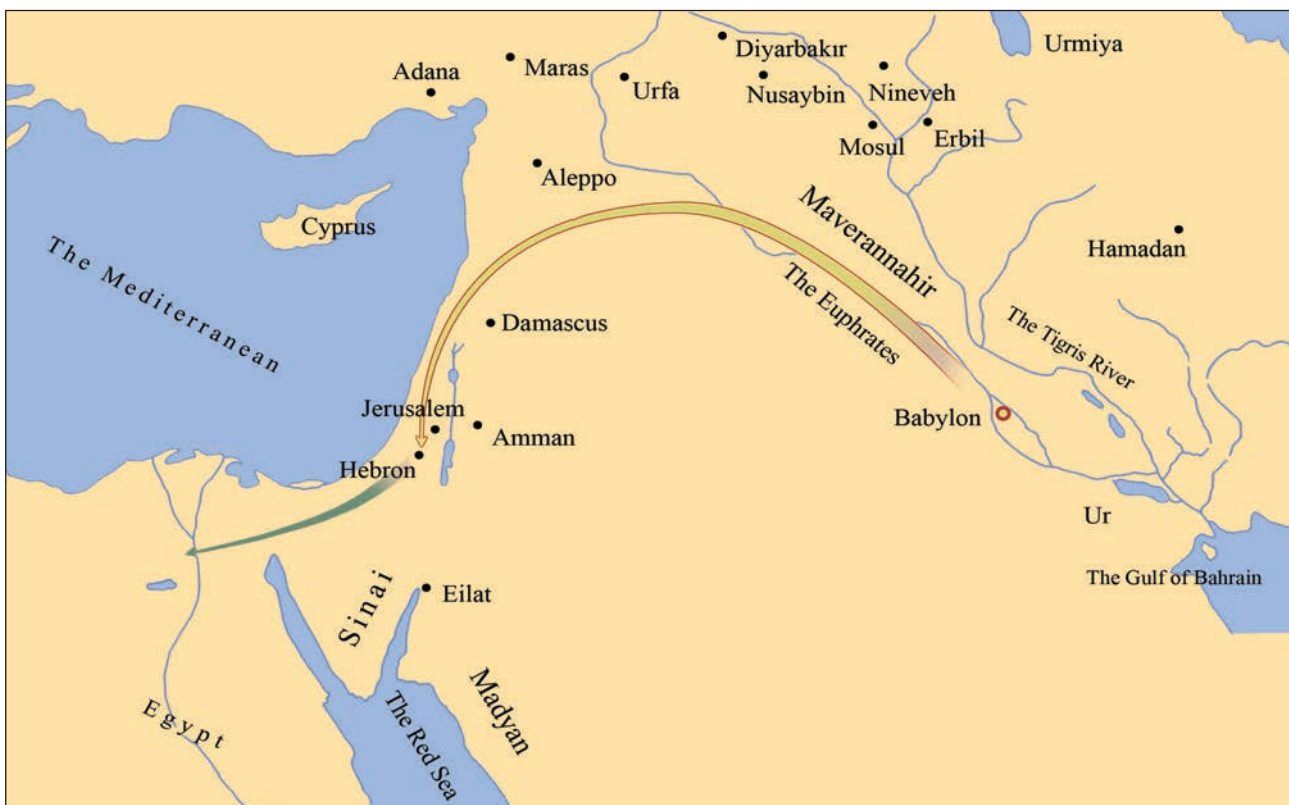
The prophet Idris
(upon whom be peace)

◆

The prophet Noah
(upon whom be peace)

The prophet Idris (peace be upon him)

It is narrated that he was born in the region of Babylonia. Babylonia was an ancient civilisation located in the region of Mesopotamia between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The prophet Idris (peace be upon him) is a grandson of the prophet Adam, from the sixth generation. He is a prophet from the lineage of the prophet Seth (peace be upon him). There are four verses in the Holy Qur'an where he is mentioned. Before he became a prophet, the prophet Idris was dedicated to his worship and he would keep company with the righteous.



He would earn his livelihood with his own hands. He lived amongst a people that were descendants of Cain.

These people who had deviated from the path shown to them by the prophet Seth (pbuh) had degenerated greatly both in their worldly and otherworldly affairs. They had forgotten their duty of worship of Allah and considered all manner of forbidden act and evil to be lawful, and thus went to great extremes in their oppression and injustice.

Almighty Allah sent the prophet Idris to these people who had deviated from the truth in order for them to be guided. He was sent a divine edict of about thirty pages, which warned of Allah's commands and prohibitions.

The prophet Idris conveyed these commands and prohibitions to his people. It is narrated that approximately one thousand people from this tribe believed in what he brought.

The angels too would visit the prophet Idris in groups and converse with him.

Some of the wise words and advice the prophet Idris told his people in guiding them are as follows:

"The humility of an intelligent person increases as his station increases"

"The intelligent person does not look at the faults of others and does not hold their faults against them. He does not become conceited as his wealth increases and does not ruin his good character"

"The one who does not purify his nafs has no intelligence"

"Love of this world and the hereafter can never exist together"

"When you pray let your intention be sincere"

Towards the end of his life, the prophet Idris was raised up to the heavens by Almighty Allah. This event is mentioned in the 57th verse of the chapter Maryam as follows:

'We raised him up to a high place' (Maryam, 19:57).

Commentators on the Qur'an consider this 'high place' to be one of three places: a station close to Allah Most High, Paradise or the fourth heaven.

The following hadith from both Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim support his being raised up to the heavens:

"When I was on the Ascension, I met with Idris when I arrived at the fourth level of heaven. Gabriel said to me:

"This here is Idris. Greet him". I greeted him with the greeting of peace and he responded in the same way. Then he said to me:

"Welcome righteous brother, righteous prophet" (Bukhari, Bad'u al-Khalk, 6; Muslim, Iman, 259-264).

The prophet Idris is mentioned as being a prophet known for his righteousness, truthfulness and patience:

'Mention Idris in the Book. He was a true man and a Prophet' (Maryam, 19:56)

'(O my beloved!) And Isma'il and Idris and Dhu'l-Kifl – each one was among the steadfast. We admitted them into Our mercy. They were among the righteous' (Anbiya, 21:85, 86)

The traits "righteousness, truth and patience" stated in these verses about the above-mentioned prophets are to illustrate their virtues and to praise them.

Jalalluddin Rumi describes the states of the prophet Jesus and the prophet Idris who have certain traits in common:



“A result of the extraordinary abstinence and struggles of the prophets Isa and Jesus was that they became like angels. They reached such a state whereby they virtually did not eat nor drink. They became like virtual angels and so they were raised to the heavens”.

With this example Jalaluddin Rumi explains how, through their abstinence and struggle, the prophets Idris and Jesus were able to free themselves of their bodily characteristics, whereby a certain subtlety and lightness appeared within them and they were raised to the heavens like the angels.

This shows us how other people, ordinary people like us, can also reach such lofty stations through purification of our *nafs* and cleansing our heart.

Just as the prophets have been at the peak of spiritual perfection throughout human history, so too they have from time to time, been pioneers in material development.

The prophet Adam was the patron saint of agriculture and the prophet Idris was the patron saint of tailoring. The culture of ‘writing’ which began with the first person was developed greatly by the prophet Idris through his own efforts. In addition, he also paved the way for mankind to attain the primary and fundamental knowledge of today’s physics and chemistry.

The prophet Idris, was a prophet who was sent scrolls, is praised in the Qur’an for his loyalty, his truthfulness and virtue and was raised to an elevated station by Allah whilst still in this world. He was an example for all, with the forbearance he showed to his people and is commemorated as a righteous servant of Allah and a recipient of divine mercy.

The Prophet Noah (peace be upon him)

The prophet Nuh was one of the prophets considered to be the *ulu al-azm*, a term meaning the Resolute Prophets. His name is mentioned in the Qur’an 43 times. We are told that his real name is Yashkur, Sakin or Abdulghaffar, and his titles were ‘*Najiyullah*’ (the one save by Allah from the flood), and ‘*Shaykh al-Anbiya*’. The prophet Nuh lived for approximately one thousand years.



After the prophet Idris people once more began to deviate from the straight path and began worshipping idols and statues.

Out of those who followed him, it was only Wadd, Suwa, Yegus, Yeuk and Nasr who obeyed the laws he brought, that is, his *shariah*, and propagated them.

When the last of Idris's faithful companions passed away, the later generations made statues of them, with the encouragement of the hypocrites, in order to remember them. Because they attributed divine power to these statues they became idol worshippers. Each tribe had their own idol and each idol had its own servant.

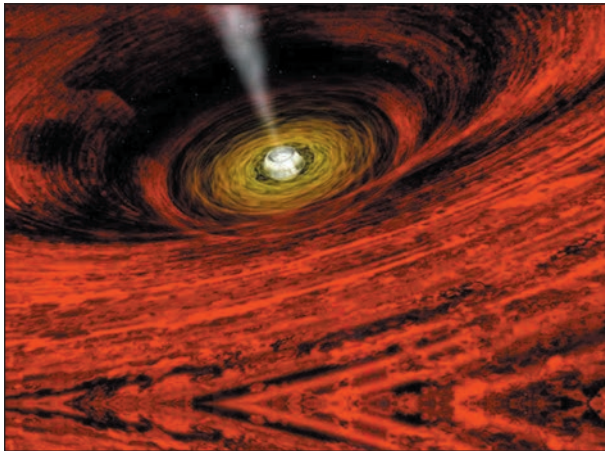
At the head of a tribe near Kufa, in which the prophet Noah also lived, was an oppressive man by the name of Darmasil who was from the lineage of Cain. Within this tribe, the majority of whom worshipped idols, there was also a group of people who were not idol-worshippers and who maintained their belief in the oneness of Allah. The prophet Noah was from this group. He earned his livelihood as a shepherd, and was occupied with trade from time to time. Noah found the idea of people worshipping idols ridiculous. He was very distressed at the extreme indecency and idol worship that they had fallen into. When prophethood was bestowed upon him, only a few of his people believed in him, namely his sons Shem, Ham and Japheth.

However, his son Can'aan was amongst those who refused to believe in him.

Throughout his prophethood, Nuh was subjected to the insults and torment of his tribe. He tolerated their actions with patience and hope for 950 years. Eventually when he lost hope and the strength to bear their harm he prayed to his Lord:

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ * أَنِّي مَغْلُوبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ

'(My Lord) I am overwhelmed, so help me!' (al-Qamar, 54:10)



In response to this prayer of Nuh, Allah commanded him to build an ark. He then built an ark of three storeys high. Eighty believers boarded the ark together with him.

A pair from every species of animal was also taken on board. Water that came out of the ground and rain that fell from the skies began to fill the land. Over the water, the ark floated for six months.

Then when Allah Most High gave the command:

'Earth, swallow up your water!' and, **'Heaven, hold back your rain!'** (Hūd, 44), the waters receded

and the ark settled on Mount Judi.

According to narrations, the Arabs and Persians are from the lineage of Noah's son, Sam; the Indians, Ethiopians and Africans come from Ham, and the Asians and the Native Americans who it is assumed passed over the Bering Strait, come from Japheth.

The characteristics of the tribe of Noah

1. The people of Noah had begun to worship their idols.

In time, the statues that had been made out of respect and as reminders became idols that they worshipped. Throughout history, idol worship has distanced people from the path of truth and made them deviate. The people of Nuh said:

“Do not abandon your gods.Do not abandon Wadd or Suwa or Yaghuth or Ya’uq or Nasr’

(Nuh, 23)

The idol Wadd was in the form of a man and Suwa was in the form of a woman; Yaghuth was a lion; Ya’uq a horse and Nasr an eagle (E.Hamdi Yazir, 8/5378).

All religions which are based on tawheed absolve the Creator of any conception of form and direct people’s attention to perceiving that which is abstract and absolute. It attempts to make them comprehend the immaterial truths that go beyond mere matter. However the human mind naturally inclines to conceiving of the Creator as having shape and form. People conceive of Him within the dimensions understandable to them or they compare Him to certain creatures whom they believe have divine powers. This can then take a person to idol worship which is a form of shirk.

This is why Islam has forbidden painting and making statues in order to preserve the human mind from attributing any sort of form to Allah.

This is because Allah, May His Majesty be exalted, possesses the attribute of ‘*Mukhalafatu li al-hawadith*’, that is, He is dissimilar to all other created beings. He does not resemble any other created being. He is above all dimension, shape, form and human conception.

Shaykh Shibli has the following to say about this matter:

“Just when you think you have comprehended Him with your mind and your thoughts, your thoughts will be returned back to you. This is because these type of thoughts are what you have created in your mind and just like you they too have come about anew (*muhdath*)...”

Here Shaykh Shibli explains the necessity of clearly distinguishing between the *muhdath*, that which is brought into existence, from the *Qadim* (that which has no beginning). He tells us that in order to know the Creator, there is no other path, other than the attributes and paths that He has mentioned.

Otherwise, to try to personify Him will drage a person to a very pitiful and lowly end.

Today there is another matter in which people are in danger of committing *shirk*. This is to pray and supplicate at the heads of the tombs of those people who are believed to have gained a high station in the sight of Allah. What should be taken note of in this matter is that one’s prayer and desires are to be directed towards Allah, in deference to these people. Otherwise, for a human being to ask from another human being can lead a person to *shirk*. The people of Noah thus made the same mistake.

2. They had gone very far in their oppression and depravity. ‘**...and the people of Nuh before – they were most unjust and exorbitant –**’ (Najm, 53:52).

3. They did not refrain from committing all manner of sin.

‘**...the people of Nuh before, they were a people of deviators**’ (Dharyat, 51:46)

4. They had lost all their good virtues and and taken evil as their maxim.

‘**They were an evil people...**’ (Anbiya, 21:77).

5. They were debased as a result of the deviation that they fell into and the sensitivity of their conscience was blunted ‘**They were an evil people and We drowned them, every one**’ (A’raf, 7:64).



Long Years of Spreading the Message

When Noah (peace be upon him) was fifty years old, the angel Gabriel (peace be upon him) came to him and informed him that he was chosen to be a prophet. He said to him:

“Go to Darmasil and your people and teach them belief in the oneness of Allah...”



Noah then promised that he would propagate this message as long as he lived. This event is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in various verses:

'When We made a covenant with all the Prophets – with you and with Nuh and Ibrahim and Musa and 'Isa son of Maryam – We made a binding covenant with them' (Ahzab, 33:7)

'We sent Nuh to his people: 'I am a clear warner to you. Worship none but Allah. I fear for you the punishment of a painful day' (Hüd, 11:25, 26)

At first the prophet Nuh carried out his duty in secret but later on began to openly spread his message.

Despite having gained the love of all as a youth, after he was appointed with the duty of spreading the divine command, very few people believed in him.

When the king of his tribe, Darmasil was informed of this propagating activity of Noah he asked those around him:

"Who is he?"

The replied:

"His name is Noah ibn Lamak and even though he is from our people he does not follow us. At first he was quite intelligent, but later he lost his mind. He claims that he is a prophet."

Then they said:

"He objects to our idols". Darmasil then called Noah to him and rebuked him:

"Woe to you! Do you reject our gods?"

Darmasil and the other unbelievers ridiculed Noah because of the poor people that surrounded him. The unbelievers said to him:

'... Why should we believe you when the vilest people follow you?' (Shu'arâ, 26:111)

Due to their arrogance this ignorant and oppressive nation despised the poor and weak. However just as the prophet Nuh defended his cause so too he defended those who were dedicated to it.

He reacted to the accusations of the deniers, saying: **'I am not going to chase away those who believe'** (Şuarâ, 114)

He used to say:

'[Because] they are surely going to meet their Lord. However, I see you as ignorant people. My people! Who would help me against Allah if I did drive them away? So will you not pay heed?' (Hüd, 11:29, 30)

When Darmasil passed away, his son Nawlin replaced him. He was even more oppressive than his father. Noah continued to spread his message in the time of Nawlin, just as he did before. His people continued to ridicule him, beat him and throw dirt all over him. However he showed great patience. And as a divine favour, Gabriel would come from time to time to dress his wounds. The deniers said

"Woe onto you O Noah. Despite our beating you and our insults, do you still refuse to abandon your case?"

The prophet Noah advised them as follows:

"I am not a fool. Your forefathers are now suffering in pain. Wake up to yourselves'.

He told them that he was not afraid of them and said continuously:

If you turn away from me you will not have harmed me in any way. I do not fear that you may harm me. I put my trust in Allah...Nor do I ask you for any reward..."

The verse is as follows:



‘I do not ask you for any wage for it. My wage is the responsibility of no one but the Lord of all the worlds’ (Shu’arâ, 26:109)

‘so have taqwa of Allah and obey me’ (Shu’arâ, 26:110)

Deprived of guidance

Some of the main reasons that, throughout history, some nations have rejected the creed of tawheed that the prophets brought, and have thus been deprived of guidance are as follows:

a) Excess and frenzy: In all true religions there exists a belief in an ‘afterlife’, where the reward and punishment for all affairs will be given. Just as this keeps in check the freedom for people to do whatever they want, it also makes it necessary for them to direct and order their lives according to the rulings of their religion.

Throughout history, in idol-worshipping societies where there is no belief in an afterlife, the powerful have oppressed the weak and enslaved them according to their own base desires. In societies such as these, all benefit belongs to those in power and so they do not believe that they will have to pay a price for their actions. Consequently the belief in an afterlife that true religions teach causes them discomfort.

When Islam appeared the first serious misgivings of the idol-worshippers lay in the idea of the existence of a hereafter. The pagans were very uncomfortable with this idea and began to talk of this news as ‘the momentous news’. The Holy Qur’an mentions their discomfort as follows: **‘About what are they asking one another? About the momentous news’** (Naba’, 1)

‘...the thing about which they differ’ (Naba’, 2, 3)

b) The loss of benefit: The discipline and order in a life of worship is difficult for idol-worshippers who have become accustomed to using their idols for their own benefit and carnal desires.

c) Being deprived of model personalities: In true religions, people need prophets as their role models. In idol-worship, however, there is no such role-model and no requirement to take them as an example. They act according to their own desires.

d) Conceit and Arrogance: The strong, wealthy, leading men of the idol-worshippers succumbed to the sickness of belittling the prophets and their companions who followed them in their wish to lead a simple life. They believed that if they mixed with the poor and weak believers they would lose their worth in society.

e) The attractions of worldly life: Another obstacle for idol-worshippers finding guidance is the life of this world (property, wealth, children) being attractive to them and thus leading them into heedlessness and the eye of their heart being veiled to the truth. A verse from the Holy Qur’an states:

‘To mankind the love of worldly appetites is painted in glowing colours: women and children, and heaped-up mounds of gold and silver, and horses with fine markings, and livestock and fertile farmland. All that is merely the enjoyment of the life of this world. The best home-coming is in the presence of Allah’ (Al’i Imran, 3:14).

As explained in the 71st verse of the chapter Yunus, Noah disclosed the evil intentions of his idol-worshipping people and challenged them thus:

1. Put forth all of your solutions in order to achieve your aims.
2. Call forth your partners
3. Do what you do openly. Do not doubt and do them in secret.
4. Direct all of your evil towards me
5. Do what you want to do immediately.

And give me no respite.



These words of the prophet Noah demonstrate his trust in his Lord.

The unfortunate tribe's request for punishment

When the prophet Noah (peace be upon him) began to invite his people to the true religion a group of people believed in him. After that just as nobody believed in him thereafter, so too the torture and suffering carried out by his people on him and the believers reached its peak. So much so that, with the courage that comes from ignorance, his people went to the extreme of asking for the divine punishment to come about:

'They said, 'Nuh, you have argued with us and argued much so bring us what you have promised us if you are telling the truth' (Hud, 11:32).

After this revelation, his oppressive people began to belittle Noah, and continued to belie him. When they went even further by telling him to 'bring us the punishment that you have promised' Noah reminded them once more of the will and disposal of Allah:

'He said, 'Allah will bring it to you if He wills and you will not be able to prevent it.

My counsel will not benefit you, for all my desire to counsel you, if Allah desires to lead you into error. He is your Lord and you will return to Him' (Hud, 11:33-34)

As a first indication of divine punishment, Almighty Allah left this rebellious nation who refused to come to their senses, without rain for forty years. They were unable to have children and their animals perished.

Helplessly they turned to the prophet Noah. He said to them:

"Abandon your worship of these idols and I will pray for you". Then Noah prayed to Almighty Allah as follows:

'O Lord I said to my people: "Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Truly He is Endlessly Forgiving' (Nuh, 10)

"(Ask forgiveness so that) He sends heaven down on you in abundant rain' (Nuh, 11)

"...and reinforce you with more wealth and sons, and grant you gardens and grant you waterways' (Nuh, 12)

The prophet Noah continued to advise and warn his people as follows:

'What is amiss with you that you cannot look forward to Allah's majesty, seeing that He has created (every one of) you in successive stages' (Nuh, 13, 14)

'Do you not see how He created seven heavens in layers, and placed the moon as a light in them and made the sun a blazing lamp?' (Nuh, 15, 16)

'Allah caused you to grow from the earth

then will return you to it and bring you out again' (Nuh, 17, 18)

'Allah has spread the earth out as a carpet for you so that you could use its wide valleys as roadways' (Nuh, 19, 20)

However this obstinate idol-worshipping nation did not pay heed to this wise advice.

When he saw that his advice was of no benefit Noah said:

'My Lord, they have disobeyed me and followed those whose wealth and children have only increased them in loss³¹' (Nuh, 21)

'They have hatched a mighty plot' (Nuh, 22)

31 Here the prophet Noah is complaining about his people who took pride in their wealth, their fame and their children and who followed their base desires.



‘saying, “Do not abandon your gods.Do not abandon Wadd or Suwa’ or Yaghuth or Ya‘uq or Nasr.

They have misguided many people. Do not increase the wrongdoers in anything but misguidance!’ (Nuh, 23-24)



One father pointed out the prophet Noah to his son and said:

“Look, do not believe in him”.

His son then took the staff from his father’s hand and hit Noah on the head with it. Dripping in blood, Noah said:

“O my Lord! If you wish it be so, then guide them. Otherwise give me patience until You decree Your judgement of them. Because You are the best of Judges”.

When their torture and obstinacy in their disbelief became too great however there was nothing left to do. The prophet Noah then called upon his Lord:

‘He called upon his Lord: ‘I am overwhelmed, so help me!’ (Qamar, 54:10)

As one generation from the people of Noah began to die out they advised the next generation to refrain from believing in him, to oppose him and to fight him. Fathers would advise their mature children as follows:

“You shall not believe in Noah as long as you live”.

The nature of the people of this nation was thus completely corrupt and they refused to recognise faith and the truth. This is why the prophet Noah then prayed:

‘ My Lord! Do not leave a single one of the unbelievers on earth! If You do they will misguide Your slaves and spawn nothing but more dissolute unbelievers’ (Nuh, 26, 27)

‘My Lord! Forgive me and my parents and all who enter my house as believers, and all the men and women of the believers.

But do not increase the wrongdoers except in ruin!’ (Nuh, 28).

After this supplication of his the command came to begin constructing the ark.

After this excessiveness of his people, Allah sent the following revelation to the prophet Noah in order to console him:

‘None of your people are going to have faith except for those who already have faith, so do not be distressed at what they do.



Build the Ark under Our supervision and as We reveal and do not address Me concerning the wrongdoers. They shall be drowned’ (Hud, 11:36, 37)

After the construction of the ark began, the idol-worshipping people continued to mock and ridicule the prophet Noah.

‘He began to build the Ark and every time some nobles of his people passed him by, they ridiculed him. He said, ‘Though you ridicule us now, we will certainly ridicule you as you do us’ (Hud, 11:38)

‘You will soon know who will receive a punishment which disgraces him and find unleashed against himself an everlasting punishment’ (Hud, 11:39)



Not content with this much, the rebellious people wanted to burn the ark by night and when they were unable to do so, they said:

“This is your magic”.

After that they went even further in their insults and animosity and sullied the ark by relieving themselves in it. When they later came down with scabies they were forced to wipe their own filth over their faces as treatment.

Despite Allah warning them with such signs as these, they still refused to wake up and pay heed.

The Flood- The imminent punishment.

The prophet Noah and the believers built the ark from a hard tree that was resistant to harsh conditions. There are narrations which state that it was three storeys high and completed in either two or four years and that it was powered by steam.

According to a narration by Ibn Abbas there were eighty people on board the ark.

A pair of each animal was also taken on board. When all preparations were ready, the awaited divine command came to Noah:

‘(And so it went on) till, when Our judgement came to pass, and waters gushed forth in torrents oven the face of the earth, We said (unto Nuh): “Place on board of this (ark) one pair of each (kind of animal) of either sex, as well as thy family – except those on whom (Our) sentence has already been passed – and all (others) who have attained to faith” – for only a few (of Nuh’s people) shared his faith’ (Hud, 11:40)

The Arabic word *‘tannur’* which is mentioned in the verse has diverse meanings one of which is ‘oven’. Based on this, some scholars have said that Noah’s ark had a chamber that was powered by steam.

One of Noah’s son, Can’aan, did not believe in him, despite all of his father’s advice and warnings and was thus one of those who did not board the ark. Noah’s last call when the ark was about to move was also of no benefit. This event is explained in the Qur’an as follows:

‘It sailed with them through mountainous waves, and Nuh called out to his son, who had kept himself apart, ‘My son! Come on board with us. Do not stay with the unbelievers!’ (Hud, 11:42)

‘(His son) said, ‘I will take refuge on a mountain; It will protect me from the flood.’ (Noah) said, ‘There is no protection from Allah’s command today except for those He has mercy on.’ The waves surged in between them and he was among the drowned’ (Hud, 11:43)

‘Nuh called out to his Lord and said, ‘My Lord, my son is one of my family and Your promise is surely the truth and You are the Justest of Judges’ (Hud, 11:45).

This was the prophet Noah’s slip – He cursing his people but prayed for his own son. Divine warning came once more to prevent him from being amongst the ignorant:

‘[Allah] said, ‘Nuh, he is definitely not of your family. He is someone whose action was not righteous. Do not, therefore, ask Me for something about which you have no knowledge. I admonish you lest you should be among the ignorant’ (Hud, 11:46)

Realising his mistake, Noah then prayed:

‘He said, ‘My Lord, I seek refuge with You from asking You for anything about which I have no knowledge. If You do not forgive me and have mercy on me, I will be among the lost’ (Hud, 11:47)

If we recall Allah (exalted and majestic is He) had ordered him not to pray for the disbelievers.

‘...and do not address Me concerning the wrongdoers. They shall be drowned’ (Hud, 11:37)



‘When Our command comes and water bubbles up from the earth, load into it a pair of every species, and your family – except for those among them against whom the word has already gone ahead. And do not address Me concerning those who do wrong. They shall be drowned’ (Mū’minūn, 27)

‘So We opened the gates of heaven with torrential water’ (Qamar, 11)

‘...and made the earth burst forth with gushing springs. And the waters met together in a way which was decreed. We bore him on a planked and well-caulked ship’ (Qamar, 12)

On board the ark that was now out at sea were those who believed in him and the creatures that had been taken on and even though they were rocking about on the waves, they found themselves under divine protection. Allah Most High says in the Qur’an:

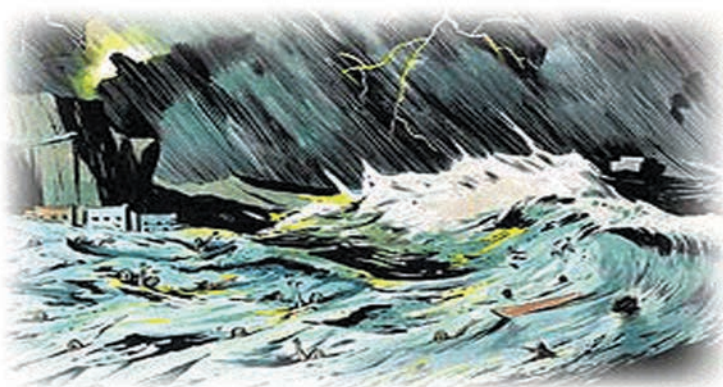
‘It sailed with them through mountainous waves’ (Hud, 11:42)

‘...[the ark] which ran before Our eyes – a reward for him who had been rejected’ (Qamar, 14)

‘We left it as a Sign. But is there any rememberer there?’ (Qamar, 15)

‘[O people see] How terrible were My punishment and warnings!’ (Qamar, 16)

The waters recede



It was due to the prayer that was taught to Noah, before he boarded the ark that the ark and those on board it were safe:

‘When you and those with you are settled in the Ship, then say: “Praise be to Allah who has rescued us from the people of the wrongdoers!” And say: “My Lord, land me in a blessed landing-place. You are the best Bringer to Land’ (Mu’minun, 28, 29)

According to narrations, the flood began on the first day of the month of

Rajab and continued for six months. Allah then commanded the land and the sky:

‘It was said, ‘Earth, swallow up your water!’ and, ‘Heaven, hold back your rain...!’ (Hud, 11:44)

Eventually on the tenth day of the month of Muharram, the ark settled on the mountain of Judi. Noah and the believers had been saved:

‘So We rescued him and those with him in the loaded ship’ (Shu’ara, 26:119)

Then Almighty Allah said to Noah:



‘It was said, ‘Nuh, descend with peace from Us and with blessings on you and on the nations which will issue from those who are with you. But there are nations to whom we will give enjoyment and then a painful punishment from Us will afflict them’ (Hud, 11:48)

‘But they denied him so We rescued him, and all those with him, in the Ark and We made them the successors and We drowned the people who denied Our Signs. See the final fate of those who were warned’ (Yunus, 10:73)



Almighty Allah informs us of the misfortune that the oppressors meet with in this world and painful punishment which is described in the verses as follows:

‘Because of their errors they were drowned and put into the Fire. They found no one to help them besides Allah’ (Nuh, 25)

The Day of Ashura

After the ark had landed safely on Mount Judi, the prophet Noah and the believers fasted as a sign of their gratitude to their Lord. They cooked *ashura*³² with the leftover ingredients from their provisions. This is why on the 10th day of Muharram which corresponds to this day, it is *sunnah* to give charity, distribute sweets and fast.

Abu Hurairah (ra) transmits the following words from the Messenger of Allah (saw):

“The most [meritorious] fast to be held after that held in the month of Ramadan, is that which is held in the divine month of Muharram” (Muslim, Sawm, 38).

Aisha, the prophet’s wife, narrates the following:

“The people of Quraysh would fast on the Day of Ashura, even in the period of ignorance. And the Messenger of Allah (saw) would fast on this day even before he became a prophet” (Bukhari, Sawm, 69, Menakibu al-Ansar, 26, Tafsir, 2/24).

This hadith demonstrates the importance and virtue of fasting on the Day of Ashura. Other events that took place on this day are as follows:

1. Allah accepted the repentance of the prophet Adam and gave him the title ‘*Safiyullah*’ (Allah’s chosen servant).
2. Allah raised the prophet Idris to a lofty station in Heaven;
3. Allah rescued the prophet Noah from the ark;
4. He saved the prophet Ibrahim from the fire;
5. He revealed the Torah to the prophet Musa on this day;
6. He rescued the prophet Joseph from prison;
7. He returned the prophet Jacob’s sight to him on this day;
8. He cured the prophet Ayyub (Job);
9. He saved Jonah from the stomach of the whale;
10. He divided the Red Sea for the children of Israel, opening up the way for them and bringing them to safety.
11. He forgave the prophet Dawud;
12. He gave the prophet Sulayman his wealth and kingdom;
13. And it was on this day that He forgave the prophet Muhammad (saw) all his sins, both past and future.

The fact that all of these important events took place on this day increases the importance of the Day of Ashura.

According to the scholars, the flood was worldwide. Water had engulfed the entire earth. It is stated in the book “*Mir’a al-Kainat*” by Nisancizade Muhyiddin Mehmed, that:

³² *Ashura* is a type of dessert made with wheat and dried fruits and nuts which is believed to have been made from leftover ingredients on the day that the ark came to rest on Mount Ararat (Translator’s note)



“When the ark landed, eighty people established the city called ‘Madina as-Sema’. This city is also called ‘Suq al-Sema’. The second proliferation of the human race was performed by these eighty people.

The prophet Noah’s oldest son, Sam was a very intelligent and righteous man. After his father he became his representative.

He was the subject of his father’s prayers of good for him. Righteous people have generally come from his lineage. It is estimated that the Indians, Ethiopians and Africans were propagated from his son Ham; and Russians, Slavs and Turks are believed to have come from his son Japheth. However in time, people again began to deviate from the path of truth and succumb to the sin of shirk, beginning to worship the sun and idols and move away from the path of truth.

According to the Qur’anic exegete, Fakhruddin al-Razi, the purpose in the Qur’an informing us that the prophet Noah lived a painful and tormenting 950 years is to inform us of this stage of the prophet Noah and to console the Messenger of Allah (saw). This is because the prophet Noah tolerated all manner of pain and torment for a long period of time and was patient. This is why, with this state of his, he is a wonderful example for the community.

The ‘mistakes’ made by the prophet Noah made

1. According to narrations the prophet Nuh once saw a sick and festering dog and turned away from it. Upon this he was subjected to the following divine address:

“O Nuh! It was I who created that dog; do you then censure Me?”

2. When the prophet Noah was left powerless in the face of his people’s unbelief and obstinacy he sought refuge in Allah and cursed his people but then prayed for the salvation of his son. Upon this Allah warned him not to be ‘from amongst the ignorant’.

As a result of his mistakes, Noah cried and shed many tears. The name *Nuh* was given to him on this account as it has the meaning of wailing and crying much. This is why we must have compassion on and show mercy to all creatures, without distinguishing between them, on account of their Creator.

The main reasons for the destruction of Noah’s people

1. They worshipped idols and encouraged others to do so.

2. There was a small group of people amongst them who were believers. The rest of them were in state of unbelief and denial.

3. They rejected the notion of life after death and that they would be taken to account for their actions.

4. Because Noah and those who believed in him were poor and from the lower classes, they labelled them ‘the contemptibles’ and despised them and belittled them.

5. Despite the fact that Noah had a strong personality and was very trustworthy his people rejected him after he became a prophet. They went even further and persecuted and oppressed him.

6. These people were addicted to the pleasures of this world and despite Allah having favoured them with much bounty, they refused to show gratitude.

7. The women of this tribe were devoid of morals, dignity and modesty.

All of these facts led to the destruction of this tribe, to whom Allah sent a prophet whom they belied and persisted in their obstinacy.

The gratitude of the prophet Noah (peace be upon him).

In the Qur’an Allah Most High reminds us of how grateful a prophet Nuh was, as an example for all of mankind. Thus we too must be grateful for all of the favours that are bestowed upon us:





“If you give thanks I will increase My bounty”
(Ibrāhīm, 7)

‘Descendants of those We carried with Nuh. [Know that] He was a grateful slave’ (Isra, 17:3)

Likewise we are told in a narration by Abdullah ibn al-As that the Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:

“There are two virtues that whoever possesses them, Allah records him as being amongst those who are grateful and patient:

For the person who looks at those who are superior to them in matters of religion and follows them, and who looks at those who are below them in worldly matters and is grateful to Allah for the bounties He has bestowed on them, Allah will record that person as grateful and patient” (Tirmidhī, Qiyāmah 59)

The prophet Noah was in a state of constant gratitude, whether it be in his acts of eating and drinking or dressing. When dressing or eating he would say ‘Bismillah (In the Name of Allah)’. After finishing his meal or undressing, he would say ‘Alhamdulillah’ (Praise be to Allah’).

‘Shukur’ or showing gratitude is an act of speech and behaviour directed towards one’s Lord, in pleasure and in the face of all of the bounties and goodness Allah has bestowed on a person.

Sariyyu al-Sakati says: “If a person meets with a bounty and does not show gratitude for that bounty, that bounty will be taken away from them”.

Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur’an:

لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

‘If you are grateful, I will surely increase My favour to you, but if you deny (and show ingratitude), indeed, My punishment is severe’ (Ibrahim 14:7).

The distinguishing characteristics of the prophet Nuh

1. Despite living amongst an idol-worshipping people and very few people believing in him, he persisted in serving his people.
2. The prophet Nuh persevered with his people for 950 years, in spite of all of the pain they inflicted upon him. He was a prophet who was ever grateful in all circumstances.
3. The prophet Nuh was a servant who was in a constant state of seeking forgiveness and immediately repented for any mistake he made.
4. From the time of the prophet Nuh, mankind’s embarking upon the seas greatly developed and they began to benefit from the sea.

This great prophet who passed away the year that the flood came to an end was an example to the prophets and their people who came after him, with the patience he showed to his people for 950 years, despite having been oppressed by their *shirk*, unbelief and the darkness of their oppression. His patience was the best legacy that he left behind...

Upon him be peace...



QUESTIONS

A. Answer the following questions

1. Which characteristics of the prophet Idris does Allah Most High praise in the Qur'an?
2. What was the name and the characteristic trait of the people of the community in which the prophet Idris lived?
3. Give an example of the advice that the prophet Idris gave to his people.
4. Even though he was a prophet the prophet Idris struggled to cleanse his heart and purify his nafs through abstinence and effort. What does this indicate to us?
5. Compare the attitude of the people of Nuh before and after he became a prophet.
6. The prophet Muhammad forbade visiting the graves for a period. How does this relate to the attempt to establish the creed of tawheed in the community?
7. Throughout history those people who first believed in the prophets were poor, lonely and from the lower levels of society. How did this affect the other members of society?
8. In the verse '**Allah caused you to grow from the earth**' (Nuh, 71:17) why is the creation of the human being compared to the growth of a plant?
9. Despite all of his efforts, the prophet Nuh was unsuccessful in making his people accept belief in tawheed and he then prayed to Allah: "O my Lord, I have been defeated so help me" What are the implications of this?
10. What was the 'slip' that the prophet Nuh made? What was the weakness in him that caused him to make this 'mistake'?
11. What were the reasons for the destruction of the people of Nuh?

B. Fill in the gaps

1. It is known that approximately people from the tribe of Idris believed in him.
2. pages of scrolls were revealed to the prophet Idris.
3. Towards the end of his life the prophet Idris was raised to theby Almighty Allah.
4. The epithet of the prophet Nuh is 'Najiyullah'. This word means....
5. Personifying the Essence of Allah and giving Him form is not a part of the creed of
6. The rebellious people of the tribe of Nuh wanted to burn his ark by night. When they were unable to do so they said:



C. Choose the correct answer from the following four options

- 1. Which of the following was not a reason for the destruction of the people of Idris?**
 - A. The people of Idris were very dissipated both in worldly and otherworldly terms.
 - B. They considered all things forbidden to be allowed and they did them.
 - C. They tortured the prophet Idris.
 - D. They went to extremes in their tyranny.

- 2. Which of the following is not one of the characteristics of Idris mentioned in the Qur'an?**
 - A. His loyalty and truthfulness
 - B. His worship day and night
 - C. His being a righteous slave
 - D. His being raised to the heavens

- 3. What is the reason for the tribe of Nuh being idol-worshippers?**
 - A. After the believers in the prophet Idris passed away, the people began to make statues of them.
 - B. Human beings have worshipped idols since the time of the prophet Adam.
 - C. The art of 'statue making and painting' was very widespread
 - D. A prophet had not been sent to them explaining the religion of tawheed.

- 4. Which of the following is not one of the features of the creed of tawheed?**
 - A. There is only One Absolute God.
 - B. It does not constrict the conception and imagination of the human being to forms and moulds.
 - C. 'God' does not resemble any of His creatures.
 - D. The Essence of Allah is personified so that it can be easily understood.

- 5. Throughout history the belief system brought by the prophets were for the most part rejected by their people. Which of the following is not a reason for this?**
 - A. They were worried that the system of slavery and exploitation that they had established would be brought down.
 - B. It was easier to make ignorant people accept as their god idols that they could see with their own eyes and touch with their own hands.
 - C. The fact that, as a result of belief in the hereafter that was advocated in true religion, they would be taken to account for what they did in this world made them uneasy.
 - D. In the system brought by the religion of truth, they would be unable to use their idols for their own benefit and they found a life regular worship difficult and taxing.

- 6. In the verses that mention the people of the prophet Nuh, which of their characteristics is attention drawn to the most?**
 - A. They were an idol worshipping people who did not listen to any of the prophets
 - B. They went to extremes in their oppression, rebellion and sin and they made evil their trademark.
 - C. They were an arrogant people who were very wealthy and lived in abundance.
 - D. They lived for a long time.



7. Which of the following cannot be said about the people of Noah?

- A. Their women had lost their dignity, modesty and shame.
- B. Allah had bestowed upon them abundant favours.
- C. They despised and belittled the believers who believed in Allah and His messengers.
- D. They did not trust Nuh nor respect him before he became a prophet.

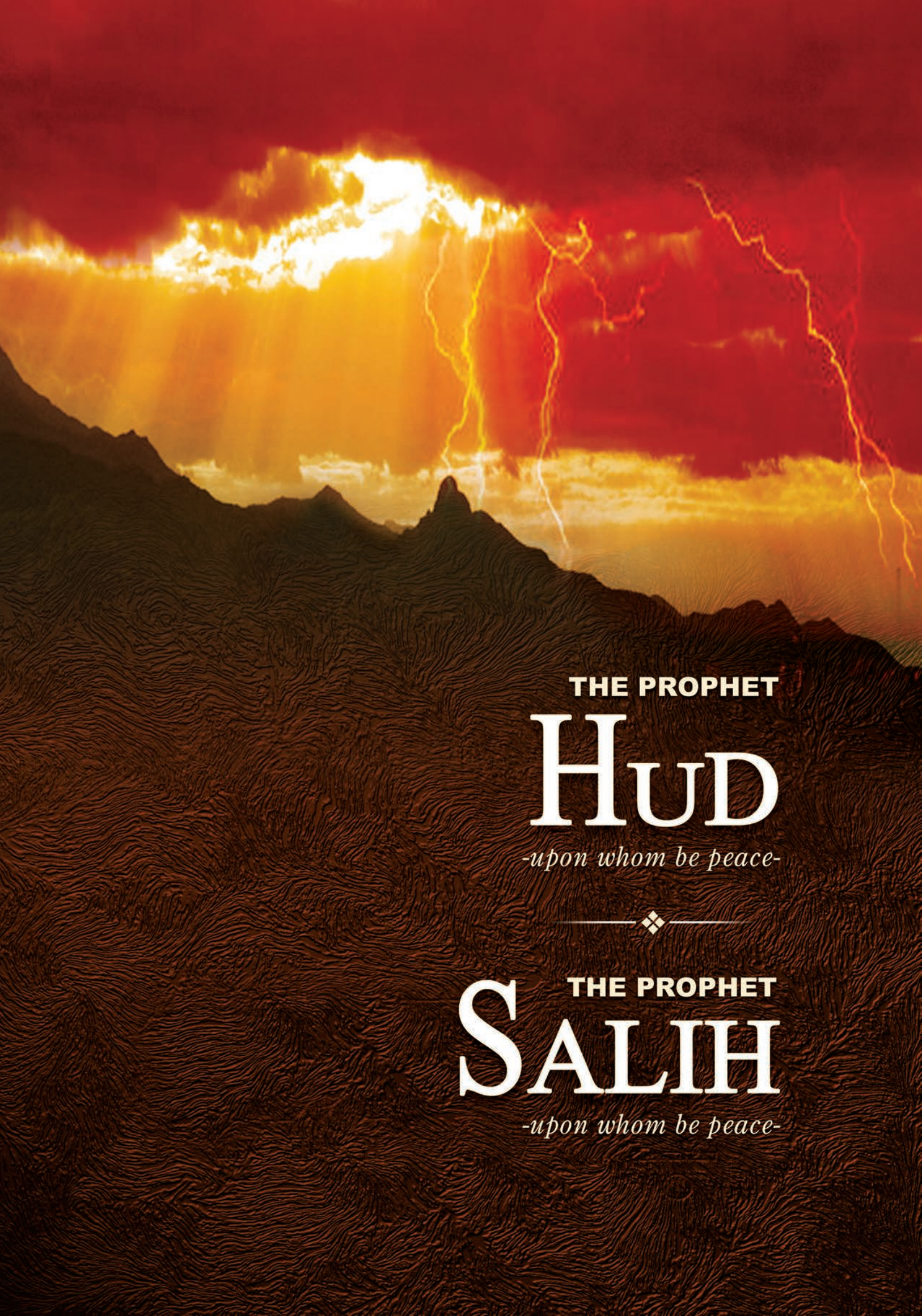
8. Which of the following meanings can we infer from the prayer of the prophet Noah: "O my Lord, I have been defeated, so help me"?

- A. He was defeated by his nafs as he could no longer bear the pain that he suffered.
- B. He was finally defeated by his people who had caused him great suffering and pain.
- C. Even though he struggled to spread and explain the creed of tawheed for many years, his people remained obstinate and still did not believe in him thus defeating him.
- D. He was defeated due to his own inadequacy in carrying out his responsibility as a prophet, remaining in a state of helplessness.

9. Which of the following is not one of the miraculous events in the life of the prophet Nuh?

- A. The ark that he built had superior technical features despite the conditions of that time. It was powered by steam and was very large and durable.
- B. The rebellious idol worshippers wished to burn the ark by night but they were unable to do so.
- C. Allah Most High made these people experience a major earthquake right before the flood as a last warning.
- D. Those who defiled the ark later succumbed to the disease of scabies and were forced to take this filth as their medicine for their illness.





THE PROPHET

HUD

-upon whom be peace-



THE PROPHET

SALIH

-upon whom be peace-

The prophet Hud
(upon whom be peace)

The prophet Salih
(upon whom be peace)

The Prophet Hud (peace be upon him)

The prophet Hud (peace be upon him) was one of the grandsons of Shem, the son of Nuh (peace be upon them). He is also known by the name Abir. He was born and raised in the land of Ahqaf. The word 'Hud' comes from the Arabic root '*hawada*' which has the meanings of gentleness, calm, conciliation, and tranquillity. The prophet Hud was sent to the people of Ad. The region of Ahqaf where the people of Ad lived and whose destruction serves as a lesson to all of mankind, was located between the lands of what are now Yemen, Aden, and Umman.

The people of Ad

The nation of Ad was an Arabian tribe consisting of 23 smaller tribes. This tribe was named after Ad, the grandson of the prophet Nuh. They lived approximately 800 years after the prophet Nuh. It is narrated that the people of this tribe were generally of a large build, tall and lived for a very long period.

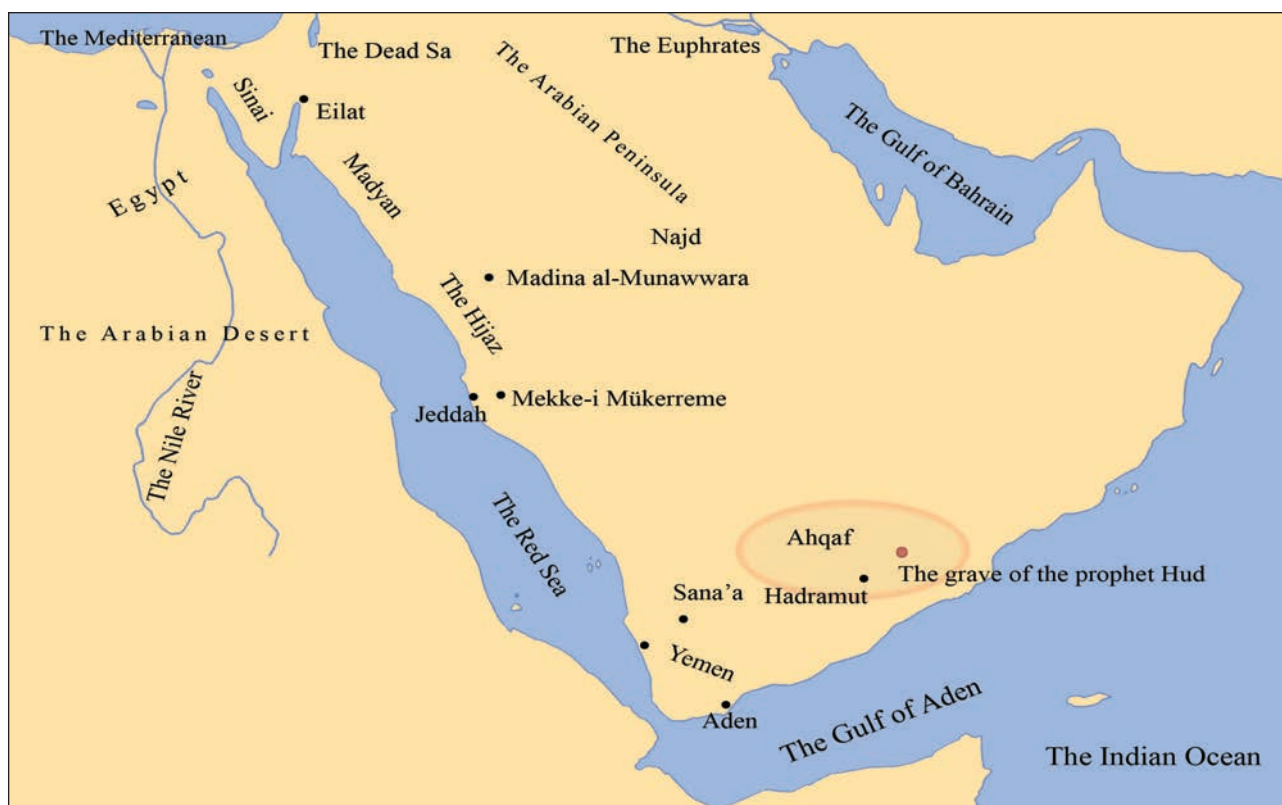
The lands in which they lived were very fertile. The region of Ahqaf in which they lived consisted of many gardens and vineyards and was thus known as '*iram*'. This is where the famous expression 'the gardens of iram' originated.

The people of Ad would hew out rocks in order to build their houses, constructing ostentatious buildings. They would include vineyards and gardens and beautiful pools. They were abound with dazzling beauty. Allah favoured this nation with worldly bounties in plenty but with time they became arrogant and gloating.

They became deceived by the abundance of these bounties that they were favoured with. They became engrossed in the life of this world. When dissension and mischief spread amongst them they strayed from their religion. They did not ponder on the terror and wisdom of Noah's flood which befell their grandfathers nor did they take heed. In the Qur'an Allah Most High mentions them as follows:

'Ad were arrogant in the land, without any right, saying, 'Who has greater strength than us?' Did they not see that Allah, who created them, had greater strength than them? But they renounced Our Signs' (Fussilat, 41:15)





They strayed so far from the divine path that they even took for themselves idols by the name of Samed, Samud, Sada and Heba and worshipped them. They went to extremes in their luxury and ostentation.

They began to oppress the weak. They became oppressive and tyrannical. They went so far in their oppression and sordidness that they raided weaker tribes and plundered their wealth. They would take powerless people up to the top floor of a building and throw them off for mere entertainment. They would then derive pleasure from watching their dismembered bodies. Thus their hearts had become so hardened and their oppression had reached such an inconceivable degree.

The prophet Hud was connected to this tribe only because he was related to them. However when it came to his way of life, he had nothing in common with them. He was the son of a pure and noble family.



As the people of Ad increased in their depravity and rebellion, and their rampancy intensified day by day, Allah chose Hud from amongst their tribe as a prophet.

‘And to ‘Ad We sent their brother Hud’ (Hud, 11:50)

After receiving revelation, the prophet Hud went to where his people had gathered. Shaddad, the king of the tribe, was sitting on a throne made of gold. The prophet Hud began to speak with his strong voice:

‘My people, worship Allah! You have no other god than Him. So will you not have taqwa?’
(A’raf,7:65)

My people! Ask forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him. He will send heaven down to you in abundant rain, and increase you with strength upon strength. Do not turn away as evildoers’ (Hud, 11:52)

Shaddad became angry. He said:



“O Hud! Shame on you! Do you think that you will be able to prevail over us when we are so numerous and strong a people. Shame on you! Are you not aware that you are one man. And do you not know that every day are born to us one thousand children!”

‘The ruling circle of those of his people who were unbelievers said, ‘We consider you a fool and think you are a liar’ (A’raf, 7:66)‘

‘They said, ‘Hud, you have not brought us any clear sign. We will not forsake our gods for what you say. We do not believe you’ (Hud, 11:53)

By boasting of their children and their wealth, Shaddad and the people of Ad belittled the prophet Hud and did not believe in him.

‘We only say that one of our gods has driven you mad’ (Hud, 11:54)

‘He said, ‘My people, I am by no means a fool, but rather am a Messenger from the Lord of all the worlds’ (A’raf, 7:67)

Divine warnings full of caution

The prophet Hud was very saddened at the rebellion and inflexibility of his people whom he tried to invite to the path of truth. In sadness he raised his hands to the heavens and sought refuge in Allah. The result was a divine warning in the form of the women of this tribe being unable to bear children. Their infertility lasted for ten years. They were forced to approach the prophet Hud. However they persisted in their ignorance. In spite of this miracle that they saw with their own eyes they still asked:

“Show us a miracle”.

Then they went even further by reprovingly and mockingly asking for punishment.

‘They said, ‘Have you come to us to divert us from our gods? Bring us what you have promised us if you are telling the truth’ (Ahqaf, 46:22)

Then their water springs dried up. Their vineyards and gardens withered. Those beautiful and fine gardens of Iram disappeared. Those strong, well-built people fell to such a state that they became dependent on a mere morsel of food.

The prophet Hud gathered them together once more. He advised them again: “Ask forgiveness from Allah”. Then he openly warned them to refrain from persisting in their unbelief:

‘I call on Allah to be my witness, and you also bear witness, that I am free of all the gods you have apart from Him’ (Hud, 11:54)

‘So scheme against me, all of you together, and then grant me no respite’ (Hud, 11:55)

‘I have put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature He does not hold by the forelock. My Lord is on a Straight Path’ (Hud, 11 :56)

‘If you turn your backs, I have transmitted to you what I was sent to you with, and my Lord will replace you with another people, and you will not harm Him at all. My Lord is the Preserver of everything’ (Hud, 11 :57)

This warning was also not sufficient for them. Despite facing so much famine and distress they still did not seek forgiveness nor did they return to the belief in the oneness of Allah.

Due to their extreme wealth they had become very distant from Allah.

If they perchance did happen to follow the prophets then they would not be able to dabble in the forbidden things that gave them so much pleasure, nor would they be able to oppress the innocent or tyrannise the weak. This is because the belief in the oneness of Allah which is the basis of the religion of truth brought with it certain restrictions. These people who lived in extreme leisure did not want to be restricted in any way. They preferred to live ignorant of the truth with their *nafs* at leisure.



The shattering storm

Before too long clouds began to appear in the sky. When the people of Ad saw the clouds appear they were very happy and said:

“The rains have come”.

However little did they know that these clouds were clouds of punishment.

For the last time the prophet Hud warned them:

“Come to the faith”.

However they had still not awakened from their deep ignorance.

“No, these clouds are the clouds that appear before the rains”, they said.

Thus they remained deaf and blind to this last divine warning. Eventually the appointed angels encompassed the entire tribe with the clouds that appeared in the sky.

On Wednesday morning the winds intensified, so much so that the storm was strong enough to uproot the trees from the ground. More and more the intense sound and cold of the storm increased. People were



flung up into the air like grasshoppers. They tied their skirts to each other to form a circle in order to avoid being thrown up but it was to no avail. When some of them saw that even camels and strong powerful men were being thrown up into the air, they raced inside to their houses. But the same result befell them there too and blew them out of their houses like straw.

Allah commanded the winds to pile the sand dunes over the people. This continued for eight days and seven nights. But when

this storm appeared, the prophet Hud and those who believed in him were saved from this divine punishment and storm by the grace and mercy of Allah. The punishment came down upon the rebellious only. The Holy Qur'an states:

'When Our command came, We rescued Hud and those who had faith along with him by a mercy from Us. We rescued them from a harsh punishment' (Hud, 11:58)

'That was 'Ad. They denied the Signs of their Lord and disobeyed His Messengers and followed the command of every obdurate tyrant' (Hud, 11:59)

'They were pursued by a curse in the world and on the Day of Rising. Yes indeed! 'Ad rejected their Lord, so away with 'Ad, the people of Hud!' (Hud, 11:60)

'So We sent a howling wind against them on disastrous ill-fated days to make them taste the punishment of degradation in the world. And the punishment of the hereafter is even more degrading. And they will not be helped' (Fussilat, 41:16)

'And also in 'Ad when We unleashed against them the barren wind, which left nothing it touched without turning it to dust' (Adh-dhâriyât, 51:41, 42)

'Allah subjected them to it for seven whole nights and eight whole days without a break. You could see the people flattened in their homes just like the hollow stumps of uprooted palms' (Hâqah, 69:7)

'How terrible were My punishment and warnings!' (Qamar 54:21)

'Do you see any remnant of them left?' (Haqah, 69:8)



The scholars of exegesis of the Qur'an explain the expression **'We rescued him by a mercy from us'** as follows:

Allah preserved and saved the prophet Hud and those believers who followed him as a requirement of his mercy. When the people of 'Ad were destroyed, the prophet Hud and those who believed in him went to Mecca and lived his life there until he passed away.

The miracles of the prophet Hud

By the permission given to him by Allah, the prophet Hud was able to direct the winds in whichever direction he wished. When his people asked him for a sign, he asked:

"What kind of sign would you like to see?"

They told him to direct the wind in the direction of their choice.

The prophet Hud then directed the wind in the direction they asked. We should take much heed from the fact that it was because the people of 'Ad saw this miracle of the prophet Hud and still refused to believe in him that they were destroyed by a strong wind. In the

Qur'an, this wind is called '*rih-i sar-sar*' or 'intense wind'.

Another miracle of the prophet Hud was that he was able to spin wool into twisted silk thread. During times of heavy rain it would be impossible to travel. Hud would subsequently pray to Allah and as a result there would appear sanctuaries along the road. Thus people could be protected from the rain until it stopped. Once the rain stopped they could continue on their way.

The following lessons can be taken from the story of the prophet Hud:

The prophet Hud was a dignified man who took to the path of Allah in all sincerity. He would weigh his words before he spoke them. He did not respond to evil with evil, but rather treated with kindness those who ill-treated him. When his people insulted him and called him a fool he sufficed to tell them that he was no fool and that he was merely a messenger sent by Allah to warn them. He reminded them of the favours that Allah bestowed upon them and that they were required to show gratitude for them by obeying Allah's commands. He particularly expressed that he did not ask them for any reward for this

The prophet Salih (peace be upon him)

The prophet Salih was a grandson from the nineteenth generation after the prophet Adam. Salih was a prophet sent to the people of Thamud. The people of Thamud take their name from Thamud, who was from the line of Shem, the son of the prophet Nuh. Thamud and those with him had settled at the location of Hijr, located between Damascus and the Hijaz. They later left there and settled in the region of the people of 'Ad. The sons of Thamud increased in number and became a tribe (*qabila*). Eventually they increased so much as to become a nation (*qawm*). The title of this nation is "*Ad-i thani*" (the second nation of 'Ad).

The bounties that were bestowed upon the people of 'Ad were also given to the people of Thamud. However just like the people of 'Ad, they too became heedless and misguided.

They also did not take heed from the people of 'Ad who came before them. Failing to see the destruction that befell them as a result of their wild rebellion as a divine warning, they were heedless and said:

"They built their houses on sand and failed to make them sound. This is why they were destroyed. We, however, have built our houses upon hard rock. We will not meet with any damage from any coming storm".

The people of Thamud also consisted of strong, powerful men, just like the people of 'Ad. They possessed an advanced civilisation. Their greatest skill was in carving out mountains in order to build their houses and their palaces. They were able to carve out and shape huge mountains and giant rocks. Rock was carved into any desired shape at the hands of their master craftsmen.





Their leader was a man by the name of Janda.

The people of Thamud consulted with each other and asked him to make them an idol which would be unique amongst the idols of all other peoples. Janda gladly obliged. Upon this they climbed a large mountain and began to chisel the rock. They gave the idol eyes, the breast of a cow, and the feet of a horse and then coated these with gold and silver. They then decorated it with various jewels and then prostrated before it.

After making this idol, the people of Thamud then built temples to house their idols. They accumulated idols by the names of Wedd, Jedd, Hed, Shams, Manaf, Manat, Lat and they began to worship them. Thus, they were the first people to create pagan temples in history.

The prophet Salih (peace be upon him) lived together with his people. He was occupied with trade and earned his livelihood with his handcrafts.

His people loved him for his honesty, his goodness and his skill. His people had high hopes for him. In fact, they wished to make him their leader. However Allah Most High bestowed prophethood upon him.

The prophet Salih begins to spread his message

When the prophet Salih was forty years old, the angel Gabriel informed him that he was a prophet. At first he was hesitant that his people would not accept the belief in the oneness of Allah. However Gabriel told him:

“O Salih! Invite your people to the oneness of Allah”.

Then he continued:

“O Salih! You will witness some events that did not take place in the time of Nuh and Hud”. He then flew up to the heavens.

Appointed with the duty of spreading his message, Salih first went to the leader Janda and invited him to the religion of Allah.

Janda responded to this invitation quite fairly and reasonably, saying:



“Let me inform my people. If they do not accept, then we will speak to them together”.

Then Janda gathered together his people. He told them that Salih had been appointed with prophethood and he explained to them the belief in the oneness of Allah that he taught.

His people said:

“O Janda. Let him come and speak for himself”.

The prophet Salih then arrived and explained to them the belief in the oneness of Allah. This event is narrated in the Qur’an as follows:

‘To Thamud We sent their brother Salih. He said, ‘My people, worship Allah! You have no god apart from Him. He brought you into being from the earth and made you its inhabitants. So ask His forgiveness and then make tawba to Him. My Lord is Close and Quick to Respond’ (Hūd, 11:61)

‘Thamud denied the Messengers,when their brother Salih said to them, ‘Will you not fear Allah?I am a faithful Messenger to youso fear Allah and obey me.I do not ask you for any wage for it. My wage is the responsibility of no one but the Lord of all the worlds’ (Shu’ara, 26: 141-145)

However very few people accepted the belief in the oneness of Allah. The others said:

‘Salih, we had great hopes in you before this happened. Do you forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped? We have grave doubts about what you are calling us to’ (Hud, 11:62)

‘(Salih) said, ‘My people! What do you think? If I were to possess a Clear Sign from my Lord and He had given me mercy from Him: who would help me against Allah if I disobeyed Him? You would not increase me in anything but loss’ (Hud, 11 :63)

‘He said, ‘My people, why are you so anxious to hasten the bad before the good? If only you would ask for forgiveness from Allah, so that mercy might perhaps be shown to you’ (Naml, 27:46)

Despite these words full of truth and wisdom, his people accused Salih of being a bewitched liar:

‘They said, ‘You are merely someone bewitched’ (Shu’ara, 26:153)

Then they began to talk amongst themselves:

‘They said, ‘Are we to follow a human being, one of us? Then we would truly be misguided, quite insane!’ (Qamar, 54:24).

Then they continued:

‘Has the Reminder been given to him of all of us? No indeed! He is an impudent liar.’ (Qamar, 54: 25).

Allah responded to these ignorant accusations of the people of Thamud with the following grave warning:

‘They will know tomorrow who the impudent liar is’ (Qamar, 54:26)

‘He said, ‘In a short while they will be full of regret.’(Mu’minun, 23:40).



In spite of all of this, the prophet Salih continued to spread his message to his people:

‘Are you going to be left secure amid what is here, amid gardens and clear springs, and cultivated fields and palms with supple spathes?’ (Shu’ara, 26:146-148).

‘Will you continue hewing houses from the mountains with exultant skill?’ (Shu’ara, 26:149).

‘So fear Allah and obey me’ (Shu’ara, 26:150).



'Do not obey the orders of the profligate, those who corrupt the earth and do not put things right' (Shu'ara, 26:151-2).

They refused to believe in the prophet Salih, and put forth the following feeble excuse:

“You want to possess our wealth and be king over us”.

Then they reasoned with the following primitive logic:

“We have our idols. Shall we now abandon these gods that we can see for Allah whom we cannot see?”

Then they continued:

“How can you have been appointed by Allah whom you cannot even see?”

“If you speak the truth, then perform an act which nobody else can perform”

'You are nothing but a human being like ourselves, so produce a Sign if you are telling the truth.' (Shu'ara, 26:154)

The miracle of the camel



The prophet Salih was very saddened at the ignorance and heedlessness of his people. He abandoned them for a period of time, secluding himself from them. When he returned, Almighty Allah showed them the majesty and stateliness of his prophecy which left his people in a state of terror.

Salih went to the leader of the tribe, Janda who said to him:

“We are going to test you to see if you are speaking the truth”

Indicating a rock which everybody knew by the name of al-Katiba, Janda then said:

“We are going to go there with you. Let your lord bring out from there a red-haired female camel, about to give birth. And let the calf that is to be born from her be the same colour as its mother”.

Mockingly his people called out:

“Let its milk be cool in summer and warm in winter. Let all who drink from this milk find a cure for their ails. Let a poor person who drinks from it be freed of his poverty”.

At that time, red-haired camels were the most precious of camels. This is why they asked the prophet Salih to produce a red-haired camel.

When all of the people of Thamud had gathered, the prophet Salih began to perform the prayer and then he sought refuge in Allah.

The rock began to grow larger. Painful sounds could be heard coming from it and then a red-haired camel appeared from it and said: There is no god but Allah and Salih is a messenger of Allah”.

In the face of this miracle, Janda kissed the prophet Salih on his forehead and called out to his people as follows:

“O my people. Enough of this blindness... I have faith in Allah, besides whom there is no other thing worthy of worship, and who has no peer or equal, and I have faith in Salih, his prophet”.

In this way, Janda and one hundred other people from his tribe accepted the creed of the oneness of Allah.



However, the chief priest of the pagan temple said:

“How quick do you tend towards this magic? I shall show you something greater...”

He then diverted the hearts of those who were tending towards belief. Janda’s brother was one of those.

The leader of the pagans took Janda’s crown and placed it on his brother’s head, saying:

“From now on you will be our king”.

Leaving them, Janda went home and broke all of the idols that were present in his house. He distributed all of his wealth and valuables to the believers. He chose to wear a harsh and matted robe. Then he began to preach belief in the oneness of Allah, alongside the prophet Salih. He became one of his main helpers. The idol worshippers said to him:

“Shame on you! You too have been deceived by the magic of Salih”

Janda however took no notice of their words and did not leave the prophet’s Salih side.

Allah Most High said to the prophet Salih:

‘We will send the she-camel as a trial for them. Just keep a watchful eye on them and be steadfast’ (Qamar, 54:27)



The prophet Salih laid down the following conditions for his camel:

‘My people! Here is the she-camel of Allah as a Sign for you. So leave her alone to eat on Allah’s earth and do not inflict any harm on her or you will be overcome by an imminent punishment.’ (Hud, 11:64)

‘He said, ‘Here is a she-camel. She has a time for drinking and you have a time for drinking – on specified days. Do not do anything to harm her or the punishment of a terrible day will come down on you.’ (Shu’ara, 26:155-156)

The camel was a very beautiful camel, of a large build and intelligent. It would graze together with its calf and glorify Allah. The other camels were in awe of its stateliness and would run away from it out of fear. Whoever saw it was amazed by it. It also grazed differently from other animals. In one day it would drink all of the water from all of the wells in the city. The other animals would find no water left to drink. The prophet Salih had divided up the water so that one day the miraculous camel would drink from it, and the other days the other animals would drink from it.

The camel would say:

“Whoever would like some milk, let them come and take it”. The people of Thamud would come and fill their vessels.

As the camel drank water, it would continue to glorify and praise Allah. Those believers who drank its milk would find a cure for their illness.

Ingratitude

Those unbelievers, grieved and helpless in the face of this great miracle, were planning to slay the camel but they were terrified of the punishment that would await them.

In spite of their fear, two women belonging to the tribe of Thamud continued to urge the unbelievers to slay the camel, claiming that their herds were being harmed. One of these women was Unayza bint Ganem. She was an old woman, but she had beautiful daughters.

The other woman was a woman named Muheyya, who was both wealthy and beautiful.



Both of these women wanted the unbelievers to slay this camel, because their animals were left without water whenever Salih's camel drank from the water.

Muheyya called her uncle's son, Mista and said to him:

"If you slay this camel, I will marry you and everything I have will be yours".

Mista accepted her offer. However he needed a helper so he found an idol-worshipper by the name of Qitar. She offered him the daughters of Unayza. He accepted this vile offer and chose one of her daughters.

These two people found several other hapless people, thus making them nine people in total. They spread propaganda amongst the unbelieving idol-worshippers and managed to convince them.

Allah Most High informs us of their state in the following verse:

'There was a group of nine men in the city causing corruption in the land and not putting things right' (Naml, 27:48)

Those nine people waited in ambush to kill the camel. Mista threw an arrow and maimed it. Qitar and those with him jumped on it.

'And they hamstrung the She-Camel, spurning their Lord's command' (Araf, 7:77)

The baby calf was terrified and fled to the mountains. According to one narration, they slayed it too and ate from its meat.

When Salih heard of this, he was very sad. He went to the camel and sat by it, crying for a long time.

He prayed for the guidance of his people. Then he went to his people and said:

'He said, 'My people, why are you so anxious to hasten the bad before the good? If only you would ask for forgiveness from Allah, so that mercy might perhaps be shown to you.' (Naml, 27:46).

However they responded as follows:

'Salih! Bring us what you have promised us if you are one of the Messengers.' (Araf, 7:77)

'He turned away from them and said, 'My people, I transmitted my Lord's message to you and gave you good counsel. However, you do not like good counsellors!' (Araf, 79)

'[His tribe said]: 'We see you, and those with you, as an evil omen.' He said, 'No, your evil omen is with Allah; you are merely a people undergoing a trial.' (Naml, 27:47)

The earthquake and the terrifying clamour

'[Salih said]: 'Enjoy yourselves in your land for three more days. That is a promise which will not be belied.' (Hud, 11:65)

These three days were Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. On the first day, their faces would turn pale. On the second day, they would turn red; and on the third day their faces would turn black. On the fourth day, they would be destroyed. On the morning of the first night, some strange events took place. Blood began to gush out from where the camel had stepped. The leaves turned red. The well in the water turned blood-red. The faces of those unfortunate people turned pale. The nine men said:

"Salih is performing magic. Let us kill him and his family".

'They said, 'Let us make an oath to one another by Allah that we will fall on him and his family in the night and then say to his protector, "We did not witness the destruction of his family and we are telling the truth."' (Naml, 27:49).

When night fell, these nine men went to the mosque to kill the prophet Salih. Upon the command of Allah, Gabriel stoned them to death. Almighty Allah says in the Qur'an:



‘They hatched a plot and We hatched a plot while they were not aware’ (Naml, 27:50)

After this event, the prophet Salih and those who believed in him, (approximately four thousand people) left the town.

‘Then when Our command came We rescued Salih and those who had faith along with him by a mercy from Us from the disgrace of that day. Your Lord is the All-Strong, the Almighty’ (Hud, 11:66)

After the believers left that land, on the second day, the faces of the unbelievers turned crimson red. On the third day, they turned pitch black. Then they turned about them to see from which direction the punishment would arrive.

Allah gave the command to Gabriel. Those strong buildings made from strong rock turned upside down.

‘These are the ruins of their houses because of the wrong they did. There is certainly a Sign in that for people with knowledge’ (Naml, 27: 52)

According to Fakhreddin al-Razi, they were destroyed by a sound that frightened them to death with its intensity.

‘The Great Blast seized hold of them inexorably and We turned them into dirty scum. Away with the people of the wrongdoers!’ (Mu’minun, 23:41)

‘The Great Blast seized hold of those who did wrong and morning found them lying flattened in their homes’ (Hud, 11:67)

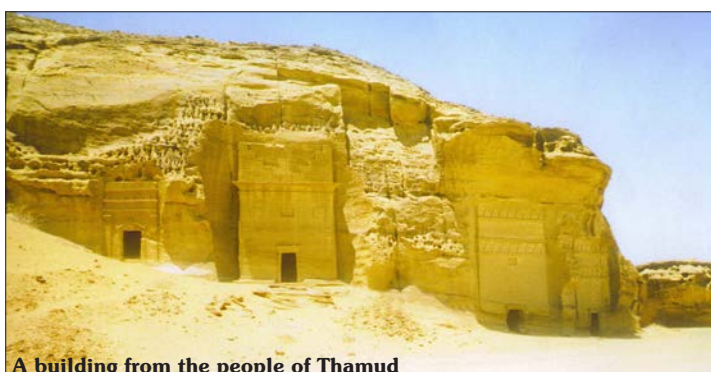
‘...so all that they earned was of no use to them’ (Hicr, 15:84)

‘How terrible was My punishment and warnings! We sent a single Blast against them and they were just like a thatcher’s reeds’ (Qamar, 54:30, 31)

‘...for the punishment did come down them. There is certainly a Sign in that, yet most of them are not believers. Truly your Lord is the Almighty, the Most Merciful’ (Shu’ara, 26:158, 159)



The reasons for the destruction of the people of Thamud



A building from the people of Thamud

1. They rejected belief in the oneness of Allah that the prophets brought and they were persistent in their unbelief.

2. They did not take heed of their prophet and they mocked him. They became arrogant and followed the desires of their rebellious *nafs*’.

3. They saw their own opinions as being above that of religion. Thus they did not heed the invitation of their prophet.

4. They listened to the words of their mischievous women. Their lust for women led them to misguidance.

In this way they joined in the act and thereby became partners to the sins of the nine people who caused the unrest.

5. They accused the prophet Salih and those with him as a result of the divine warnings and calamities that befell them and they displayed hatred for good people. They said to the prophet Salih:



“No such misfortune ever befell us before you became a prophet”. They attributed the evil that befell them to the prophet Salih.

6. They feared losing the worldly bounties that they had been favoured with. They were deceived by their greed and love for the goods of this world.

7. They betrayed the trust given to them by Allah. They asked the prophet Salih for a miracle in the form of a camel which was a great trust given to them by Allah but despite making an oath of faith they still killed it.

8. The camel belonged to no one. It was an endowment. Its milk was like a public fountain. Its owner was Almighty Allah. However by killing it, they misappropriated what was in effect public property.

9. The mischief and tyranny of those nine people had become very great. They would seize other people’s property by force, thus infringing on other people’s rights.



QUESTIONS

A. Answer the following questions

1. Which mistake is reflected in the words of Shaddad, the King of the people of 'Ad, to the prophet Hud: "Do you think that you can overpower us when we are so many in number and strong?"
2. The people of 'Ad asked that the divine punishment be brought upon them. What characteristic of theirs does this show?
3. When the people of 'Ad saw the clouds of punishment that came before the storm they said: "These are rain clouds". Evaluate their words in light of the verse: "They have eyes they do not see with. They have ears they do not hear with' (A'raf, 7:179)
4. What could be a reason for the Qur'an comparing the destroyed people of 'Ad to 'a hollow date log' or 'an uprooted date log'?
5. Describe the miracles of the prophet Hud.
6. What evidence did his people put forth in order to reject the prophet Salih?
7. What type of miracle did the unbelievers ask for from the prophet Salih?
8. Describe the nourishment and giving of milk of the prophet Salih's miracle camel.
9. What is the wisdom in Allah Most High giving the people of Thamud a period of respite of three days before their destruction?
10. In the verse '**These are the ruins of their houses because of the wrong they did. There is certainly a Sign in that for people with knowledge**' (Naml, 27:52), the reason for the destruction of the people of Thamud is given as being their own wrongdoing. Could then the disasters that afflict people today be a result of their own wrongdoing?
11. How would you respond to the question of the people of Thamud that: "Should we believe in a god that we cannot see?"

B. Fill in the gaps

1. Allah Most High took away a portion of the favours that he had bestowed on the people of 'Ad in order for them to wake up from their
2. One of the reasons the people of 'Ad were destroyed was their in which they saw others as being beneath them and another reason was their which arose due to their great wealth.
3. The people of 'Ad failed to believe in the prophet Hud despite seeing his miracles and were thus destroyed by fierce winds. These winds are called (fierce storms) in the Holy Qur'an.
4. Allah Most High appointed Salih with the duty of prophethood when he was ... years old.
5. The camel that miraculously arose out of a rock said:
6. After killing the camel the people of Thamud refused to heed the warnings of the prophet Salih and went even further by saying:.....



C. Choose the correct answer from the following four options

- 1. Which of the following is not a character trait of the people of 'Ad?**
 - A. They would torture weak and powerless people for pleasure.
 - B. They were fond of luxury and ostentation and lived in extravagance.
 - C. Their hearts had become hardened and they were a cruel and ruthless people.
 - D. They were very wealthy and had many fruitful gardens and vineyards.

- 2. Before the people of 'Ad were subject to great punishment they received many divine warnings. Which of the following was not one of these warnings?**
 - A. Their water spring dried up and their beautiful garden of Iram withered and wilted.
 - B. Their women were unable to bear children for a very long period.
 - C. They lived in shortage for many years.
 - D. They were subject to severe sand storms.

- 3. Which of the following is not one of the conditions that the people of 'Ad found themselves in?**
 - A. They had nafs' which were very unruly and were thus unable to overcome its desires.
 - B. They did not thank Allah for the gardens of Iram, beautiful houses and other bounties that He had bestowed upon them and were thus ungrateful.
 - C. They tortured the prophet whom Allah sent them by stoning him.
 - D. They became proud and smug of the favours that Allah bestowed upon them and they thus belittled Allah's messenger.

- 4. Which of the following was not a reason for the people of 'Ad refusing to believe in Allah despite so many divine warnings:**
 - A. They would be forced to give up the forbidden acts that gave them pleasure if they accepted the faith.
 - B. They would not be able to continue to gain money through unlawful means.
 - C. They would no longer be able to oppress the weak and poor for their own personal pleasure and vice.
 - D. They would lose their gardens of Iram and all other bounties if they accepted faith.

- 5. The prophet Hud continued to invite his people to believe in Allah till the last minute even though he had been informed that they would be destroyed. Which of the following conclusions can not be made about this act of the prophet Hud?**
 - A. The prophet Hud genuinely wished that his people would accept faith and be saved.
 - B. The prophet Hud loved his people and valued them.
 - C. The prophet Hud was very compassionate and thus could not accept the punishment that would befall his people.
 - D. He wished to carry out his duty of preaching that Allah had given him until the last moment.



6. **Which of the following is not a common characteristic of the people's of 'Ad and Thamud?**
- Both of them very wealthy tribes to whom Allah had given much bounty.
 - Both had become conceited and smug to such an extent that they failed to see their own wildness and rampant nature.
 - Both would boast of their ability to build solid and durable houses.
 - Both tribes lived in the same region and benefited from the same sources of income.
7. **Which of the following did not happen to the people of Thamud before their destruction?**
- Their faces had turned pale.
 - Blood oozed out where the she-camel had stepped.
 - They planned to murder the prophet Salih.
 - The water in their wells turned bright red.
8. The people of Thamud loved the prophet Salih before he became a prophet and even considered appointing him as their leader. **However after he began teaching them about the creed of tawheed they accused him of being a liar and being self-satisfied. What does this indicate about them?**
- They contradicted themselves due to their unbelief and obstinacy, refusing to accept the belief in tawheed that the prophet Salih taught.
 - Even though he rejected their own beliefs, they loved the prophet Salih very much.
 - They believed that the prophet Salih had succumbed to some sort of disease or that he had become bewitched.
 - They realised that their prior opinion of the prophet Salih was wrong.
9. The words of the unbelievers: **'You are merely someone bewitched'** (Shu'ara, 26:253) is an indication of which of the following opinions of the people of Samud about the prophet Salih:
- They had begun to hate the prophet Salih.
 - They believed that the prophet Salih was only concerned about his own benefit.
 - They believed that the prophet Salih was a liar.
 - They believed that the prophet Salih planned on becoming the leader of his tribe.
10. **Which of the following is not a reason for why the ungrateful people of the tribe of Thamud wished to kill the miracle camel**
- The camel drank all of the water and left none for the other animals.
 - There was a danger that the camel would eat all of the grass in the pasture and the other animals would then be in danger of starving.
 - The idol-worshippers were uncomfortable seeing this camel as it was evidence for the miracle that the prophet Salih displayed.
 - The miracle camel made the other animals in the herds uncomfortable and harmed them.
11. **The leader of his tribe, Janda and one hundred other people immediately accepted the faith after they saw the miracle that the prophet Salih performed. What feature of a miracle does this show?**
- Miracles are able to motivate people who have good intentions and are not obstinate in their unbelief to accept faith
 - The miracles that Allah bestows on His beloved servants other than prophets can be a means for guiding other people
 - Miracles are extraordinary phenomena that can be perceived only by people of intelligence and insight.
 - Miracles can guide those who have even a tiny proportion of faith in their hearts.



12. **Even though nine people killed the miracle camel all people from the tribe of Thamud who were unbelievers were destroyed. Which of the following can not be a reason for this?**
- A. None of the other people from the tribe of Samud tried to prevent these nine people who had gone to extremes in their wildness and brutality.
 - B. Because the corruption and cruelty of those nine people had become so great Almighty Allah destroyed the others along with them.
 - C. The people of Thamud were content with the slaying of the camel and supported what those nine people did and so they deserved the same punishment.
 - D. If Allah had not destroyed the people of Thamud they too would later have become so brutal (as the nine people) as to kill the camel themselves.





THE PROPHET

IBRAHIM

-upon whom be peace-



THE PROPHET

ISMAIL

-upon whom be peace-



THE PROPHET

ISHAQ

-upon whom be peace-



The prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him)

The prophet Ibrahim was born in the region between the two rivers of the Tigris and the Euphrates, in the east of Babylon.

According to a sound narration, his father was Terah, a sincere believer. When Terah passed away, Ibrahim's mother married Azar, Terah's brother. Azar, an idol-worshipper, was in fact his step-father. According to another narration, Terah was the old name of Ibrahim's father. When he became an idol-worshipper, his name was changed to Azar.

According to a narration by Imam Suyuti, which comes from Ibn Abbas (ra), Azar was not Ibrahim's father, but rather his uncle.

The prophet Ibrahim is the most virtuous of people after the prophet Muhammad (saw). Allah Most High honoured him by addressing him as '*Khalili*' or 'My friend'. This is why he is also known by the name of '*Khalil ar-Rahman*'. The verses that were revealed to him numbered ten pages. Another of his attributes is '*Abu al-anbiya*', that is, the father of the prophets.

His sons are Ismail (peace be upon him) and Ishaq (peace be upon him). The prophet Muhammad (saw) comes from the lineage of Ismail, and the Israelite prophets came from the line of the prophet Ishaq.

The prophet Ibrahim was sent to the Chaldeans.

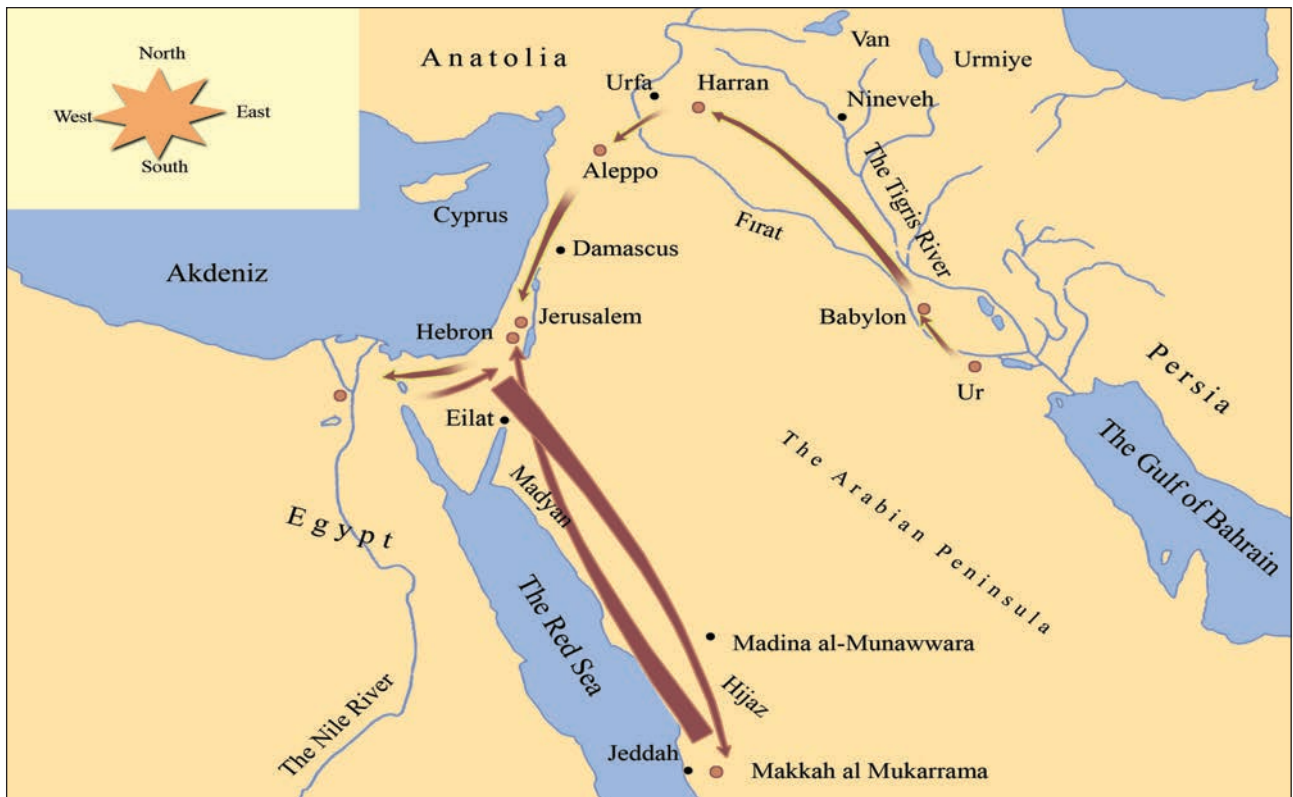
The ruler of the Chaldeans was Nimrod, who originally was a just and fair man. His people used to worship the stars and idols. However when Nimrod's kingdom grew great he became arrogant and he had statues made of him and he said to his people:

"I too am a god so worship me..."

The Holy Qur'an has the following to say about this:

'What about the one who argued with Ibrahim about his Lord, on the basis that Allah had given him sovereignty? Ibrahim said, 'My Lord is He who gives life and causes to die.' He said,





‘I too give life and cause to die.’ Ibrahim said, ‘Allah makes the sun come from the East. Make it come from the West.’ And the one who was an unbeliever was dumbfounded. Allah does not guide wrongdoing people’ (Baqara, 2:258).



This verse also informs us of the rebelliousness of Nimrod and how he was ungrateful for the bounties bestowed on him.

According to one narration, one day Nimrod had a dream in which he saw a light shining in the sky which then extinguished the light of the sun and the moon.

In another narration, he saw a person come and remove him from his throne and throw him to the ground. When he awoke he was very alarmed. He called his astrologers to his palace and explained his dream to them. They said:

“A new religion will come. The one who brings it will tear your throne to the ground. Take your precautions against him”.

Upon this, the consultation committee of Nimrod decided to have all male children yet to be born killed in order to prevent this from taking place.

Approximately one hundred thousand newly born babies were thus murdered at that time.

At that point in time, Ibrahim’s mother was pregnant with him. When the birth was near, she said to her husband, Azar:

“Go to the pagan temple and pray for me there. If I give birth to a male child, I will bring him there. You will take our child to Nimrod and he will murder him. Thus your standing with him will increase”

After Azar went to the temple, Ibrahim was born. His mother immediately took him to a secret cave and settled him there.

When Azar returned home, she told him that the child was born very weak and died.



Whenever Azar would leave the house, Ibrahim's mother would immediately go to her child and nurse him.

Sometimes she would see the baby Ibrahim sucking on his own fingers.

According to narrations, the angel Gabriel would pour milk and date juice over his fingers. It is narrated that after Ibrahim spent his childhood in the cave, he began to spread the message of the oneness of Allah.

The Holy Qur'an states:

'...We vouchsafed unto Ibrahim his consciousness of what is right (*rushd*)...' (Anbiya, 21:51).

The meaning of '*rushd*' is the ability to distinguish between right and wrong.

As a result of this '*rushd*', Ibrahim had knowledge of many great divine truths and was a guide for the path of tawheed, despite having received no training or education.

Allah is my Lord

'When night covered him he saw a star and said, 'This is my Lord!' Then when it set he said, 'I do not love what sets.' (An'am, 6:76)

'Then when he saw the moon come up he said, 'This is my Lord!' Then when it set he said, 'If my Lord does not guide me, I will be one of the misguided people.' Then when he saw the sun come up he said, 'This is my Lord! This is greater!' Then when it set he said, 'My people, I am free of what you associate with Allah!' (An'am 6:77-78).

'I have turned my face to Him Who brought the heavens and earth into being, a pure natural believer (*hanif*)³³. I am not one of the *mushrikun*³⁴' (An'am, 6:79).

The truth that is being expressed by these verses is this:

The prophet Ibrahim was trying to show those unfortunate people who were in worship of other than Allah, that their way was wrong and that their beliefs were false.

In addition, these examples show us that through contemplation, every person with intelligence can attain the knowledge of Allah's existence and His attributes and thus have faith.

This is why the Maturidi school of thought stated that people whom Islam did not reach were still responsible for believing in the existence and oneness of Allah, in order for them to be saved in the hereafter. However they were not responsible for performing deeds because they had not been taught how.

Invitation to tawheed

Ibrahim was able to find his Lord by perceiving the divine truth and was bestowed with such knowledge that was not bestowed on others. When it came to inviting others to believe in the oneness of Allah, he began with his father, Azar. With a gentle manner, he said to him:

'Father, why do you worship what can neither hear nor see and is not of any use to you at all?' (Maryam, 19:42)

'Father, knowledge which never reached you has come to me, so follow me and I will guide you to the right path' (Maryam, 19:43) **'Father, do not worship Satan. Satan was disobedient to the All-Merciful'** (Maryam, 19:44)

'Father, I am afraid that a punishment from the All-Merciful will afflict you, and turn you into a comrade of Satan.' (Maryam, 19:45)

33 A *Hanif* is a person who believes in the true religion without committing shirk or falling into misguidance. It is the name of the true religion that existed before the arrival of the prophet Muhammad (saw).

34 A *mushrik* (pl. *mushrikun*) is someone who commits the sin of *shirk*, that is associating partners with Allah (Translator's note).



However Azar became angry and said:

‘Do you forsake my gods, Ibrahim? If you do not stop, I will stone you. Keep away from me for a good long time.’ (Maryam, 19:46)

Ibrahim responded to Azar again in a gentle tone:

‘Peace be upon you. I will ask my Lord to forgive you. He has always honoured me’ (Maryam, 19:47)

Then he prayed for his father to be forgiven. However his prayer was not accepted, because his father was hostile to Allah.

When Ibrahim realised this, he stopped praying for him. One does not pray for unbelievers to be forgiven but rather for their guidance.

The Qur’an informs us about this matter:

‘It is not right for the Prophet and those who have faith to ask forgiveness for the *mushrikun* – even if they are close relatives – after it has become clear to them that they are the Companions of the Blazing Fire’ (Tawbah, 9:113)

‘Ibrahim would not have asked forgiveness for his father but for a promise he made to him, and when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he renounced him. Ibrahim was tender-hearted and forbearing’ (Tawbah, 9:114).

The prophet Ibrahim reproached his father and tribe for their unbelief saying:

‘What are these statues you are clinging to?’ (Anbiya, 21:52)

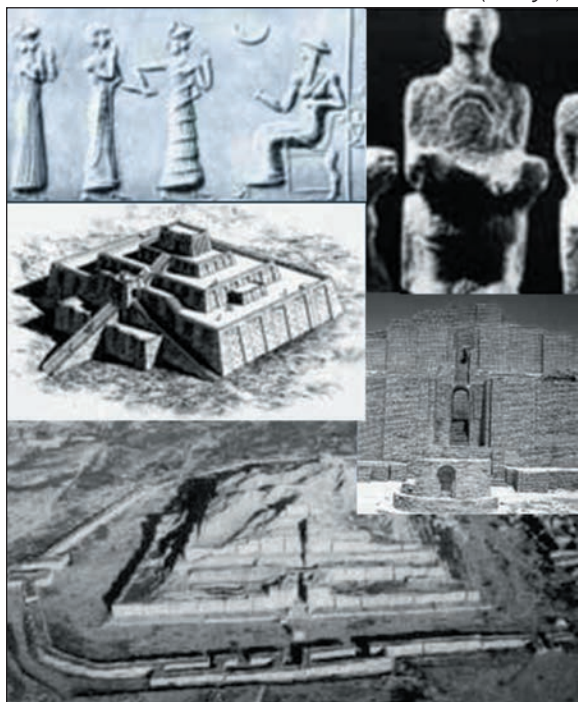
They responded to him saying:

‘We found our fathers worshipping them.’ (Anbiya, 21:53)

After that the following conversation took place between Ibrahim and his father and people:

‘(Ibrahim said:) ‘You and your fathers are clearly misguided.’ (Anbiya, 21:54)

‘They said, ‘Have you brought us the truth or are you playing games?’’He said, ‘Far from it! Your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He who brought them into being. I am one of those who bear witness to that’ (Anbiya, 21:55-56)



Azar used to make and sell idols in order to earn his livelihood. Azar’s other sons would praise the idols and help him to sell them.

The prophet Ibrahim would however take the idol that his father gave him to sell, tie a rope to it and take it to the market. There he would drag it along the ground as an insult. Then he would place the head in water and say:

“Come now, you are very thirsty, now drink”.

Ibrahim breaks the idols

The tribe of the Chaldenas would gather together one day a year for their festival outside the town.

Azar said to Ibrahim:

“Come with us to celebrate today”

However, after they had set out, Ibrahim made an excuse that he was sick and he turned back and went to



the pagan temple. Inside the temple were idols made of silver, copper, and wood. Food would be placed in front of them to receive blessings. The largest idol was made of gold and was seated on a throne. It was clothed in silver brocade and a crown had been placed on its head.

Ibrahim took an axe and broke all of the idols except for the largest one. Then he hung the axe around its neck.

When evening came and the Chaldeans returned to the temple from their celebrations, they were shocked at the scene in front of them. They said:

“Only Ibrahim could have done something like this”

Then they found Ibrahim and asked him: -

“Did you do this?” Ibrahim answered them:

“The large idol did not want to be worshipped beside other idols. This is why it was angry with the others. Eventually it just broke all of them with an axe and then hung the axe around its neck. If you like, why don't you ask it. Let it tell you what happened”.

The idol-worshipping people said:

“Idols cannot speak”.

Ibrahim then said to them:

“In that case, how can such powerless creatures, who can neither speak nor protect themselves, protect you? Will you still not come to your senses?”

This event is narrated in the Qur'an as follows:

‘He turned surreptitiously to their gods and said, ‘Do you not eat? What is the matter with you that you do not speak?’ He turned on them, striking out with his right hand’ (Saffat, 37:91-93). **‘They came rushing back to him. He said, ‘Do you worship something you have carved when Allah created both you and what you do?’ ‘(Then Ibrahim) broke them in pieces, except for the biggest one, so that they would have it to consult!’** (when they saw the broken idols they said):

They said, ‘Who has done this to our gods? He is definitely one of the wrongdoers!’ They said, ‘We heard a young man mentioning them. They call him Ibrahim.’ They said, ‘Bring him before the people’s eyes so they can be witnesses.’ They said, ‘Did you do this to our gods, Ibrahim?’ He said, ‘No, this one, the biggest of them, did it. Ask them if they are able to speak!’ (Anbiya, 58-63)

‘They consulted among themselves and said, ‘It is you yourselves who are wrongdoers’³⁵. But then they relapsed back into their unbelief: ‘You know full well these idols cannot talk.’ He said, ‘Do you then worship, instead of Allah, what cannot help or harm you in any way? Shame on you and what you worship besides Allah! Will you not use your intellect?’ (Anbiya, 21:64-67)

After listening to what Ibrahim had to say, the idol-worshippers became convinced that it was Ibrahim who had broken the idols. But rather than pondering on the powerlessness of those pieces of stone and turning to Allah, those unfortunate people became irate with Ibrahim, not being able to accept what he had done.

‘They said, ‘Burn him and support your gods if you are resolved to do something.’ (Anbiya, 21:68)

35 This verse has also been interpreted as such: They then turned to each other and accused one another: You are the real wrongdoers for leaving the idols alone and defenceless”.



The prophet Ibrahim is thrown into the fire

The idol-worshippers informed Nimrod of what had taken place. Nimrod then called Ibrahim to him. It had been a practice that all those who entered the presence of Nimrod bowed down to him first. However, Ibrahim did not bow down.

Curiously Nimrod asked him why he did not bow down. Ibrahim replied:

“I will not bow down to other than the One who created you and me”.

Nimrod asked him:

“Who is your lord?” Ibrahim responded:

“My lord is Allah, who gives life and death”. Nimrod said:

“I too give life and death”. Then he had two people brought from the dungeon. He had one killed and he let the other one live. Then he said:

“ See, I too can do the same”.

However the foolish Nimrod did not know that giving life meant giving something a spirit, whereas killing meant taking back that spirit.

Ibrahim then said:

“My lord causes the sun to rise from the east. If you are able then make it rise from the west”.

The Holy Qur’an states :

Ibrahim said: ‘Allah makes the sun come from the East. Make it come from the West.’ And the one who was a unbeliever was dumbfounded. Allah does not guide wrongdoing people’ (Baqara, 2:258).

The commentator, Baydawi tells us that Nimrod was the first fool to claim to be a god.

Instead of being grateful for all of the wealth and property given to him, he did the opposite and denied Allah.

There are two accounts of the meeting between Nimrod and Ibrahim:

The first is that after Ibrahim had broken the idols, he was imprisoned. He was brought to the presence of Nimrod, who was about to throw him in to the fire.

The second account is as follows. There had been a famine for one year. Consequently Nimrod had been distributing food to his people. He would ask those people whom he gave food:

“Who is your lord?”

When he asked Ibrahim, Ibrahim said:

“My lord is the one who gives life and who causes to die”

Nimrod became enraged at this reply. He did not give Ibrahim any food. Moreover he gathered together his people and consulted with them as to how to punish him. An unfortunate man by the name of Hanun said:

“Throw him into a great fire and burn him”. This suggestion was accepted. They then began to prepare to burn Ibrahim. They gathered firewood for one month.

The ignorant and foolish people said:

“This man rejects our idols” and rushed to carry the firewood.

They ignited the wood that was now as big as a mountain. The flames reached the skies. Birds would not even fly close by due to the heat. When all the preparations had been made, the people gathered about the fire.



Ibrahim was brought to the fire, his hands and feet tied in chains.

However that great prophet, '*khalil al-rahman*', was in a state of complete submission to and trust in Allah in the face of this difficult situation.

There was not the slightest fear or worry in his heart. Nimrod and his advisers consulted about how to throw him into the fire and decided that they would catapult him into the fire.

The angels in the heavens and on the earth were in shock and begged Allah:

"O Lord. Ibrahim, the one who is always in remembrance of You, is being thrown into the fire. He is a prophet who does not forget you for even a minute. Allow us to help him Allah".

When Allah gave permission, an angel approached Ibrahim and said:

"The winds have been given to my command. If you wish I will scatter them about".

Another angel said:

"Water has been given to my command. If you wish I can put the fire out in an instant".

Another angel said:

"The earth has been given to my command. If you wish I can have it swallow up the fire".

However, Ibrahim said to the angels:

"Do not come between friends. I am content with whatever my Lord wills. If He saves me, it is from His grace. If He burns me, it is due to my own defect. But I will be of the patient *inshallah* (if Allah wills)".

When he was being placed in the catapult and about to be thrown into the fire, he kept saying:

"Allah will help me and how good a guardian is He".

Just when he was about to be thrown into the fire, Gabriel came to him and asked:

"Do you have any wish?"

Ibrahim responded:

"Yes, I do, but not from you". Gabriel asked him in amazement:

"Why do you not ask Allah to save you?" He answered:

"He knows my state. And tell me with whose command does the fire burn? Whose affair is it to burn?"

Allah Most High praises this characteristic of him in the Qur'an as follows:

'...and of Ibrahim, who to his trust was true' (Najm, 53:37)

The fire becomes a garden



Because of the great submission and reliance upon Allah of Ibrahim, '*khalil al-Allah*', Allah Most High made a command to the fire before he even fell into it:

يَا نَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ

'O Fire, be coolness and peace for Ibrahim!'

(Anbiya, 21:69).

With this command, the place where Ibrahim fell into was transformed into a rose garden. A sweet spring of water began to flow there.



Nimrod was shocked at this event and said in his excitement:

“I am now going to sacrifice four thousand cows for your god”.

Ibrahim said to him:

“There is no value in any sacrifice you make as long as you do not desist from your misguidance and believe in the oneness of Allah”.

However Nimrod said:

“I cannot give up my wealth and my kingdom. But I will yet make my sacrifice”.

He did in fact sacrifice four thousand cows. And he also gave up his struggle with Ibrahim. However, he did not believe due to his arrogance, conceit and obstinacy and he became one of the ill-fated ones. After witnessing this clear miracle, a group of idol-worshippers however believed and were saved.

After being saved from Nimrod’s fire with the help of Allah Most High, Ibrahim then reminded those who still refused to believe in the divine punishment:

‘He said, ‘You have adopted idols apart from Allah as tokens of mutual affection in this world. But then on the Day of Rising you will reject one another and curse one another. The Fire will be your shelter. You will have no helpers.’ (Ankabut, 29:25).



After this event, Allah commanded Ibrahim and those who believed in him to emigrate in order for them to be saved from the divine punishment that would befall Nimrod and the Chaldeans and so that they could worship in peace.

Thus He saved His ‘*khalil*’ and the believers. This event is described in the Qur’an as follows:

‘And Lut had faith in him. He said, ‘I am leaving this place to follow the pleasure of my Lord. He is the Almighty, the All Wise.’ (Ankabut, 29:26)

The prophet Lot was the son of Ibrahim’s brother. If we remember that he was a prophet too, then it is not plausible to say that he was initially an unbeliever and then came to have faith.

Consequently the above verse which states that Lot had faith in Ibrahim indicates that Lot was the first person to confirm him.

The destruction of Nimrod and the Chaldeans.

After Ibrahim emigrated to Babylon, the Chaldeans, who refused to believe out of their arrogance and conceit, were rained down upon with swarms of gnats, which were like dust. These gnats sucked the blood of the idol-worshippers so that those unfortunate people dried up and were destroyed. One gnat reached Nimrod’s brain after entering in through his nose. Due to the pain the arrogant Nimrod had, he would have his head beaten continually with a club. Eventually his head was ruptured from a very violent hit. The Holy Qur’an states:

‘They desired to trap him but We made them the losers’ (Anbiya, 21:70, See also Saffat, 37:98)

Eventually Nimrod and his unfortunate people, having been dragged into conceit and arrogance with their worldly kingdom, had their blood sucked by gnats so that they became ‘dried-up people’, as a lesson to all of mankind.

The flight of the prophet Ibrahim

The prophet Ibrahim, his nephew Lut from Babylon, and the daughter of his uncle, Sara, along with a group of believers, migrated to Harran, a town in the south of Urfa, (in what is now modern-day Turkey).



As commanded by his lord, Ibrahim eventually married Sara. Again on the command of his lord, he migrated together with her to Damascus, and from there they went to Egypt. Lot also migrated to Sodom³⁶ as a prophet.

Egypt was ruled by the family of the Pharaoh. These people were tyrants and very arrogant. Whenever a foreign and beautiful lady entered the city the Pharaoh was immediately informed. If she was married, her husband would be killed, if she had a brother, he would be asked for her hand in marriage.

When Ibrahim and his wife Sara entered the city, the palace was informed. The news spread that a beautiful woman had entered Egypt. They asked Ibrahim what his relation to Sara was and he answered that she was his sister, meaning his 'sister in religion'.

Thus they did not harm Ibrahim but they took Sara to the palace.

There is a hadith in Sahih Bukhari about this event:

When Sarah entered the palace she immediately took her ablutions and prayed two cycles of prayer. She sought refuge in Allah and He protected her. The Pharaoh tried to approach her. However he immediately lost his breath and became paralysed. Allah protected Sarah from his evil. Out of his fear Pharaoh then let her go. He also gave her his slave Hajar as a gift.

When those around him were surprised at this, he said:

“This women is a jinn. If she stays with me any longer I will be destroyed. I gave her Hagar so that I could be freed from her harm” (see Muslim, Fadail, 154).

Allah Most High says in the Holy Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ

'You who have faith! Seek help in steadfastness and prayer' (Baqara, 2:153)

Thus was Sara saved as a result of the prayer that she prayed in accordance with this verse and after seeking refuge in Allah.



Ibrahim then returned to Palestine together with Sara and Hajar. They settled for a while in a place called 'Seb'. There Ibrahim dug a well from which crystal clear water flowed.

When they ran out of food a little while later, Ibrahim set out for the city. After having gone for a little while he remembered that he had no money and he turned back. When he arrived back he put some sand and pebbles into his sack so that Sara and Hajar would not lose hope. Then he laid down his sack and lay down to sleep as he was very tired. Sara said to Hajar:

“Open the sack”. The sand and pebbles that Ibrahim had filled the sack had been turned into wheat. They immediately ground it up and baked bread with it. When Ibrahim awoke he was surprised and thanked his Lord. With time the abundance of the region of Seb increased. Allah's favours became great and many people settled there so that it became very crowded. However they later became ungrateful and refused to give water to Ibrahim from the well that he had dug himself. Ibrahim was very offended. The waters receded as a result of the offense that a prophet of Allah felt.

A great drought began. When those poor heedless people saw this, they were immediately sorry. They apologised to Ibrahim on account of their heedlessness. They asked him to pray for them to be forgiven. Being the gentle prophet that he was, he granted their wish and sought refuge in Allah, upon which the waters increased once more.

36 Sodom is a place where the lake of Lot can be found. Because it was turned upside down when the people were destroyed, it was called 'mu'tafika'



The revival of the birds

The prophet Ibrahim once asked Allah:

“O my Lord! I wish to see with my own eyes how You bring back the dead to life...”

This event is described in the Qur’an as follows:

‘When Ibrahim said, ‘My Lord, show me how You bring the dead to life.’ He asked, ‘Do you not then have faith?’ He replied, ‘Indeed I do! But so that my heart may be at peace.’ He said, ‘Take then four birds and teach them to obey you; then place them separately on every hill (around you)’; then summon them; they will come flying to you. And know that Allah is almighty, wise’ (Baqara, 2:260).

Ibrahim was curious as to how a dead creature could be brought back to life and asked his Lord to show him. Allah Most High responded with a concrete demonstration, however He did not explain the nature of resurrection. This is because the intelligence capacity of the human being is not capable of comprehending the event of resurrection. These examples and those that were given in previous verses are all miracles. The important point is to believe with certainty that Allah will definitely resurrect all creatures and in particular man and take them to account.

It is also true that Allah Most High, who has power over all things, resurrects and gives life as He so wishes but He can also do this through the hand of His servants.

This event that took place by the hand of Ibrahim is an example of this.

The Ibrahim who said: **My Lord is He who gives life and causes to die** (Baqara, 2:258) and then says ‘O my Lord!’ is in fact saying: ‘O my Lord *who has the power to give life and cause death*’.

And when he asks: “How is it that you bring the dead back to life”, he is in fact saying: I know that you bring the dead back to life, however because I do not know exactly how you do it, I wonder if your attribute of bringing back to life can also occur through me? I ask that you demonstrate this for me”.

Upon the warning of Allah: “O Ibrahim, do you not have faith?” he replied: “Of course my Lord. I have believed. You show me what life is, and how to resurrect at the time you wish, however I want to see so that my heart is satisfied. I want to pass from belief to personal observation, from knowledge to witnessing”, indicating that his real aim was to possess a purified heart that is free of all blemishes and faults.

In this way he wished to reach the station of ‘*hullah*’, (the station of true love and friendship) and remain ‘*khalil al-allah*’, that is the friend of Allah forever

The marriage of Ibrahim and Hagar.

The prophet Ibrahim’s wife Sara had been unable to bear children and she had reached an old age so she set free her maid Hagar for Ibrahim (her Husband) to marry her. From this marriage was born Ismail (ra) and the light of Muhammad then passed onto him. Sara wished that this light would pass with her being the vehicle. When this did not happen she was very sad. She told Ibrahim that he must take Hagar to another town. By Allah’s command Ibrahim took Hagar and his son Ismail to Mecca, a deserted place at the time.

According to a narration by ibn Abbas in Sahih Bukhari, Ibrahim took Hagar and Ismail, who was still breastfeeding him.

He left them near a tree where the well of *zamzam* flowed, which would gush out in the nearby future. He placed a basket of dates and an urn full of water beside them. Then he returned home. Hagar called out to him:

“Did Allah command you to leave us here?”

Ibrahim answered : “Yes”.



With great reliance and submission to Allah, Hagar said:

“In that case, my lord will protect us and not let us go to ruin”. She went back to where Ismail was lying. When he was out of sight of Hajar and Ismail, Ibrahim raised his hands to the heavens and pleaded with his lord:

‘Our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring by Your Sacred House in an uncultivated valley. Our Lord! Let them establish the prayer! Make the hearts of mankind incline towards them and provide them with fruits, so that hopefully they will be thankful’ (Ibrahim, 14:37, Bukhari, Anbiya, 9).

Allah accepted this prayer of Ibrahim. It is because of this prayer that the believers who perform the hajj and umrah increase in their love for this city and their souls find peace and calm. This pure city overflows with various types of dates and other fruits.

In addition, due to this prayer of the prophet Ibrahim was a means for the well of zamzam gushed from there. When the urn of water that Ibrahim brought finished, Hagar ran a total of seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah in order to find help. There are four hundred metres between these two hills.

Hagar kept running back and forth and at the same time looking at Ismail. There was not even a bird that flew there let alone a human being. There was not the sign of life anywhere. When Hagar came back to the hill of Marwah, a voice said:

“Drink and listen well”. This was the voice of Gabriel.

Hagar immediately turned to the direction the voice was coming from. This voice said to her:

“You are entrusted to the one who has power over all things. Do not fear that you will perish, that there is the site of the house of Allah. That child there and his father will build the house. Allah Most High will not make perish the master of that house.

Upon this Hagar went back to where Ismail was. She then saw water spurting out from the place where Ismail’s foot was. In great happiness, she thanked her lord.

Out of fear that the water would dry up, she made a pool from the sand. Then she called to the water ‘Zam, zam’ which means ‘stop, stop’.

This water which was the fruit of reliance upon and submission to Allah now flows and will continue to flow until the end of time, as a cure for the community of Muhammad.

In this way, Ibrahim and Hajar, attained to great bounty as a result of their submission.

Another manifestation of this bounty is that the ‘sa’y that Hagar made between Safa and Marwah remains a pillar of the acts of hajj and umrah and will continue and be accepted from them as ongoing charity until the end of time.

Together mother and son continued to live in this dry and deserted town, until a tribe passing by, the tribe of Jurham, saw a bird flying down to the ground and then back up again and considered that this was a sign of life. They then sent two people there. When they saw the water of zam zam they asked Hagar:

“Can we settle here?”

She gave them permission with the condition that they did not claim possession of the water. Thus, the first tribe to settle in Mecca was the tribe of Jurhum.

The trial of the sacrifice

When Ibrahim was travelling from Babylon to Damascus he said:

“I am going towards my Lord; He will be my guide. My Lord, bestow on me a right-acting child!” (Saffat, 37:99-100)



Here there is an indication that this was a journey of union, from the heart, that is the inner world to the greatest friend.

In the following verses, there is mention of the good news of the birth of Ismail and the event of the sacrifice:

‘And We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy’. When he was of an age to work with him, he said, ‘My son, I saw in a dream that I must sacrifice you. What do you think about this?’ He said, ‘Do as you are ordered, father. Allah willing, you will find me resolute.’ Then when they had both submitted and he had lain him face down on the ground, We called out to him, ‘Ibrahim! you have discharged your vision.’ That is how We recompense good-doers. This was indeed a most manifest trial. We ransomed him with a mighty sacrifice and left the later people saying of him: ‘Peace be upon Ibrahim.’ That is how We recompense good-doers. He truly was one of Our believing slaves’ (Saffat, 37:101-111).



After Ibrahim had left Hagar and Ismail in Mecca, he returned to Sara. From time to time he would visit Hagar and Ismail. One time while he was in Mecca, he had a dream. As stated in the verse, he saw himself sacrificing Ismail in his dream. Ibrahim was not sure whether the dream was from Allah or whether it was from Satan. However he saw the same dream for three days in a row. These days corresponded to the days of *tawriya*, *arafah* and the first day of the feast.

In one account, it is said that Ibrahim once said:

‘If Allah gives me a son, I will sacrifice him’

This promise is the reason why he was subject to this trial.

He told Hagar that he was taking Ismail to his friend, in order to obey a command from his lord and to wash him and scent him with a beautiful scent.

He advised Ismail to bring with him a rope and a knife and said:

“My son, I am going to make a sacrifice for the sake of Allah”

They set out for the place where the pilgrims stop at Arafah during the rite of the Hajj.

At that point, Satan approached Hagar in the form of a man and said:

“Do you know where Ibrahim is taking your son?”

She replied:

“He is taking him to his friend”

Satan said:

“No, he is taking him to sacrifice him”.

Hagar replied:

“He loves his son very much”.

When Satan kept saying:

“He is going to slaughter him because Allah commanded him to”, Hagar then said:

“If Allah did command this, then this is a good thing. We place our trust in Him”.

When Satan was unable to deceive Hagar, he went to Ismail and asked him:

“Do you know where your father is taking you?”

Ismail responded:



“To visit his friend”.

Satan said:

“No, he is taking you to slaughter you. He thinks his Lord has commanded it”.

Ismail responded as follows:

“If Allah has commanded this, then we will go willingly”. And then he sent Satan away and cast stones at him.

Satan was unable to deceive Ismail so he went to Ibrahim and said:

“Hey old man. Where are you taking your son? Satan has deceived you. Those dreams were from him”.

Ibrahim said to him:

“You are Satan yourself. Depart from us immediately”.

He picked up seven lots of stones and cast them at Satan at three different places.

Thus this is how the rite of ‘stoning Satan’ began at the pilgrimage which would continue until the end of time.

This was an example for the coming generations, an example of their trust in Allah and their submission to Him.

When Ibrahim was walking from Mina to Arafah together with Ismail, the angels in the heavens were nervous with excitement. In amazement they were saying to each other:

“Glory be to Allah! A prophet is going to take another prophet to sacrifice him”.

Ibrahim explained the reality of the situation to his son Ismail:

“O my son. I have been commanded to sacrifice you in a dream”.

Ismail replied:

“Father, has Allah commanded you to do this?”

Ibrahim responded:

“Yes”. Ismail then said:

“Dearest father! Do as you have been commanded to. God willing you will find me to be patient”

He told him that he was ready to sacrifice his life. After these words, which were a relief to his father, he said:

“O father. You were patient when Nimrod threw you into the fire. And Allah was pleased with you. I too am content with being sacrificed. Allah willing you will find me to be of those who are patient. When I part from you I will go to my Lord; when I part from the bounties of this world, I will be reunited with Paradise. My only sorrow is that for the rest of your life, you will miss the child that you sacrificed with your own hands. O father. If only you had informed me before I could have farewelled my mother and we could have embraced one another...”

Ibrahim said:

“My son, I was afraid that your mother would object”.

Ismail was only seven or thirteen years old at the time.

Ali (ra) narrates the following from the prophet Muhammad:



“When Allah Most High showed Ibrahim the heavens and the earth, Ibrahim saw someone rebelling against Allah. He prayed to Allah to destroy him and Allah did so. He then saw another rebel. He cursed him too. And he was also destroyed. He saw another rebel and he prayed for him to be destroyed too and he was. In this way several people were destroyed. After this, Almighty Allah revealed the following to Ibrahim:

“O Ibrahim. In truth you are one whose prayer is answered. Do not pray to me to destroy my servants for they have three qualities that I see:

1. A servant repents for what he did and I accept his repentance.
2. A generation will come from them who will remember Me.
3. On the day of Judgement I will forgive him or punish him as I wish.”

In another account it is said:

Ibrahim was raised to the skies every night as indicated in the verse:

‘... We showed Ibrahim the dominions of the heavens and the earth so that he might be one of the people of certainty’ (An’am, 75)

One night he was raised to the heavens again. He saw a sinner committing evil deeds and said: “O Allah. This man eats from what You have provided for him and walks upon your earth but despite this he does not obey your commands. Then do away with him”. And Allah did away with him. When he saw another sinner, he also prayed for his end.

Then he was addressed as follows:

“O Ibrahim. Stop praying for the destruction of my servants. Give them time and do not be hasty. I always see their rebellion and yet do I not destroy them”.

Then Ibrahim prepared to slay his son after he had said with great submission:

“Do as you have been commanded father”, and he took the knife in his hand saying:

“O Allah. This here is my son. He is the fruit of my heart and the most beloved to me of all people”. He then heard a voice saying:

“Do you remember the night you asked for the destruction of my servant? Do you not know that I am merciful and compassionate towards my slaves just as you have compassion for your child? You asked me to destroy my servant. Now I ask you to sacrifice your son...” (Ramazanoğlu M. Sâmî, İbrâhim -aleyhisselâm-pgs, 44-46)

About to be sacrificed, Ismail, said to his father:

“O father. I have some last requests:

“Tie my hands and feet securely so that I do not err and move from the pain.

Lift your robes so that my blood does not splatter onto you.

Make sure your knife is sharp so that it will be easy for me to give up my spirit and your task will be ended quickly.

Do not look at my face when you stab the knife. Perhaps you will not be able to overcome your fatherly compassion and mercy and you may delay in bringing about Allah’s command.

Take my shirt to my mother so that she can find consolation. Tell her: “Your son has gone to Allah to intercede for you”.

While Ibrahim listened to these words, tears gushed from his eyes. He weeped and sobbed and then said:

“My dear child. How you help me in carrying out Allah’s commands”





Then he raised his hands to the heavens and said:

“O my Lord. Please give me patience for this state of mine. Have mercy on me on account of my old age”.

Ismail prayed as follows:

“O my Lord. Give me patience and forbearance”.

Later on Ismail said:

“Dear father. The gates of the heavens

have opened. The angels are prostrating to Allah in amazement and pleading with Him: O my Lord. a prophet is about to sacrifice another prophet for Your sake... Have mercy on them”.

Then he gave encouragement to his father saying:

“Dear father, a condition of love is to avoid delaying carrying out a command. Come, do as you have been commanded...”

Ibrahim lay his son Ismail down and said :

“O my child. Farewell to you until the Day of Judgement. We will meet again then...”

He steadily placed the knife at Ismail’s throat. At that point Allah commanded Gabriel as follows:

“Quick. Turn the knife back”. In an instant Gabriel went from ‘Sidra’ (the seventh heaven) and turned the knife back. Ibrahim however took the knife again. This time the knife would not cut.

Allah said:

“Ibrahim has truly confirmed his dream. He has demonstrated his loyalty”.

After that Gabriel sent down a ram from Paradise, with the command of Allah and reciting the *takbir*:

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

“Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar”.

When Ibrahim heard this, he responded as follows:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ

“La ilaha illallahu wa'allahu akbar”.

And Ismail said :

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ الْحَمْدُ

“Allahu akbar, wa lillahi al-hamd”.

Thus, the ‘*tashrik takbir*³⁷’ takes place on every day of Arafah from the morning prayer to the afternoon time of the fourth day of the festival of *the eid of adha*.

And so it was that father and son returned home in a state of gratitude. Hajar embraced her son Ismail.

37 Is is obligatory to repeat the ‘*tashriki takbir*’ after each obligatory prayer once”.



Ibrahim then returned to his wife Sara.



In being thrown into the fire, Ibrahim was tested with his own nafs, and by being commanded to sacrifice his son, he was tested with obedience to Allah.

As a result, his reliance upon Allah and his submission to him, led him to pass both of these tests.

The next test would be a test with wealth.

According to one account Ibrahim had twelve thousand sheep. He also had many shepherd dogs to protect them.

He would hang gold collars on them to affront those who were in submission to this world, besotted with the adornments and trimmings of this world.

One day the angel Gabriel approached Ibrahim in the form of a man and asked:

“To whom do these sheep belong?”

Ibrahim replied:

“They belong to my Lord. He has entrusted them to me”.

Gabriel asked:

“Will you sell them to me?”

Ibrahim answered:

“Make remembrance of my Lord once and I will give you a third, do this three times and I will give you them all”.

Gabriel answered:

سُبُّوحٌ قُدُّوسٌ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ

“Our Lord. You are completely free of any deficiency in attributes that do not befit Your godhead and You are pure and holy. You are the Lord of the angels and of Gabriel”.

Ibrahim then said:

“Here take them all, they are yours”.

Gabriel said:

“I am an angel. I cannot take them”.

Ibrahim answered:

“If you are an angel, then I am *khalil al Allah* (the friend of Allah). I cannot take back what I have given”.

Eventually Ibrahim sold the sheep and bought a large piece of land with the money endowing it to the Muslims in order for them to benefit from it³⁸.

Thus the institution of endowments first began with the prophet Ibrahim.

38 *Waqf* (Endowment): The institution of ensuring continuing charity which is a manifestation of the mercy, compassion and love shown to creatures on account of their Creator. This means dedicating one's wealth to Allah and ensuring it is forever used for religious purposes.



Thus Ibrahim, the friend of Allah, was able to sacrifice his entire wealth for the sake of Allah, in an instant and successfully passed this examination along with the others, proving that he truly was a friend of Allah.

Ibrahim receives the good news of the birth of Ishaq

Despite being quite an old man when Ibrahim demonstrated his loyalty in sacrificing his son, he was given another son as a reward for attempting to do so.

At that time Ibrahim was 120 years old and Sara was 90 or 99. Allah Most High says in the Qur'an:

'We gave him the good news of Ishaq, a Prophet, one of the righteous. We showered blessings upon him and upon Ishaq. Among their descendants are good-doers and also people who clearly wrong themselves' (Saffat, 37:112-113).

One of the distinguishing traits of Ibrahim was his hospitality. This is why he is also known by the name '*abu al-adhyaf*', "the father of guests".

Hospitality is a trait of the prophets. When it comes to feeding others one must take care to be moderate. To continue eating after one is full is wastefulness. However there is no waste in making offerings to one's guest and in the food that is eaten with them.

However there is the condition that the offering and invitation is far from personal benefit and must be done for Allah.

According to an account by ibn Abbas, Gabriel and a group of angels approached Ibrahim with the good news of the arrival of Ishaq. From there they went on to destroy the people of Lot. When the angels visited Ibrahim, they were dressed like human beings and they looked just like guests.

Ibrahim cooked some beef for them and placed it in front of them. When they did not eat from it, Ibrahim realised that they were angels. He was afraid as he did not know that they were there to announce.

He asked:

"Has something happened to entice the wrath of Allah? Or have you come to destroy my people?"

In order to understand whether they really were angels or not, he asked again:

"Will you not eat?" they replied:

"We will not eat without paying a price"

Ibrahim then recited "*Bismillah*" before eating and '*Alhamdulillah*' after finishing the meal. The angels then said about him:

"And so here is the real *khalil*, the true friend of Allah".

Then they told him:

"Do not fear Ibrahim. We are going to go from here to the people of Lot and destroy them"

Thus the reason for why they did not eat and the reason for their coming was made clear. When Ibrahim's fears abated, he was given the glad tidings of Ishaq and Yaqub.

Sara was listening to their conversation from behind the wall. Because she was a woman of modesty and decency, she covered her face with her hands. She was amazed at this news since she and her husband were so old.

The angels said:

"Are you shocked at the command and decree of Allah?"



Ibrahim was pleased with the news of the arrival of Ishaq, however he was very saddened by the news that the people of Lot were about to be destroyed, as he did not know that this would be with the exception of the believers.

He wanted to seek refuge in Allah to annul the punishment.

However the angels told him that any prayer he made would be of no benefit and this punishment would come to the deniers only. Ibrahim was then relieved.

This truth is expressed in the Qur'an as follows:

'Our messengers brought the good news to Ibrahim. They said, 'Peace!' and he too said, 'Peace!' and brought in a roasted calf without delay.

When he saw that their hands were not reaching for it, he suspected them and felt afraid of them. They said, 'Have no fear! We have been sent to the people of Lot.'

His wife was standing there and she laughed out loud. So We gave her the good news of Ishaq, and beyond Ishaq, Ya'qub' (Hud, 71)

'She said, 'Woe is me! How can I give birth when I am an old woman and my husband here is an aged man? This is indeed an astonishing thing!'

They said, 'Are you astonished at Allah's command? May Allah's mercy and His blessings be upon you, People of the House! He is Praiseworthy, All-Glorious'

'When the feeling of fear left Ibrahim, and the good news reached him, he disputed with Us about the people of Lot' (Hud, 11:72-74).

This was because Ibrahim was afraid that Lot and those who believed in him would also meet with the calamity and punishment that was to fall upon the people of Lot. Thus he begged Allah to lift the punishment.

'...for behold, Ibrahim was most clement, most tender-hearted, intent upon turning to Allah again and again' (Hud, 11:75)

Moreover after he was previously raised to the heavens and cautioned by Allah about cursing the rebellious, his heart then became filled with the utmost compassion and mercy for people.

The people of Lut however had turned their backs completely on the mercy of Allah and had become so wild that punishment became unavoidable. They persistently asked for punishment to come, and continued in their damnable acts. They could not see the presence of pure and wholesome people amongst them.

"Remove these people", they would say.

The angels said to Ibrahim, whose heart was full of mercy for the servants of Allah:

'Ibrahim, turn away from this! Your Lord's command has come. A punishment is coming to them which cannot be repelled' (Hud, 11:76).

This truth is repeated in the 24-30th verses of chapter Dhariyat on account of its importance.

The prophet Ibrahim visits his son Ismail

The prophet Ismail married a girl from the tribe of Jurhum, he learnt Arabic from them and was very well regarded and respected. When Ismail's mother Hagar passed away, she was buried in the '*hijr*³⁹' near the Ka'bah.

After some time, Ibrahim came to visit his son, Ismail. However he was not at home at that time. He asked his wife and she replied:

³⁹ *Al-Hijr* is the crescent-shaped area immediately adjacent to the Ka'bah. Both the prophet Ismail and his mother Hajar (peace be upon both of them) are believed to be buried there (Translator's note).



“He has gone to procure our livelihood”

Then Ibrahim asked her:

“How do you do for your livelihood, is it enough?”

Ismail’s wife replied:

“We are in dire straits, our condition is very bad”.

Ibrahim said to her:

“When your husband comes home give him with my greetings of peace and tell him to change his threshold”.

When Ismail arrived home he knew that his father had visited due to his pleasant scent that was left behind. He asked his wife is anybody had visited them that day.

His wife replied:

“Yes an old man came and asked about you. I told him where you were. Then he asked how we were doing and I told him that we were in dire straits”.

Ismail asked her:

“Did he leave a message for me?”

She answered:

“Yes he said: “Give him my salam and tell him to change his threshold”.

Ismail perceived the subtle point of these words and he said to his wife:

“That man was my father. He has ordered me to divorce you. You may go back to your family”. Then he left the house. He later married another woman from the tribe of Jurham.

After the time that Allah so willed had passed, Ibrahim again went to visit his son but again he found him absent. He asked his new wife where her husband was and she answered:

“He has gone to procure our livelihood”.

Ibrahim asked her:

“How are you, how is your financial situation, do you have enough to eat?”

The woman replied, praising and thanking Allah:

“Praise be to Allah, we are upon good, we are happy and in plenty”.

Ibrahim asked her:

“What do you eat and drink? The woman replied:

“We eat meat and we drink water”.

Ibrahim then prayed to Allah:

“O my Lord, bless their meat and their water”.

Then he said to her:

“When your husband comes home, give him my greeting of peace and tell him to keep his threshold secure”.

When Ismail arrived home, he smelled the scent of his father once more and asked his wife:

“Did anybody come to our home?”

His wife replied, praising the prophet Ibrahim as follows:



Then she continued:

“He asked about you and I told him where you went” He asked how we got by. I told him that we were in goodness and happiness”.

Ismail asked her:

“Did he leave a message for me?”

She answered:

“Yes that honourable old man said: Give my salam to your husband and tell him to keep his threshold secure”.

Ismail then said:

“That was my father. And you are the esteemed threshold of our home. My father has commanded me to keep you well and live with you in harmony”, (Bukhari, Anbiya 9).

The Prophet added, “Then Ibrahim said to Ismail’s wife, “when your husband comes, give my regards to him and tell him that he should keep firm the threshold of his gate.’ When Ismail came back, he asked his wife, ‘Did anyone call on you?’ She replied, ‘Yes, a good-looking old man came to me,’ so she praised him and added: “He asked about you, and I informed him, and he asked about our livelihood and I told him that we were in a good condition.’ Ismail asked her, “Did he give you any piece of advice?” She said, “Yes, he told me to give his regards to you and ordered that you should keep firm the threshold of your gate”. On that Ismail said, ‘It was my father, and you are the threshold (of the gate). He has ordered me to keep you with me’ (Sahih Bukhari).

From this story we can understand that gratitude is a means to increasing one’s bounty and ensuring it continues. To belittle the favours that Allah has bestowed and to complain about them is ingratitude. The result is a decrease in bounty and even being deprived altogether.

The building of the Ka’bah

Years later Ibrahim returned to Mecca. He embraced Ismail and they caught up on old times. Ibrahim said to his son:



“My Lord has given me a command. We are to build a house and you are to help me”.

Ismail and Gabriel carried stones and Ibrahim built the walls of the house. The marble piece of the ‘*maqam*’i Ibrahim’ (the station of Ibrahim) where Ibrahim’s footprints can be seen acted like an elevator in the building of the house.

Allah Most High says in the Qur’an:

‘And when Ibrahim built the foundations of the House with Isma’il: ‘Our Lord, accept this from us! You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing’ (Baqara, 2:127).

According to accounts of the building of the Ka’bah, when the prophet Adam and Eve were removed from Paradise, they were reunited again at Arafah where together they walked west and came to the site of the Ka’bah. The prophet Adam then wished to worship his lord in order to thank Him for their being reunited.



ed. He asked Allah to give him back the pillar around which he used to do *tawaf* whilst in Paradise. That pillar of light then appeared there and Adam walked around it worshipping Allah.

This pillar of light became lost during the time of the prophet Seth and in its place was left a black stone. Seth then built a four-sided building made of stone where this stone was and then placed the black stone in a corner of the house. This black stone is the stone that is today known as '*hajar al-aswad*'.

Then during Noah's flood, this house was buried under the sand for a long period of time.

By the command of Allah Ibrahim then went to the site of the Ka'bah and settled Ismail and his mother Hajar there. Then together with Ismail they begin to dig at the site where the Ka'bah was. They find the foundations of the house built by Seth. They then rebuilt the existing Ka'bah on those foundations.

In the verse this is what the expression "built the foundations of the House" means.

When the Ka'bah was complete, Ibrahim prayed to Allah:

“My Lord, make this a place of safety and provide its inhabitants with fruits – all of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day’.

Accepting the prayer of Ibrahim Allah answered:

‘I will let anyone who becomes an unbeliever enjoy himself a little but then I will drive him to the punishment of the Fire. What an evil destination’ (Baqara, 2:126)

Allah gives an opportunity for those who deny Him also, to benefit from the bounties of this world. In that case worldly bounty is not dependent on a person's faith or worship. It is given to both the believer and the unbeliever.

In fact the bounties of this world are a test. Whether they are good for one or not depends on their consequences. If wealth and power are a means for one's worship then they will bring happiness in both worlds. If they are a cause for depravity and misguidance then this will destroy one's afterlife and bring disaster instead of happiness.

Ibrahim continued to pray as follows:

‘Our Lord, make us both Muslims submitted to You, and our descendants a Muslim community submitted to You. Show us our rites of worship and turn towards us. You are the Ever-Returning, the Most Merciful’ (Baqara, 2:128).

‘Our Lord, raise up among them a Messenger from them to recite Your Signs to them and teach them the Book and Wisdom and purify them. You are the Almighty, the All-Wise.’ (Baqara, 2:129).

The prophet Muhammad (saw) has the following to say about the prayer in this verse:

“I am the fulfilment of the prayer of my father, Ibrahim and the good news brought by Isa”, (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, V, 262).

The pure lineage of the prophet Muhammad goes back to the prophet Ibrahim as follows:

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 1. Muhammad (saw) | 7. Hakim (Kilab), |
| 2. Abdullah, | 8. Murrah, |
| 3. Abdulmuttalib (He is also known as Shayba al-Hamd) | 9. Ka'b, |
| 4. Hashim, | 10. Lu'ayy |
| 5. Abdu Manaf (His real name is Mughira) | 11. Ghalib, |
| 6. Qusayy (He is also known as Zayd) | 12. Fihri (Quraysh) |
| | 13. Malik, |



14. Nadr,
15. Kinane,
16. Huzayma,
17. Mudrike,
18. Ilyas,

19. Mudar,
20. Nizar,
21. Ma'ad,
22. Adnan.

The pure lineage of Allah's Messenger is traced back to Adnan, who is from the lineage of Ismail. However the time between these two is not known.

In short, the fact that so many prophets came from the lineage of Ibrahim and in particular the blessed prophet Muhammad (saw), shows the unique and select position of the prophet

Ibrahim in the history of the prophets.

The Ka'bah and the rites of the *hajj* are full of spiritual memories of the prophet Ibrahim that will last until the Day of Judgement.

Moreover everyday, five times a day, millions of Muslims, send blessings on the Prophet Muhammad (saw) in their *tahiyah*, whilst also making mention of the blessings bestowed upon Ibrahim by Allah.

اللَّهُمَّ بَارِكْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا بَارَكْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
 وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ *
 اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ كَمَا صَلَّيْتَ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ
 وَعَلَى آلِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّكَ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ *

“O Allah! Send blessings on Muhammad and his family just as You sent blessings on Ibrahim and his family. You are worthy of praise most high”.

“O Allah! Send goodness and plenty to Muhammad and his family, just as you did with Ibrahim and his family” (Bukhari, Dawat 32; Tirmidhi, Witr, 20; Ibn Majah, Iqama, 25).

The prophet Ismail (peace be upon him)

He is one of the prophets mentioned in the Qur'an. He is also known by the name '*dhabiha al-Allah*' which means 'the sacrifice of Allah'. Ismail became a prophet to the tribe of Jurham who left Yemen to migrate to the region of the Hijaz. The dictionary meaning of 'Ismail' is the one who obeys Allah. Its Hebrew equivalent is 'Ishmael'.

The Arabs pronounced it Ismail however.

Ismail grew up with the children of the Jurhumites and learned to throw arrows from them. When he was a young man he became a very good archer.

When a group of people from the tribe of Asham were competing with each other in archery, the prophet Muhammad (saw) said to them:

“O sons of Ismail Throw your arrows, your father was a skilful archer”, (Bukhari, Anbiya, 9).

When Ismail's father passed away, he continued to perform the duties of the Ka'bah and the *hajj*. Firstly he covered the Ka'bah with a covering. Allah then bestowed prophethood upon him. He was sent to Mecca and to the surrounding tribes of Jurham, to the Amalekites and Yemen and to Ma'rib and Hadramaut.



The prophet Ismail continued to invite them to Islam for fifty years. Some of them believed in him while others did not. However those who did believe in him were very few.

Ismail was very patient and persevering in his duty. Ismail was true to his word, commanded to pray and fast and was a prophet who gained the pleasure of his Lord as is described in the following verse:

'Mention Isma'il in the Book. He was true to his promise and was a Messenger and a Prophet. He used to command his people to do salat and give zakat and he was pleasing to his Lord' (Maryam, 19:54-55).

The miracles of the prophet Ismail

1. He transformed a thorny tract of land into a green pastures.
2. Through his prayers, barren sheep gave milk and their wool was like silk,
3. Through his prayers the sands beside him became flour.
4. Zamzam water appeared because of him and would continue until the end of time.

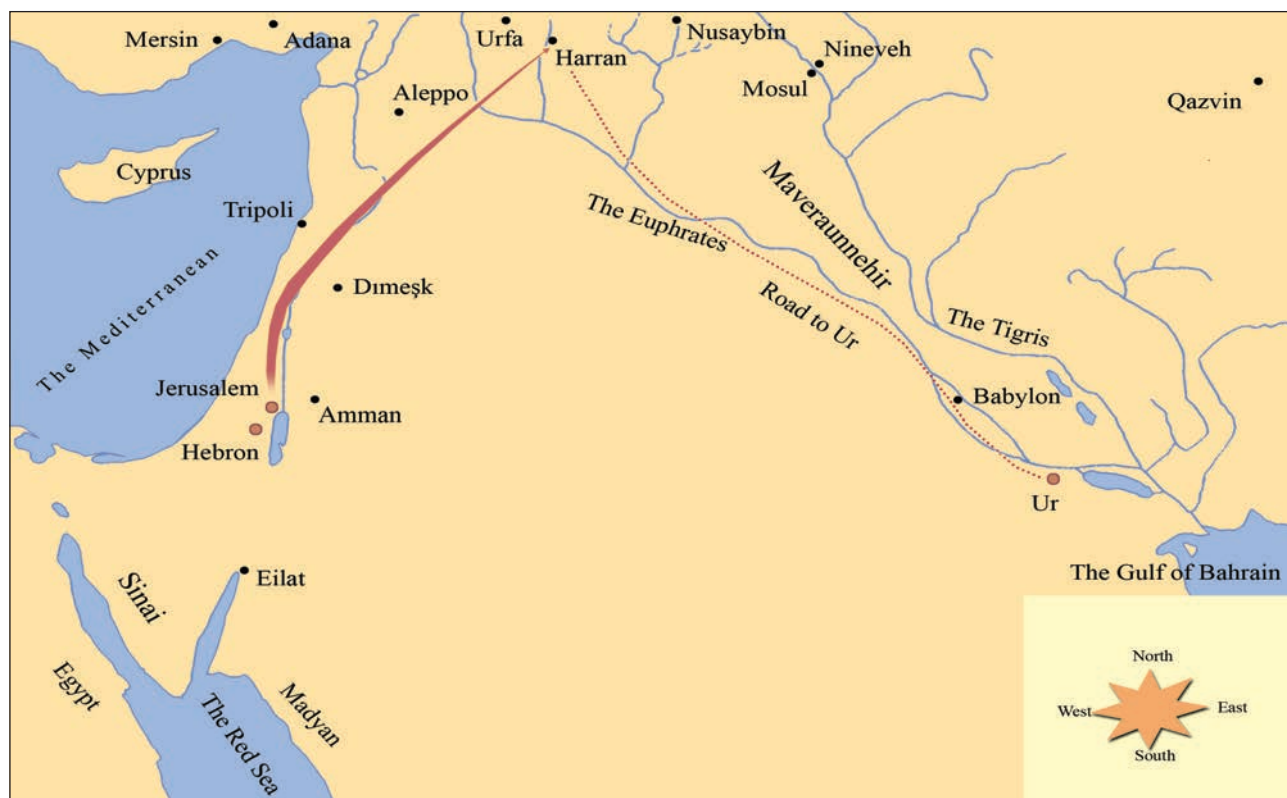
The distinguishing traits of the prophet Ismail:

He was a very patient, forbearing and submissive prophet.

The prophet Ishaq (peace be upon him)

Ishaq is the son of Ibrahim born to Sara. When she learned that she was to give birth to a son she was very surprised and said:

'Woe is me! How can I give birth when I am an old woman and my husband here is an aged man? This is indeed an astonishing thing!' They (the angels) said, 'Are you astonished at Allah's command? May Allah's mercy and His blessings be upon you, People of the House! He is Praiseworthy, All-Glorious', (Hud, 11:72, 73).



‘We gave him the good news of Ishaq, a Prophet, one of the righteous. We showered blessings upon him and upon Ishaq. Among their descendants are good-doers and also people who clearly wrong themselves’, (Sâffât, 37:112, 113).

Ishaq is praised in the Qur’an as follows:

‘And remember Our slaves Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya‘qub, men of true strength and inner sight. We purified their sincerity through sincere remembrance of the Abode.

In Our eyes they are among the best of chosen men’ (Saff, 38:45-47).

After the death of his father, Ishaq was given the duty of prophethood and sent to the people of Damascus and Palestine. Allah most High made him an eminent and righteous person.

During his old age his eyes had weakened and he became blind.

Ishaq had two twin sons, called Yaqub and Esau (*al Eys*). Towards the end of his life Ishaq prayed for both sons. He prayed that prophets would arise from the lineage of Yaqub and that kings and sultans would rise from the sons of Esau.

According to accounts Ishaq lived until he was 160 years old and passed away in an area near Jerusalem in Palestine. He is buried near the grave of his father Ibrahim (Ibn Asir, al-Kamil, I, 127)

His miracles based on various accounts

Those who did not accept the prophethood of Ishaq said to him:

“If the animals do not bear witness that you are a prophet then we will not believe in you”.

Ishaq then addressed the animals:

“O animals, tell them who I am”

The fox said: “You are a messenger of Allah”. The gazelle said: You are the son of ‘*khalil al-Allah*’

The goat said: “You are a prophet of Allah. Whoever does not believe in you will go to hell”

When Ishaq was trying to spread the religion to his people in Jerusalem, they said to him:

“If you can make that mountain move, we will believe in you”.

By the permission of Allah, the mountain did in fact shake with grandeur. The people of Jerusalem then believed.

Whilst he was preaching to his people, the hides of some cows were brought to him. Those who brought them said to him:

“Bring these back to life!”

Ishaq (as) then filled the hides with sand and then prayed to Allah. All of them then came back to life. Another miracle is the fact that whichever sheep he ran his hand over, it gives birth to a lamb.

Ishaq passed away in Palestine. And he was buried in the region of Khalil al-Rahman.

Peace be upon him....

QUESTIONS

A. Answer the following questions

1. Why was the prophet Ibrahim called 'abu al-anbiya'?
2. The leader of the Chaldean tribe was once a just person. Why then did he later have made statues of himself and claimed to be a god?
3. What was the reason for the murder of approximately one thousand new born children by Nimrod, during his reign?
4. What will those people to whom a prophet was not sent be taken to account for on the Day of Judgement?
5. Can a person reach the conclusion of tawheed, that there is only one god, by reason alone? Explain your answer with examples from the life of the prophet Ibrahim.
6. Before he taught them about the Religion of Truth, the prophet Ibrahim first explained to his people that idols were not worthy of being worshipped. Explain the reason for such a method employed by the prophet Ibrahim.
7. After breaking all of the idols in the temple why did the prophet Ibrahim then hang the axe around the neck of the largest idol?
8. Compare the prayer that the prophet Nuh made for his son to that which the prophet Ibrahim made for his father.
9. What did Allah Most High command to the fire when the prophet Ibrahim was thrown into it?
10. Why did Nimrod reject faith even though he witnessed a clear miracle of the prophet Ibrahim?
11. What did Sara do to avoid the evil plans of the Pharaoh when she was forcefully taken into his palace?
12. Which event does the stoning of Satan during the pilgrimage represent?
13. The 'takbir al-tashriq' that begins on the morning of the Day of Arafah after the fajr prayer and continues until the afternoon prayer of the fourth day of the eid al-adha was based on which event?
14. Explain the event that first took place in the prophet Ibrahim's life and that is the basis of the establishment of our foundations (endowments) today.
15. When the prophet Ibrahim was about to be cast into the fire three angels were sent to him however he rejected their help. And just at the last moment when he was about to fall into the fire Gabriel came to him and asked: "Why do you not ask Allah to save you?" He replied: "He knows the state I am in. By whose command does fire burn? Who is it that causes to burn?" What state of mind, in this most terrifying of moments, does this answer reflect?
16. Which characteristics of the prophet Ismail are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an?
17. Jalalluddin Rumi says that 'the way to Allah consists of entering the fire. Thus before you are thrown into the fire seek out whether you have the 'traits' or 'traces' of Ibrahim in yourself. Because fire recognises all 'Ibrahims' and will not burn them". Explain these words from the perspective of 'tawakkul' or reliance upon Allah.



18. How many sons did the prophet Ishaq have? Which of them did he pray for and how did he pray for them?
19. In verses 45-47 of Chapter Sa'd, which characteristics of the prophet Ishaq are mentioned?
20. Describe the emotions felt by Sara, having remained childless and barren for many years and losing all hope, when she spoke the following words: 'Woe is me! How can I give birth when I am an old woman and my husband here is an aged man?' (Hud, 11:72).
21. 'Among their (Ibrahim and Ishaq's) descendants are good-doers and also people who clearly wrong themselves' (Saffat, 37:112, 113). What do you understand from this verse?

B. Fill in the gaps

1. Allah Most High compliments the prophet Ibrahim by calling him 'khalili' (my friend). The prophet Ibrahim was thus called
2. When the Pharaoh tried to impose himself on Sara he thought she was a and he became terrified. He thus let her go free and also gave her as a gift.
3. Because the prophet Ibrahim liked to feed everybody he was called (the patron of guests).
4. prayer was a means for the appearance of the water of Zamzam.
5. The prophet Ishaq was sent to the people of and
6. The prophet Ishaq prayed that many prophets come from the lineage of his son
7. The prophet Ishaq prayed that and come from the lineage of his son Esau.

C. Choose the correct option from the following answers

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Which of the following was <u>not</u> one of the methods employed by the prophet Ibrahim in spreading the creed of tawheed?</p> <p>A. He began with those closest to him with a sweet expression and gentle words and a polite manner.</p> <p>B. He continually prayed for those of his people who did not believe to be guided to the truth.</p> <p>C. At every opportunity he would state or show that the gods that the idol-worshippers worshipped were helpless and useless.</p> <p>D. He broke the idols in the temple so that the idol worshippers would worship them a little less and thus not commit as much sin.</p> | <p>2. How was the prophet Ibrahim tested with his own nafs?</p> <p>A. By fighting Nimrod</p> <p>B. By being thrown into the fire</p> <p>C. To teach the religion of truth to people under difficult circumstances.</p> <p>D. By having to sacrifice Ismail.</p> |
|--|--|



3. **After witnessing the miracle of the fire becoming a garden of roses for the prophet Ibrahim, Nimrod was very shocked and affected. He said to Ibrahim: "I am going to sacrifice four thousand cows for your Lord". and he did in fact keep his word. He also abandoned his struggle against the prophet Ibrahim. However he still did not believe. Which of the following cannot be a reason for these actions of Nimrod?**
- He was afraid that he would lose his wealth and kingdom.
 - He was unable to overcome his pride and obstinacy even though he saw the truth.
 - Because the cows that he sacrificed would not be accepted, his obstinacy increased and he was unable to accept belief.
 - He was afraid he would lose his prestige amongst the people.
4. **How did the prophet Ibrahim know that the angels who came to him in the form of human beings were in fact angels?**
- By the clothes that they wore.
 - They did not speak much.
 - They did not eat anything.
 - They were frowning.
5. **In the beginning of his reign Nimrod, the ruler of the Chaldeans was a just, fair ruler who knew his limits. However he later overstepped his limits and became proud and arrogant, even going so far as to claim that he was a god. Which of the following was not a reason for this?**
- His wealth had increased and he became dazzled and spoilt by with the extreme respect and compliment shown to him by the people.
 - The expansion and growth of his kingdom and rule made him deluded in believing that he had supernatural powers.
 - Nimrod's fondness of worldly wealth and transient pleasures made him become more attached to the world; and the fear of losing his kingdom made him even more oppressive and ignorant of his own state.
 - Nimrod envied the prophetood of Ibrahim, he became jealous of the spiritual bounties that he had been given, and this envy drove him to proclaim his own godhead.
6. **When seeking His Creator the prophet Ibrahim first saw a star and was affected by it, then when he saw the moon he forgot about the star, and when he saw the sun he abandoned the moon and eventually he came to realise that none of these could be his god. All of this represents a metaphor. Which of the following lessons should we take from this event?**
- If an unbeliever in search of his Creator begins with the stars, then he will find the true God.
 - Because this is a metaphor there can be no such situation in reality.
 - The fact that the prophet Ibrahim finally found Allah after doubting a number of times shows how difficult it is to believe.
 - Even if a divine religion has not reached a person, he can still find and know Allah through contemplating on creation.



7. What does 'abu al-adyaf' mean?

- A. The father of orphans
- B. The father of innocents
- C. The father of the poor
- D. The father of guests

8. When the prophet Ibrahim set out to sacrifice his son Ismail, Satan approached three people in order to make him abandon this act. Who were they and what was the order in which he approached them?

- A. Ibrahim, Ismail, Hajar
- B. Hajar, Ismail, Ibrahim
- C. Ibrahim, Hajar, Ismail
- D. Hajar, Ibrahim, Ismail.

9. When the prophet Ibrahim was thrown into the fire he did not experience the slightest fear or anxiety. What was the reason for this?

- A. He was in a state of total submission to and dependence upon Allah.
- B. He knew that Gabriel would help him.
- C. He knew that the fire would turn into a garden of roses.
- D. He reasoned that he was going to burn anyway and he did not have the power to resist.

10. When the prophet Ibrahim broke the idols in the temple he hung the axe with which he broke them around the neck of the largest idol. When his people came he said to them: "The largest idol did not want any other idols to be worshipped alongside him and he was angry with the others so he may have broken them. Why do you not ask him?" What inconsistency of the people did he try to show them with this act and words of his?

- A. That the idols which his people trusted so much and from whom they expected benefit were things which could be broken quickly.
- B. That idols possessed feelings of envy and goodness just like human beings.
- C. That idols who are larger than the others cannot harm smaller ones even if they wished to.
- D. That the idols which people awaited great benefit from and who they believed to possess great spiritual powers were incapable of performing even the tiniest of acts.

11. When we consider all of the miracles displayed by the prophet Ismail, which conclusion can we come to about the region in which he lived?

- A. It was a very populated place.
- B. It was a place where people earned their livelihood through seafaring and forestry.
- C. It was a place where the great civilisations of history were established.
- D. It was a dry and barren region where agriculture and livestock breeding was carried out.



12. Which miracle of the prophet Ismail occurred thousands of years ago and which people can witness openly today and people will be able to witness until the Day of Judgement?

- A. The submission he showed towards his father Ibrahim
- B. The never-ending well of Zamzam water that was found by the prophet Ismail by the grace of Allah.
- C. The stoning of Satan who tried to whisper misgivings to the prophet Ismail.
- D. The prayer of the prophet Ismail to make the desert into a mountainous region.

13. Below are given some events from the life of the prophet Ismail and the beautiful traits that he displayed in response. Which matching pair is incorrect?

- A. His response towards his father in the event of the sacrifice / His dependence on Allah and his submission.
- B. His stoning of Satan who tried to whisper misgivings to him as he was going to be sacrificed / His discernment and foresight
- C. His continual prayer for the guidance of his people and his looking upon them with the gaze of mercy in the face of the misfortunes that befell them / His compassion and gentleness
- D. His praying by the grace of Allah and the turning to flour of sand / His skill and capability.

14. Which of the following does not demonstrate the situation of a person who has properly placed his reliance upon Allah (tawakkul)?

- A. The peace of mind and contentedness of the heart that arises from relying upon Allah and having done everything in one's power.
- B. A state in which one has prepared oneself for every and any result having asked for what is best for oneself.
- C. The resulting disappointment when one does not get what one wants pushes one to despair and withdrawing into oneself and sadness.
- D. One knows that the paths that lead one to positive aims have not dried up and so one is hopeful at all times.

15. Which of the following conclusions can we not draw on considering the verse: '(O My Beloved!) And remember Our slaves Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of true strength and inner sight.

We purified their sincerity through sincere remembrance of the hereafter In Our eyes they are among the best of chosen men' (Sâd, 38: 45-47)

- A. The prophets Ibrahim and Ishaq were sincere slaves who corrected their behaviour in considering their afterlife.
- B. Ibrahim and Ishaq were chosen by Allah in preeternity to be His messengers.
- C. Ibrahim and Ishaq were sincere human beings in servitude to Allah.
- D. Ibrahim and Ishaq were the best of the chosen prophets and possessed the highest rank amongst all the prophets.



16. **What is the apparent reason for good people and prophets to have come from the line of the prophet Ishaq and to be subject to divine grace and blessings?**

- A. He was a prophet chosen by Allah.
- B. The prophet Muhammad would come from his lineage.
- C. His father Ibrahim prayed that this would be the case for him.
- D. The prophet Ishaq was the last of the children of the prophet Ibrahim.

17. **Which of the following is not a miracle of the prophet Ishaq?**

- A. Every domestic animal that he petted with his hand was able to talk.
- B. Animals bore witness that he was a messenger of Allah.
- C. He was able to bring back to life cows from their stripped hides.
- D. He was able to move a mountain upon the request of his people.





THE PROPHET

LOT

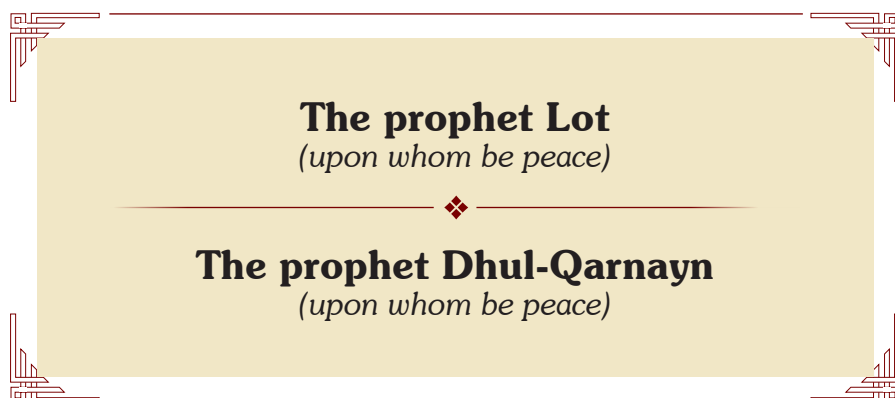
-upon whom be peace-



THE PROPHET

DHUL-QARNAYN

-upon whom be peace-



The prophet Lot (peace be upon him)

The prophet Lot is the son of Hara, the brother of the prophet Ibrahim.

The name of the prophet Lut is mentioned in various verses in the Holy Qur'an twenty seven times.

The prophet Lut was the first person to believe in the prophet Ibrahim and was honoured by migrating with him in the path of Allah.

He followed the way (*shariah*) of the prophet Ibrahim. He was a person of worship, generous, patient, pious and very hospitable. He earned his livelihood through farming and manual work.

In order to gain experience in inviting people to the religion of Allah, the prophet Lot left Iraq with his uncle Ibrahim and went to visit Syria, Palestine and Egypt. He was then sent as a messenger to the sinning people of Sodom, with which he had blood relations in order to reform them.

In the Qur'an Allah Most High has the following to say about Lut and his people:

'And Lot was one of the Messengers' (Sāffāt, 37 :133)

'We gave right judgement and knowledge to Lut and rescued him from the city which committed disgusting acts. They were evil people who were deviators' (Anbiya, 21:74). **'We admitted him into Our mercy. He was one of the righteous'** (Anbiya, 21:75)

'And Isma'il, al-Yasa', Yunus and Lot. All of them We favoured over all beings' (An'am, 6:86)

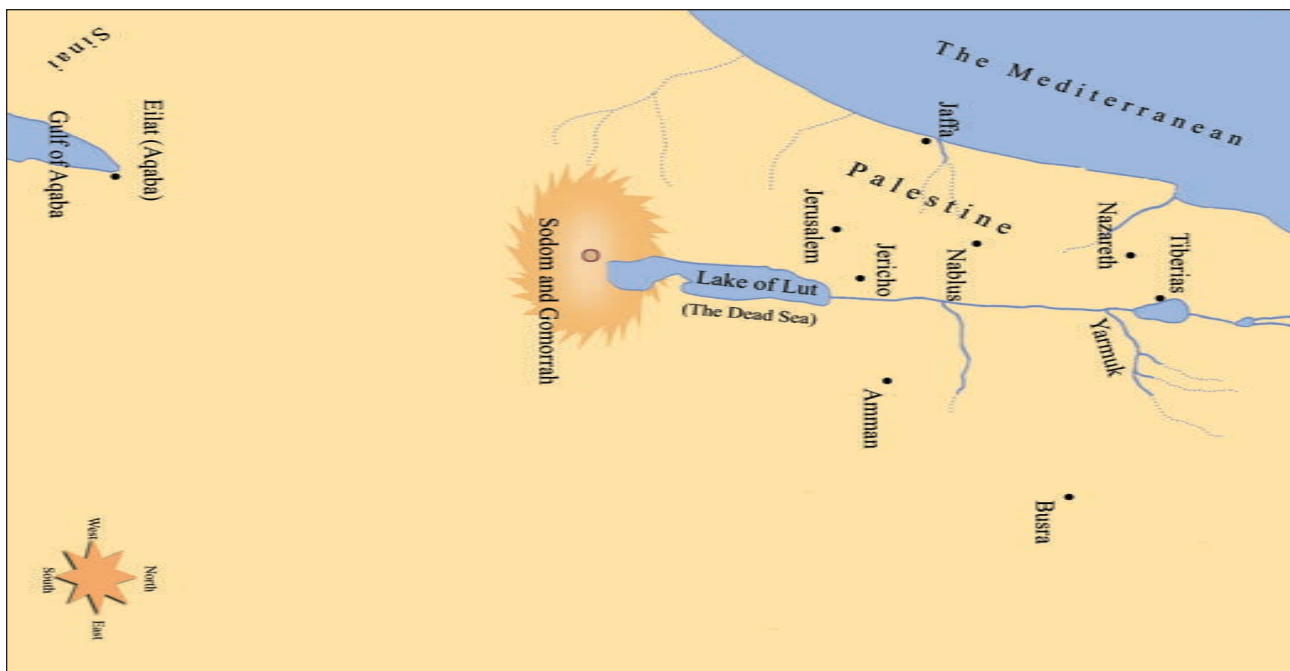
After Lot had been appointed with the duty of prophethood he began to invite the people of Sodom to the religion of Allah. He called them out of their abasement to servitude to Allah.

The people of Sodom

The people of Sodom lived in the east of what is now Jordan, between Iraq and Palestine. The people of Sodom were a depraved and wild tribe. They committed all manner of indecent acts which had never before been seen in any other people. They went to such extremes in their despicable and disgusting acts that indecency and immorality became their trade.

They would not listen to decent people who tried to prevent them and silenced them instead, saying:





“Remove from our midst the pure and decent ones”

These people had forgotten chastity, modesty and shame and such abasement as has never been seen even in the animal kingdom appeared amongst them. They became subject to the quranic address: **‘Indeed they are even more astray (than animals)’**⁴⁰.

And so Lut was appointed with the duty of guiding such an unfortunate and miserable tribe. He struggled day and night to wake them up and see the truth.

‘...when their brother Lot said to them, ‘Will you not have taqwa?’ (Şhu’arâ, 26:161)

‘...(know that) I am a faithful Messenger to you’ (Shu’ara, 26:162).’...so have taqwa of Allah and obey me. I do not ask you for any wage for it. My wage is the responsibility of no one but the Lord of all the worlds.

‘Of all beings, do you lie with males,’ leaving the wives Allah has created for you? You are a people who have overstepped the limits.’ (Shu’ara, 26:163-166)

The people of Sodom denied the messengership of the prophet Lot.

They did not accept the invitation he made to the true religion. Lot then explained to them the gravity of the indecent acts that they were committing:

‘And Lot, when he said to his people, ‘Do you commit an obscenity not perpetrated before you by anyone in all the worlds?’ (Â’raf, 7:80)

He warned them that their evil acts would drag them to destruction. The people of Sodom, who had no intention of abandoning their immodesty and lewdness, ridiculed Lot and tried to drive him out of their land.

This is described in the Qur’an as follows:

‘The only answer of his people was to say, ‘Expel them from your city! They are people who keep themselves pure!’ (A’raf, 7:82)

⁴⁰ This is how Allah Most High describes the abasement and depravity of the unbelievers: **‘Do you suppose that most of them hear or understand? They are just like cattle. Indeed they are even more astray’** (Furqan, 25:44).



To keep oneself pure, modest and dignified was considered a crime for such a wild and shameless people. They felt uncomfortable with pure people since they themselves found their spiritual nourishment from filth. They even went so far as to threaten him:

‘They said, ‘Lot, if you do not desist you will be expelled.’

The prophet Lot reminded them again of the punishment of Allah:

‘He warned them of Our onslaught but they dismissed the warnings’ (Qamar, 54:36).

They did not comprehend the divine threat as they could not grasp the terror of the disaster that would befall them. With the temerity that came from their depravity and shamelessness, they refused to abandon their wantonness saying:

‘Bring us Allah’s punishment if you are telling the truth.’ (Ankabut, 29:29).

The rain of hardened stones and the terrifying clamor

Despite his warnings of divine punishment, the prophet Lot saw that the people of Sodom remained indifferent to him.

In fact they went to extremes by asking for the punishment to come. Thus they became deserving of their punishment. Lot sought refuge in his lord and asked Him for help:

‘My Lord, rescue me and my family from what they are doing.’ (Shu’ara, 26:169)

‘He said, ‘My Lord, help me against the people of corruption!’ (Ankabut, 29:30)

This prayer was a last resort for the prophet Lot. Allah then sent the angels to destroy the people of Lot. Unfortunately these wild people even attempted to seduce the angels who appeared in the form of men.

This event is described in the Qur’an as follows:

‘When Our messengers came to Lot, he was distressed for them, and very concerned for them, and said, ‘This is a dreadful day.’ (Hud, 11:77)

When Lot saw the angels in the form of young men he thought they were people and he was afraid that his people would try to take advantage of them. This is because, as is explained in the 80th and 81st verse of the chapter Araf, sexual depravity was common amongst the people of Lot.

The angels approached Lot:

‘His people came running to him excitedly – they were long used to committing evil acts. He said, ‘My people, here are my daughters. They are purer for you. So have fear of Allah and do not shame me with my guests. Is there not one rightly-guided man among you?’ (Hud, 11:78)

According to some commentators, the daughters that the prophet Lot advised the people of Sodom to marry were not his own daughters, but the girls from the tribe. He had only two daughters. Since every prophet is considered the leader and spiritual father of his tribe, when Lot said ‘here are my daughters’ he was indicating the daughters of the tribe.

However the ravenous Sodomites said:

‘You know we have no claim on your daughters. You know very well what it is we want.’ (Hud, 11:79)

‘(Lot) said, ‘If only I had the strength to combat you or could take refuge in some powerful support!’

(The angels said): ‘Lot, we are messengers from your Lord. They will not be able to get at you. Set out with your family – except for your wife – in the middle of the night and none of you should look back. What strikes them will strike her as well. Their promised appointment is the morning. Is the morning not close at hand?’ (Hud, 11:81)



‘When Our command came, We turned their cities upside down and rained down on them stones of hard baked clay, piled on top of one another in layers, each one earmarked by your Lord. And they are never far from the wrongdoers’ (Hud, 82,83).

The arrival of the divine punishment is described in more detail in the chapter Hijr, in the 58th to 74th verses.

There is described how the destruction of the people of Lot began at sunrise with a terrifying clamour and then the raining down of stones of hardened clay (See Hijr, 73-74).

After describing the destruction of this shameless tribe Allah then warns us:

‘Verily in all this there are messages indeed for those who can read the signs; for behold, those (towns) stood by a road that still exists’ (Hijr, 15:75-76).

First of all Allah Most High frightened the people of Lot with a terrifying blast of sound, then He brought their town upside down and later rained down stones upon them. Could there be a more intense and severe way of wiping a people out than this!...

In the chapter Ankabut, we are informed that there were left certain signs of the destruction of these people in order to be a lesson for future nations.

‘We have left a Clear Sign of them behind for people who use their intellect’ (Ankabut, 29:35).

This sign has been interpreted to be the stories of the destruction of these people, the remains of their destroyed land, the stones that rained down from the skies, and the rivers that ran black.

The prophet Lot’s wives and children.

When Lot was assigned with the duty of prophethood he was married to a lady named Fawat who passed away 20 years later.

Then Lot married a woman from Sodom whose name was Wahila. It later became apparent that Wahila was a hypocrite as she remained silent in the face of the disbelief and indecency of her people.

In fact she would secretly support them, against the prophet Lot. The night the appointed angels came to destroy these people, Wahila immediately went to inform her people. That is she betrayed her husband Lot.

As a result of this she was destroyed along with the others.

Lot had two daughters who had accepted the prophethood of their father and believed in him. When the people of Sodom were destroyed they left Sodom together with their father and those who believed in him and were thus saved from the divine punishment.

Later they went to Ibrahim along with their father. Ibrahim married them to two believers from his own tribe.

The evil acts of the people of Lot and the reasons for their destruction

1. They worshipped idols.

2. They committed acts of homosexuality. According to a narration by Ibn Abbas the prophet Muhammad said three times:

“Those who do what the people of Lot did are cursed” (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, I, 317).

In another account he said:



“If you see a person commit the ugly act committed by the people of Lot, kill both the doer and the one to whom it is done’ (Tirmidhi, Hudud, 24/1456; Abu Dawud, Hudud, 28/4462).

The prophet Muhammad also described the painful and debasing situation that the perpetrators of this ugly act would be in on the Day of Judgement:

“Whoever of my community commits the act of the people of Lot and dies upon that will be placed with them and resurrected with them on the Day of Judgement” (Suyuti, Jami’ al-Saghir, II, 181).

Malik ibn Dinar has the following to say about this matter:

Past nations had never before committed the act of homosexuality. It was first seen amongst the people of Lot. And it was Satan who taught them this ugly act. When people commit this act, which is against their nature, they are dragged to divine punishment and wrath.

Allah Most High gave mankind the feeling of sexual passion for the purpose of procreation. To unjustly use this passion for purposes other than this is against this wisdom, and is a result of man’s ignorance and depravity. This situation debases the dignity and honour of man and lowers him to a level below that of the animals.

3. Killing by sodomy. Whenever their wild men wanted to kill a person, they would first order that he be sodomised and then after torturing him in this way they would kill him.

4. The people of Sodom would perform their acts of indecency out in the open. They would even censure honourable people. They were so debased that they would pass wind out in the open and used this as a means of entertainment.

5. They would sit on the sides of the roads with stones in their hands in order to intercept them and throw them to passerbys. Whenever a foreigner passed by they would stone him and mock him.

6. They loved tittle-tattle and spreading rumours.

7. They were miserly people who did not like giving out charity from their wealth.



Allah Most High has the following to say about the people of Lot in order for us to take heed:

‘We have left a Clear Sign of them behind for people who use their intellect’ (Ankabut, 29:25).

The remains of this destroyed nation have been left as a sign for mankind until the Day of Judgement.



A photo of the lake of Lut or the Dead Sea as it is otherwise known.

The ‘clear signs’ around the Lake of Lot are truly amazing. Its geological state is just as interesting as the events that took place there. The lake is four hundred metres lower than the Mediterranean while its deepest part is also four hundred metres. In other words the deepest part of the lake is eight hundred metres lower than the Mediterranean.

This is an indication of the lowliness and baseness of even the lands of the people of Lot.

Another feature of the Lake of Lot is that its salt content is almost 30%. For this reason no fish or plants can survive there. In the Qur’an this lake is called ‘*Bahr al-mayyit*’, which means the dead sea (which is also the name by which it is more commonly known).

The fact that not even animals can survive in this damned place is another lesson to take heed from. The events of this accursed people that are described in the Qur’an are assumed to have taken place around 1800 BC.



It is now possible to encounter trees that have remained from that period, preserved from the high level of salt there. The remains of the city were buried under the ground. The lake itself is the colour of pitch and gives off a foul smell to its surroundings. And so the ugliness of the foul acts committed around this lake is presented to mankind as a sign.

The divine retribution that befell the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are similar to the disaster that occurred at Pompeii.

The destruction of Pompeii

The city of Pompeii, a symbol of the moral degradation of the Roman Empire was in Italy.

Like the people of Lot, they were buried under the earth as a result of their sexual deviation.

Historical records show that before it was destroyed, the people of this city had reached the peaks of depravation, indecency and immortality. Approximately seventy years after Christ (peace be upon him), the volcano of Vesuvius exploded and the resulting lava covered the land and wiped it off the map.



A portrait of the terrifying punishment and Divine revenge at the point of death (*sakarāt al-mawt*) of unbelieving and oppressive peoples. Even though 900 years have passed, Pompeii yet portrays the warning scenes of an indecent people turned to stone. They are like human silhouettes in beastly form...!

Thus nobody was able to escape this divine punishment. Those foolish and unfortunate people were turned to stone in their state of clear deviation as a sign for others to take heed.

This event took place suddenly. All of those indecent people were caught unaware and turned to stone as they were. Their remains have reached us to this day, having been preserved completely and are one of the ugly scenes from history.

The Holy Qur'an mentions these and other sudden destruction events as follows:

'It was but one single blast (of Our punishment) – and lo! They became as still and silent as ashes' (Yasin, 36:29).

'How many generations We have destroyed before them! Do you see a trace of any one of them or hear even a whisper of them?' (Maryam, 19:98).

People who are unable to perceive the truth, who watch events through the emotions of their *nafs*, and who are devoid of any perception, see these as mere remains and statues. The lands of those wild, dishonourable, indecent people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the grand palaces carved out of stone of the people of Ad and Thamud, who saw the world as a place of entertainment and idolised their own selves, are inhabited now only by owls.

Rebellious people and the preservation of the humankind

'Has the news of those who came before them not reached them, the people of Nuh and 'Ad and Thamud, and the people of Ibrahim and the inhabitants of Madyan and the overturned cities? Their Messengers brought them the Clear Signs. Allah did not wrong them; rather they wronged themselves' (Tawbah, 9:70)

Man spends most of his time in this world of trial and examination in deep ignorance, when he should be in a state of serious awareness and vigilance. This heedless sleep leads him to ignorance and misguidance dragging him to a sad and pitiful end affair. The world has become an illusion and a place of deception for them.

The calamities that befall those people who have deviated from the paths of faith and morality are full of divine wrath. Consider the arrogant people of Nuh, 'Ad and Thamud; the Pharaoh who struggled against the prophets, and claimed to be a god himself and eventually drowning in a drop of water; Nimrod, over-



come by a tiny gnat; the immoral people of Lot whose lifestyles were below that of the animals and others; where is there tyranny and rebellion now?

These past nations were destroyed as a result of their unbelief, their immorality and their tyranny.

The destruction of these disbelieving and oppressive peoples is a terrifying portrait of divine punishment and retribution.

Even though centuries have passed, the indecent scenes of the people of Pompeii, now turned to stone, are still on display for all the world to see. They are like silhouettes of people turned to animals.

The heavens did not weep after them, eyes did not shed a tear, nor did hearts feel pain at their departure. On the contrary, through the curse and imprecation of the innocents they oppressed they have disappeared into the refuse of history. The lands that they reigned over are now occupied by owls and dogs.

The history of unbelief, oppression and injustice is filled with examples of fearsome divine retribution. Those who oppose the way shown by the prophets and defy Allah will sooner or later meet with the compelling and undeniable manifestations of divine power and a painful punishment. This is an unalterable divine law.

Allah Most High sent his prophets to us as a cure for the collective wounds that arise as a result of man abiding by the desires of his *nafs*.

Alas those who were deceived by the gilded appearance of this world reached a state of eternal ruin, frightening and miserable, by parting from the illuminated horizon opened up by these prophets. They devastated their societies, meeting with frustration and disappointment, after assuming their sordidness to be happiness. Because they could not comprehend the wisdom and mysteries in creation, they imitated the animals and were destroyed as a result by meeting with divine wrath.

The importance of honour and chastity, the continuation of the generations, the founding of families are all consequences of the natural laws of the divine bounty that is life.

From the time of the prophet Adam, all of the prophets have given great importance to the institution of marriage for the health and well being of the human race.

This is because the way to preserve human lineage is possible only through the existence and continuation of the institution of wedlock.

For generations who have not been nurtured within the family, and have remained out of wedlock, life becomes chaotic; the welfare of society is shaken at its foundations and anarchy prevails.

There can be no greater stupidity and ignorance than to exchange the peace and happiness of marriage for the immorality of indecency and depravity.

To raise an honourable generation of human beings is an exalted ideal of humanity and a happiness that is to be aimed for. In a hadith about raising children it is said:

“Value your children. Take care with their education and nurturing...”, (Suyuti, Jami as-Saghir, I, 47).

The difficulties and troubles one encounters in raising and nurturing one's children are a cause for the sins of the parents to be wiped out.

The Qur'an, which openly states that those nations who have lost the awareness of their servitude, their spiritual honour, human dignity and value, have been wiped off the map of this world, which Allah created to be a place of worship and a realm in which a person can carry out the requirements of his servitude. It is the same Qur'an that lights the way for mankind with its flame of guidance and directs the way to eternal happiness.

May our Lord allow us to use the bounties that He has betowed upon us in a way that will earn His pleasure...May He make our generation true servants of His and a worthy community of His Beloved Prophet (saw).

Amen...

Dhul-Qarnayn (peace be upon him)

The name '*dhu'l qarnayn*' is an Arabic word made up of two words '*dhu*' and '*qarnayn*'. '*dhu*' means to possess something. '*qarn*' has the meanings of century, time, and sun. '*qarnayn*' is the dual form of the word '*qarn*' and thus the word *dhu'l qarnayn* has been translated as '*He of the two centuries*'.

Dhu'l qarnayn was given this title on account of how he travelled both east and west of the world and how both light and darkness was given to his command by Allah.

Dhu'l qarnayn is from the lineage of Japheth, one of the sons of the prophet Nuh.

His real name is Alexander (Iskender).

He is mentioned in the Qur'an as travelling to both east and west and there are accounts of him being either a prophet or a saint.

We should not confuse Dhu'l qarnayn with the Macedonian Alexander. Alexander the Great from history was born in the third century BC in Macedonia. He was a student of Aristotle and ruled over an empire that stretched as far as India.

Dhu'l Qarnayn however lived during the time of the prophet Ibrahim and even made pilgrimage with him and was the recipient of his prayers.

Dhu'l Qarnayn used to make armour and sell it, earning his livelihood through his own handcraft. He would donate what was left over from his needs to the poor.

Dhu'l Qarnayn fought the disbelievers for a long period of time. He had built a wall made of copper-plated iron as a barrier against the people of Gog and Magog⁴¹.

He strove to spread the religion of Allah and the creed of unity.

When the prophet Muhammad (saw) used to talk about the cautionary events that befell previous peoples who lived in Mecca, the Jews and the Iranians began to narrate their own stories of past nations.

Amongst these were Jews in Madina who were estimating that a prophet from the last days of time would arise from amongst them and settle in Madina. They would advise the Meccan pagans as follows:

"A prophet has appeared amongst you. If he is a true prophet ask him about the Companions of the Cave, about Dhu'l Qarnayn, and about the nature of the spirit. If the answer he gives about the Companions of the Cave and Dhu'l Qarnayn are complete but the answer about the nature of the spirit is only partial then know that he is a true prophet. Then you too follow him. However, if he does not give you news about these three matters, then know that he is a liar".

The Meccan pagans then approached the Prophet Muhammad (saw) and said :

"Who are the Companions of the Cave and who is Dhu'l Qarnayn? And what is the nature of the spirit?"

The chapter 'Kahf' was then revealed:

'They will ask you about Dhu'l-Qarnayn. Say: 'I will tell you something about him.'

We gave him power and authority on the earth and granted him a way to everything' (Kahf, 18:83-84).



41 Gog and Magog (Ya'juj wa Ma'juj) are the names of two tribes mentioned in the Qur'an. These two harmful and trouble-making tribes will reappear again towards the end of time.

The distinguishing characteristics of Dhu'l Qarnayn

1. Allah Most High gave a power to Dhu'l Qarnayn with which he was able to travel to the east and the west and with which he built the wall of Dhu'l Qarnayn.

2. Clouds and other natural powers were under his command.

3. He was given knowledge and power. In this way he had physical and spiritual disposal and control over things.

4. He was given two banners, one white the other black, which had miraculous powers. Whilst at battle with his soldiers during the day, he would carry the black banner behind him and a darkness would follow them such that their enemies could not see them and they would lose their way and be defeated in the darkness. At night time, he would place the white banner in front of him, so that for him and his soldiers a light would appear as if it were daytime and in this way they would win great victories against the enemy.

5. He believed in Allah and the Last day and was thus a just and compassionate ruler towards his subjects. He would not oppress or tyrannise the peoples of the lands he conquered. He would say to them:

“There is no cause for anxiety for those innocent people amongst you; and for those who do good they will be recompensed”. He conquered the hearts of people due to his compassion and understanding. He loved all things that were beneficial to mankind.

6. He was very generous and tolerant. He was not after wealth like other rulers. He liked to bestow on others and he loved to forgive.

7. He was very dignified and wise. He was forbearing and kind and in control of his anger. His true aim was to serve mankind and bring justice to the oppressed. He considered wealth to be for the service of people and not for the comfort of kings.

His expeditions of dawah

Through his conquests Dhu'l Qarnayn had expanded his lands and strengthened his government. He began to spread the commands and prohibitions of the religion to other lands. With his army of believers he first set out west. Wherever he went he invited the unbelievers to believe in the oneness of Allah.

He went as far west as he could go until there was no more land and reached the shores of a wide ocean. The sun looked like it was setting in a lake of black mud. He encountered a disbelieving tribe there. Some of them believed in him. He fought those who did not. He defeated them by leaving them in their darkness. However later the remainder of these people repented and collectively accepted belief in the oneness of Allah.

This is described in the Qur'an as follows:

'We gave him power and authority on the earth and granted him a way to everything. So he followed a way west until he reached the setting of the sun and found it setting in a muddy spring and found a people by it. We said, 'Dhu'l-Qarnayn! You can either punish them or else you can treat them with gentleness' (Kahf, 18:84-86).

Having been given such authority, Dhu'l Qarnayn said, acting with a divine standard:

'As for those who do wrong, we will punish them and then they will be returned to their Lord and He will punish them with a dreadful punishment. But as for him who has faith and acts rightly, he will receive the best of rewards and we will issue a command, making things easy for him' (Kahf, 18:87-88)

Dhu'l Qarnayn continued to invite people to belief in Allah. Those who followed him were saved; those who did not found their punishment. He then travelled to the east. The Holy Qur'an says:



‘Then he followed a way...until he reached the rising of the sun and found it rising on a people to whom We had not given any shelter from it’ (Kahf, 18:89-90).

Dhu’l Qarnayn travelled as far west as the Atlantic Sea and in one account he went as far as the Black Sea. There he watched the sun setting over the horizon. But in the great universe, this ocean appeared to him as tiny as a spring of water. The sun was setting over the ocean, covered with mist, and looked as if it was being buried in a muddy spring. The people he encountered on these shores were a disbelieving people. This is why Allah Most High left Dhu’l Qarnayn free to either punish them or guide them.

When the sun was at its most intense, the people mentioned in the verse would take shelter in caves or in the ocean. They would then come out when the intense heat of the sun had diminished. Dhu’l Qarnayn invited them also to the true religion.

He then travelled to the north. Here he encountered a tribe which spoke a foreign language. He spoke to them through an interpreter. Allah Most High has the following to say about this expedition:

‘Then he followed a path until he arrived between the two mountains where he found a people scarcely able to understand speech’ (Kahf, 18:92-93).

These people were likely the Turks. They complained to Dhu’l Qarnayn about some creatures, called Gog and Magog, who were harming them. They asked him to build a wall to protect them. Dhu’l Qarnayn then built the wall. These people, who are assumed to be the Turks, then became Muslim.

The verse states:

‘They said, ‘Dhu’l-Qarnayn! Yajuj and Majuj are causing corruption in the land. Can we, therefore, pay tribute to you in return for your constructing a barrier between us and them?’ (Kahf, 18:94). **‘He said, ‘The power my Lord has granted me is better than that. Just give me a strong helping hand and I will build a solid barrier between you and them. ‘Bring me ingots of iron!’ Then, when he had made it level between the two high mountain-sides, he said, ‘Blow!’ and when he had made it a red hot fire, he said, ‘Bring me molten brass to pour over it. They were, therefore, unable to climb over it nor were they able to make a breach in it’** (Kahf, 95-97). **‘He said, ‘This is a mercy from my Lord. But when my Lord’s promise comes about, He will crush it flat. The promise of my Lord is surely true’** (Kahf, 18:98).

The barrier of Dhu’l Qarnayn is not the Wall of China. There is disagreement as to where it is. The destruction of this wall is listed as one of the signs of the end of time. This wall will be destroyed close to the end of time and Gog and Magog will once again spread over the earth causing much mischief. They will be so populated both humans and jinn will make up only a tenth of them. That is, they will make up nine-tenths of the population of the world.

The destruction of this wall and the spreading of these people is mentioned in the Qur’an as follows:

‘When Yajuj and Majuj are let loose and rush down from every slope, and the True Promise is very close, the eyes of those who were unbelievers will be transfixed: ‘Alas for us! We were unmindful of this! No, rather we were definitely wrongdoers’ (Anbiya, 21:96)

Gog and Magog (Ya’juj wa Ma’juj)

According to accounts, Gog and Magog are two evil and destructive nations. They have flat faces and small eyes. Their ears are very big; they are short in height and great in number. They will spread over the earth towards the end of time.

Just like flies who multiply rapidly in sediment, they too will multiply just as quickly.

Just as billions of people have descended from Adam and Eve, there is going to be an explosion in the population of Gog and Magog in a short period of time. Where they are now is known only by Allah.



When the time comes, the barrier of Dhu'l Qarnayn will be destroyed and flattened and this tribe will spread over the earth. However they will not be able to enter the holy cities of Mecca, Madina or Jerusalem, but will be able to enter all other lands.

They will eat and drink everything they come across, virtually drying up everything and causing mischief throughout the lands. They will be like locusts. And like vermin they will bring harm wherever they go. They will eventually be destroyed by Allah.

Stories to take heed from

On one of the expeditions made by Dhu'l Qarnayn he encountered a strange people. These people had abandoned the ornaments and pleasures of this world and were trying to free themselves from the anxiety of death; they would eat only vegetables and worship much thus trying to free themselves from their carnal desires. These people had no worldly fortune. They earned their provision through the plants and fruits that they grew.

They took much care in preserving their food. Moreover, everybody in this tribe would dig his own grave, clean it everyday and carry out his worship there. Dhu'l Qarnayn called their king to him, who sent the following news to him:

“I do not wish to see anybody. Whoever wishes to see me can come to me”.

Dhu'l Qarnayn then went to the king and asked:

“I invited you, why did you not come?”

The king answered:

“I have no need of you; if I did I would have come”.

Dhu'l Qarnayn then asked him:

“What is this state of yours? I have never seen the likes of it in any other people?”

The king answered:

“Yes, we do not give any importance to gold or silver. Because we have seen that whenever somebody attains a certain portion of these, he desires more and he loses his peace of mind. This is why we are not after worldly wealth...”

Dhu'l Qarnayn then asked him:

“What are these graves? Why do you dig them and carry out your worship here?”

The king replied:

“We made these so that we would not run after the world. Whenever we see our graves and remember that we would enter them one day, we abandon all else”.

Dhu'l Qarnayn then asked:

“Why do you have nothing to eat other than vegetables? Could you not breed animals so that you can benefit from their meat and their milk?”

The king replied:

“We do not wish to make our stomachs the graveyards of animals. We earn our livelihood through our plants. And anyway nothing has any taste left once it passes our throat⁴²”.



42 In reality, there is no objection to eating the meat of animals that Allah has allowed. The above-mentioned act of these people is their own particular preference.



Once a man said to Dhu'l Qarnayn:

“Teach me something that will strengthen my faith and my *basirah*⁴³”. He replied:

“Do not get angry with anyone even when you feel anger. Satan most incites to evil when a person becomes angry. Do not rush. When you do so, you lose what would have been your lot anyway. Be gentle with all people whether they be close or distant from you. Never be obstinate, denying and oppressive...”



Before he died Dhu'l Qarnayn made the following last request:

“Wash me and shroud me. Then place me in a coffin. Allow my arms only to hang outside. Let my servants come behind me. And load my treasures onto mules. Let the people see how I, who had a magnificent kingdom and was a possessor of the world, go to the hereafter emptyhanded. Let them witness how both my servants and my treasures remained in the world and were not able to accompany me. Let them not be deceived by this deceitful and fleeting world”.

They did exactly as he commanded.

The scholars have commented on his last testament as follows:

“With the armies that followed me, I ruled over both east and west. I had innumerable soldiers and many servants. None of them disobeyed my commands. The world was completely under my rule. I possessed innumerable treasures. But the bounties of this world are not permanent. See how I now go to my grave empty-handed. Worldly wealth remains in this world. Perform deeds that will benefit you in the hereafter...”

The Messenger of Allah (saw) indicates to the following truth in the last testament of Dhu'l Qarnayn:

“Three things follow the deceased (to his grave). These are his family, his property [wealth] and his deeds. Two of these leave and one remains. His family and wealth go back but his deeds remain with him”
(Bukhari, Rikak 42; Muslim Zuhd 5)

Dhu'l Qarnayn passed away in a place called ‘*Dumat al-Jandal*’ between Madina and Damascus. It is reported that he is buried in the ‘Tihama’ mountains near Mecca.

Peace be upon him...

43 *Basirah* - to feel and perceive the truth with one's heart. To sense the truth; discernment.



QUESTIONS

A. Answer the following questions

1. What were the character traits of the people of Sodom?
2. The geographical state, the odour, the characteristics of the water in the region of the Dead Sea where the people of Sodom were destroyed, are such that no plants can grow there and no animals can survive there. What lesson does this teach us?
3. **‘So the Great Blast seized hold of them at the break of day. We turned the place completely upside down and rained down on them stones of hard-baked clay’** (Hijr, 15:73). Describe the emotions and thoughts that this verse gives rise to.
4. What do the remains of the people of Pompeii, which we can still see today, have to teach us about their immodesty and depravity?
5. The human being is the vicegerent of Allah on earth, the ‘khalifetullah’. In other words he is a being who has the potential to manifest divine attributes within him. With the life that he leads he can either become a friend of Allah or His enemy. What do we need to do in order to become Allah’s friend?
6. What were the particular characteristics of the tribes of God and Magog?
7. What did Dhu’l Qarnayn advise a person who asked him how to strengthen his belief and foresight?
8. In one part of the legacy of Dhu’l Qarnayn, he ordered that after his death, his arms be left hanging outside of his coffin, and that his servants and his wealth be brought to his grave (to see him). What lesson is there in his request for those to come after him?
9. If we were forced to migrate for our religion and our beliefs what would be the most difficult things for us to abandon?
10. The blessed Companions of the prophet Muhammad had reached such a state in which they were able to sacrifice everything they had when it came to the cause of giving out and being generous and they would do this saying “May my mother and father be sacrificed for you”. What was the effect of the character of the prophet Muhammad on their being in such a state?
11. Describe the mentality and understanding of people who try to accumulate worldly bounties knowing that they are not going to be able to take them with them to the hereafter?
12. What was the reason for the Jews asking the prophet Muhammad questions about Dhu’l Qarnayn and the Companions of the Cave?
13. What was the secret behind Dhu’l Qarnayn being so victorious against his enemies?
14. Describe the behaviour and actions of a person who reflects on death and what’s to come after it?



B. Fill in the gaps

1. The prophet Lot went to Syria, Egypt and Egypt with in order to gain experience in guiding people.
2. The rebellious people of the prophet Lot were destroyed by and
3. "Whoever commits the act of the people of Lot (homosexuality) is" (Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, I, 317).
4. Yafas, the son of Dhu'l Qarnayn was from the lineage of
5. Dhu'l Qarnayn should not be confused with who was a historic ruler.
6. Allah Most High gave Dhu'l Qarnayn such strength and power that he was able to travel to the east and the west and build the
7. Dhu'l Qarnayn first travelled to to preach the religion of tawheed.

C. Choose the correct answer

- 1. Because the human being was created to serve Allah, this world is a place of worship for him. When the human being uses this world in accordance with its purpose, everything in this world competes to serve him. Those who do not use this world and its bounties in accordance with their purpose will never be truly happy.**

Which of the following statements can not be made about the above paragraph?

 - A. The human being is the most precious of creatures who has been endowed with the characteristics and potential in being able to properly serve Allah Most High.
 - B. All creatures, both living and non-living serve the human being who is a true servant of Allah.
 - C. The human being is like the essence of all creatures and will attain true happiness as long as he lives in accordance with the purpose of his creation.
 - D. This world is like a hostel in which human beings stay as a guest for a short period. A person will be taken to account for those times which he did not spend in worship.
- 2. The words of the people of Sodom who knew no limits in their wildness and indecency about those who were not like them: "Let the pure go away from us" indicate what kind of mentality?**

 - A. They were unable to tolerate the existence of pure people who were distant from the deviation to which they had succumbed themselves.
 - B. They wanted to know which people were not like them.
 - C. They wanted pure and beautiful people to be born from them.
 - D. They did not like anybody who did not commit the ugly act that they committed



3. Which of the following is not an example of the ignorance and wildness that blinded the tribe of Sodom to the truth?

- A. They wanted the prophet Lot to refrain from advising them against their indecent and immodest acts and accept them as being natural.
- B. When the prophet Lot invited them to a way which was pure and permissible they threatened him with exile.
- C. They stoned and cast away the prophet Lut and the angels who came to destroy them.
- D. They challenged the prophet Lut in spite of his warning them of the impending punishment by saying: "If what you say is true then bring Allah's punishment".

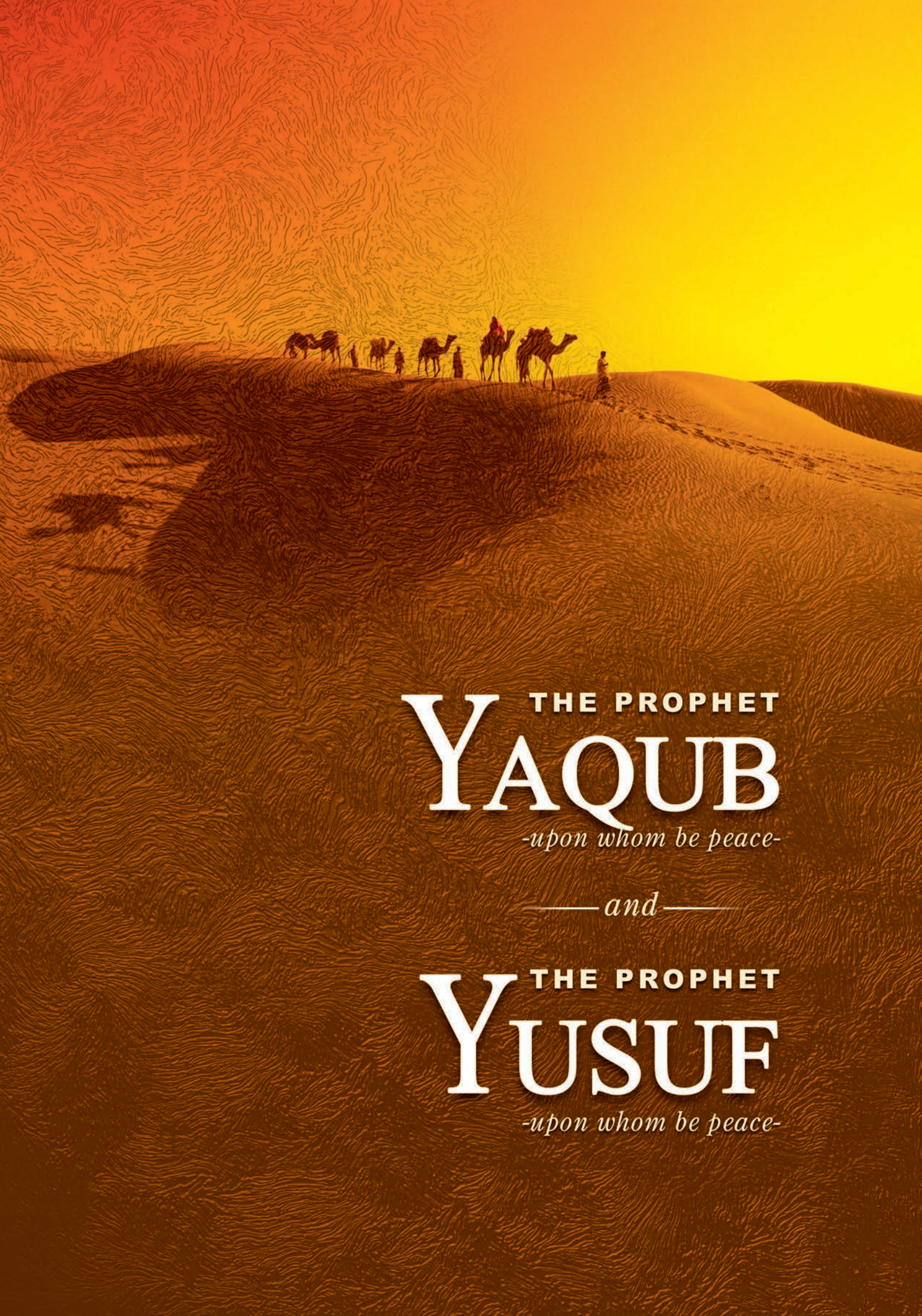
4. When the people of Sodom were destroyed the prophet Lut and his family were saved by divine grace. His wife, Wahila however, was also amongst those destroyed. Which of the following can not be a reason for this?

- A. Wahila was a hypocrite and a partner to what the people of Sodom did.
- B. Wahila did not speak out against the indecency and disbelief of her people.
- C. Wahila supported the people of Sodom against the prophet Lut.
- D. Wahila was originally from the tribe of Sodom.

5. To preserve the dignity and modesty of a community and thus the generations and children of that society and establishing good character within it is an important duty of servitude that Allah Most High has commanded us to. Which of the following is not an essential condition in order for this duty to be carried out?

- A. All efforts must be made to preserve the dignity and modesty of all individuals.
- B. Youth should be advised to postpone marriage until they have learned everything about it.
- C. The conditions of marriage must be abided by with great sensitivity.
- D. The institution of marriage and fidelity towards both husband and wife should be established in order to ensure the continuation of the family.

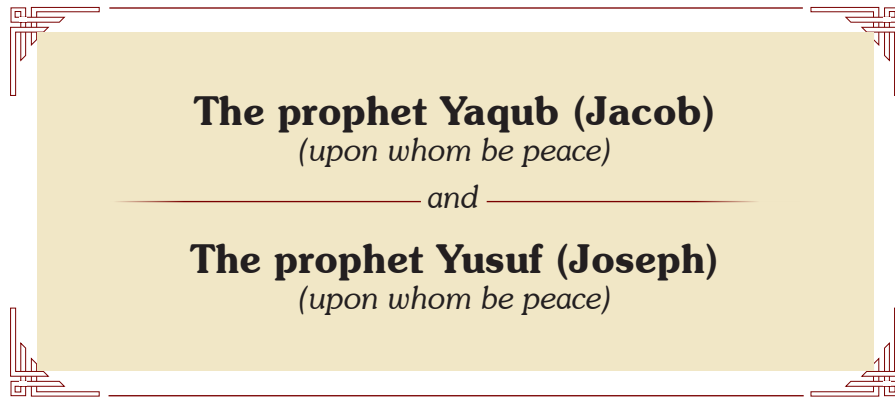




THE PROPHET
YAQUB
-upon whom be peace-

— and —

THE PROPHET
YUSUF
-upon whom be peace-



The prophets Yaqub and Yusuf (Jacob and Joseph) (peace be upon them)

The prophet Yaqub was the son of the prophet Ishaq (peace be upon them) and was sent to the people of Canaan. It is narrated that he was born in Madyan or in Damascus. He was the twin of Esau (*al Eys*) and because he was born after Esau, he was given the name 'Yaqub' which means 'the one who follows'.

Another meaning of 'yaqub' is '*safwat Allah*', that is a pure and wholesome servant of Allah'. The epithet of Yaqub is 'Israel', which means 'the servant of Allah'. Many prophets came from his lineage including the prophets Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Dawud (David), Sulayman (Solomon), Zaccariah, Yahya (John the Baptist) and Isa (Jesus), (peace be upon all of them).

Yaqub's twin brother Esau was a very skilful hunter. One day when he was out hunting, his mother took one of the sheep that belonged to Yaqub, and slaughtered it and cooked it. She placed it in front of Ishaq and said:

"Here is an offering from your son..."

Upon this Ishaq then prayed that his son Yaqub's offspring would be prophets and kings. When Yaqub left, his brother Esau arrived and said:

"Here father, I have brought you what I have hunted as you asked".

In response to this gift, Ishaq then prayed for Esau as follows:

"May your progeny be as bountiful and widespread as the earth".

Almighty Allah did indeed give Esau a bountiful and widespread progeny, so much so that it is accepted today that the lineage of the Greeks came from his son Rum.

Allah Most High has allowed each of his prophets a particular prayer that will be accepted by Him without doubt. Every prophet made his prayer while in this world, but the prayer of prophet Muhammad (saw) has been left until the Day of Judgement.

With this prayer of his, the 'great intercession⁴⁴' will come about in the hereafter.

44 "*al-Shafa'ah al-Uzma*": on the Day of Reckoning, when the believers will be in unbearable terror and intense distress, the prophet Muhammad will plead with Allah Most High to take them to account and judge them without delay. On that day when everybody will be concerned only with their own selves, the Messenger of Allah (saw) will pray for the salvation and safety of all believers. This prayer of his will be accepted by Allah.





Esau was jealous of his brother Yaqub. As a precaution against any ill-will between the two brothers, their mother sent Yaqub to her brother. Yaqub's uncle had two daughters, the elder one was Laya (Leah) and the younger one name Rahil (Rachel). After serving his uncle for seven years, Yaqub married his uncle's elder daughter, Leah. Then after serving his uncle for another seven years, he married the younger daughter, Rachel⁴⁵.

When his uncle married Yaqub to his two daughters, he also gave his daughters as servants two maids called Zilpah and Bilha.

He also presented Yaqub with two servants.

Yaqub had six sons from his wife Leah, four sons from the above-mentioned maid servants and two sons from his wife Rachel. For a long time, Rachel had remained barren, but then she prayed to Allah and she was favoured with a son called Yusuf (Joseph). She then gave birth to a second son called Bunyamin (Benjamin). However Rachel passed away forty days after his birth.

Yaqub became a prophet the year that Yusuf was born. Many people from the land of Canann came to believe in him after he began inviting them to belief in the oneness of Allah.

This is described in the Qur'an in various verses as follows:

'... We gave him Ishaq and Ya'qub, making each of them a Prophet. We endowed them with Our mercy and made them highly honoured' (Maryam, 19:49, 50)

'And remember Our slaves Ibrahim, Ishaq and Ya'qub, men of true strength and inner sight' (Sâd, 38:45)

'We purified their sincerity through sincere remembrance of the Abode. In Our eyes they are among the best of chosen men' (Sâd, 38:46-47).

⁴⁵ According to the shariah of the prophet Yaqub, it was allowed for a man to marry two sisters at the same time. This ruling continued until the time of the prophet Musa (peace be upon him).



Yusuf was different from his brothers in every way. He was loved by his father from a very young age. His father Yaqub saw in his son certain characteristics that were from him.

This is why his affection for him was greater than that of his other sons. He loved him dearly and, honoured him above his other sons, keeping him by his side at all times.

The story of Yusuf – the ‘best of stories’

In the Qur’an the story of Yusuf is called ‘*ahsan al-qasas*’ that is, the best of stories and a separate chapter is allocated to it (Chapter Yusuf).

According to a narration by Ubayy ibn Ka’b (ra) the Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

“Teach your slaves the chapter of Yusuf. Allah will make his ‘sakaratu’l mawt’ easy for the Muslim who writes and teaches it to his family and his slaves. And he will not find the strength to envy any other Muslim” (Zamakhshari, Kashshaf, III, 98).

When the prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him) became the subject of the envy of his brothers he went through many ordeals such as being thrown into a well and being imprisoned.

However he did not lose his *taqwa* in the face of these events. Allah sent the angel Gabriel to help and console him. He made the tribulations and trial easier for him. Later He bestowed on him strength, dignity and sovereignty.

Because he himself went through much pain and struggle, when he reached his position of rule, he treated with compassion and kindness all weak, poor, needy and deprived people.

Let it be known that the one who reads the chapter of Yusuf and ponders on the deep and elevated meanings within it, can derive the same happiness felt by the prophet Yusuf.

The chapter Yusuf is filled with countless wisdom and lessons for man: prophethood, slavery, imprisonment, dream interpretation, patience, separation, attraction, love, good behaviour in the face of tribulation, tolerating the harshness of one’s enemy, forgiving whilst in a position of being able to punish, overcoming the deceit and wiles of women, and other matters are all discussed in this chapter.

This chapter also discusses being an heir to the prophets, the secrets of being the vicegerent of Allah, and spiritual faculties such as the spirit and heart.

In this chapter, Zulayha represents the ‘*nafs al-ammara*’. However she later becomes Muslim, and her spirit is refined and she becomes a servant whom Allah is pleased with.

Eventually her spirit becomes one with Yusuf and the distress and tribulation that she encountered, developed and matured her spiritually until she was able to return to Allah. The reason for the revelation of this chapter is as follows:

The Jewish scholars approached the leading pagans and said to them:

“Ask Muhammad: Why did Yaqub and his family migrate from Damascus to Egypt and how did the story of Yusuf come about?”

The leading pagans went to the Messenger of Allah (saw) and asked him these questions upon which the chapter Yusuf was revealed.

At the time that this chapter was revealed the trials and tribulations of the Messenger of Allah and the believers came one upon the other. The Messenger of Allah (saw) had lost both his wife, Khadijah, and his uncle abu Talib.

The pressure upon the Muslims had increased. It was in this year, which was termed ‘the year of sadness,’ that this chapter was revealed and became a consolation for the Messenger of Allah and his Companions.



Moreover this chapter gives the good tidings of victory being near for the believers, following in the path of the Messenger of Allah, patient in the face of the trials and difficulties encountered.



‘Alif Lam Ra Those are the Signs of the Clear Book. We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur’an so that hopefully you will use your intellect.

We tell you the best of stories in revealing this Qur’an to you, even though you were unaware of it before it came’ (Yusuf, 12:1-3).

The prophet Yusuf was the most beautiful of the children of Yaqub. In the same way his lineage was also beautiful as his lineage included that of three prophets.

He was honoured with prophethood, a beautiful face, worldly rule, and superior traits such as patience in difficult times, and good behaviour.

These were great and fine bounties from Allah. His prayer was also the best of prayers:

‘...o Lord take me as a Muslim at my death and join me to the people who are righteous’ (Yusuf, 12:101).

Thus he was the first to wish for death in order to be reunited with Allah. This chapter was the first to be revealed to the Messenger of Allah as a story. In terms of its wording, it is very concise, and its meanings are deep and profound.

In this chapter, Yusuf represents the heart; Yaqub the spirit, Rachel the body, and Yusuf’s eleven brothers represent one’s carnal desires. There are many more unique meanings in the exposition of the Qur’an.

In order to understand them we need eyes that can see the truth, and insight that can perceive the subtleties.

The prophet Yusuf’s dream

‘When Yusuf told his father, ‘Father! I saw eleven bright stars, and the sun and moon as well. I saw them all prostrate in front of me’ (Yusuf, 12:4).

The prophet Yusuf was only seven years old when he saw this dream. The eleven stars that he saw in his dream represent his brothers, the sun his father Yaqub; and the moon represents his auntie Leah, as his mother Rachel had passed away.

The wisdom in Yusuf seeing his brothers as stars is that siblings can have an important effect on the direction a person’s life’s takes.

The mentioning of the sun and moon after the stars is an indication that Yusuf would be reunited with his father after his brothers.

One time one Jew approached the Messenger of Allah and asked him:

“O Muhammad! Which stars did Yusuf see in his dream? Tell me”.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) was silent for a moment. At that point, Gabriel came and told him the name of the stars.

The prophet Muhammad (saw) then turned to the Jew and said:

“If I tell you will you become Muslim?” the Jew replied: “Yes”.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) then told him:

“They are Jaryan, Tariq, Zayyal, Kabis, Amudan, Falik, Misbah, Daruh, Fera, Wasab, and Zalkefitayn”.

He then told him that Yusuf saw these stars, and the sun and the moon descend from the sky and prostrate before him.



The Jew then said:

“By Allah, these names are correct”.

Three types of dreams

The first type of dream result from a person’s imagination, and include seeing one’s affairs or work that one is occupied with daily or a lover seeing their beloved.

The second kind of dream occurs through the whisperings of Satan and it is a convoluted dream that brings distress to the soul.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said: “*True dreams are from Allah. Distressing dreams are from Satan. Thus if one of you sees a dream that is displeasing to him, left him spit on his left side and seek refuge with Allah. If he does this, Satan can never harm him*” (Bukhari, Tibb: 39)

The prophet Muhammad (saw) said about the third kind of true dream:

“*The dream of the believer is one part of the forty six parts of prophethood*” (Bukhari, Tabir: 4)

“*A righteous person will see a righteous dream or their dream is shown to them*” (Bukhari, Tabir: 5)

A person who sees such a dream is shown traces of the *Lawh al-Mahfuz* by the angel of dreams.

Thus this dream is sound, and true.

The dream that Yusuf saw was of this type.

‘(Yaqub) said, ‘My son, do not tell your brothers your dream lest they devise some scheme to injure you, Satan is a clear-cut enemy to man.

Accordingly your Lord will pick you out and teach you the true meaning of events and perfectly fulfil His blessing on you as well as on the family of Ya‘qub as He fulfilled it perfectly before upon your forebears, Ibrahim and Ishaq. Most certainly your Lord is Knowing, Wise’ ‘In Yusuf and his brothers there are Signs for every one of those who wants to ask’ (Yusuf, 12:5-7).

Envy – the flame that kills the heart



Yahuda, Robil, and Shamun, the sons of Yaqub, were unable to understand the wisdom in the particular attention and love that their father Yaqub felt for Yusuf. They were envious of him and said:

‘When they declared, ‘Why! Yusuf and his brother (Bunyamin) are dearer to our father than we are although we constitute a powerful group. Our father is clearly making a mistake.

Kill Yusuf or expel him to some land so that your father will look to you alone and then you can be people who do right’ (Yūsuf, 12: 8, 9)

After Yaqub learned of the dream that Yusuf saw, he understood that he was going to be bestowed with prophethood, and his love for him increased even more. However the envy of his brothers who sensed this increased day by day. Their envy became so great that they went so far as to set a trap for Yusuf.

The extreme love felt by Yaqub for Yusuf was a means for his trials and tribulations to be increased accordingly.

One of the attributes of Allah is ‘al Raqib’, that is the One who continually watches over creation.



That is, Allah, who is in control of His servants at every instant, saw the love in the heart of Yaqub slip towards another creature and so in order to temper this extreme love felt for Yusuf, He subjected him to an apparent misfortune.

In this way, Allah favoured Yaqub by directing his love towards His Own self. Yaqub really did see the light of prophethood on the forehead of his son Yusuf, and thus he gave him more importance. The love and tendency of their father towards Yusuf thus led to his brothers' envy of him.

The day eventually came when their envious feelings overflowed and they made their evil plans to be free of Yusuf altogether.

The most important lesson to be learnt from the verses is that one should keep one's love for another secret in one's heart, silent and internal, in order for it to not lead to envy and jealousy.

The extreme love that Yaqub felt for Yusuf was against '*gayretullah*', which means that Allah Most High was not pleased with this particular state of his servant, and He wished him to be rid of it. Allah then willed that he be tried and tested by subjecting him to various forms of distress. This is why He took Yusuf away from his father. For a father to be tried with his own son is a very great tribulation.

Likewise the prophet Nuh cursed the unbelievers and wished for their destruction, but when he saw his son drowning along with them he became impatient and said:

"O my Lord. My son is from my family".



If the heart, which is the centre of both positive and negative emotions, is not directed to the path of Allah and not purified by *zikr*, it will darken and reach a state where it desires evil.

The Holy Qur'an states:

'...those who have faith and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace' (Ra'd, 13:28)

Zikr, is the consciousness of the heart that arises when one is able to perceive Allah. This is the only way that the heart can free itself of sin. This is because the heart is the '*bayt al-Allah*', that is the house of Allah and the place where love of Allah becomes manifest. If there is no *zikr*, or remembrance of Allah there, it will blacken and die, and submit to the desires of the *nafs*. The feeling of envy has been condemned because it amounts to opposing the command of Allah. '*Gipta*' on the other hand, which is to admire good and positive traits in others, has been praised.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said:

"*Hasad (envy) devours virtuous deeds just as fire devours wood*" (Abu Dawud, Adab 44; Ibn Majah, Zuhd 22).

Having envy for others harms oneself more than anyone else. This state is like that of a person who throws a stone at someone but finds the stone rebounding and blinding him in the eye.

There is no benefit in this and it does nothing but increase one's anger. The result is that the person is disgraced and humiliated. So the envy that Yusuf's brothers felt for him and the evil that they committed as a result came back to them.

The insidious plan

When his brothers had reached consensus about Yusuf they said:

'One of them said, 'Do not take Yusuf's life but throw him to the bottom of the well, so that some travellers may discover him, if this is something that you have to do' (Yusuf, 12:10)

Judah was able to persuade his brothers to accept this suggestion of his. How sad is the state of Yusuf's brothers that even the most compassionate of them advised, out of his envy, that he be thrown into a well.



This is an indication that there are many enemies around one who out of their envy they don the clothes of friendship.

It is necessary to beware of them and guard oneself against them as much as possible.

Those who are indeed on the correct path are those whose hearts are alive. Contrary to this, a heart that is far from *zikr* will remain under the influence of the *nafs*. It will dry up and harden with the fire of passion and envy and reach a state whereby that person's limbs can no longer perform their worship. Hearts that remain in this state become like dry trees, having been burned by fire, of no benefit whatsoever. We seek refuge in Allah from falling to such a state.

Allah Most High says in the Holy Qur'an:

'...Woe to those whose hearts are hardened against the remembrance of Allah! Such people are clearly misguided' (Zumar, 29:22).

Eventually Yusuf's brothers went to their father having made their plan.

'They said, 'Our Father! What is wrong with you that you refuse to trust us with Yusuf when in truth we only wish him well?

Why do you send him out with us tomorrow so he can enjoy himself and play about? All of us will make sure that he is safe' (Yusuf, 12:11, 12)

Tribulation is dependent on the words that come out of one's mouth

'He said, 'It grieves me to let him go with you I fear a wolf might come and eat him up while you are heedless, not attending him' (Yusuf 12:13)

It is reported that the prophet Yaqub saw a dream in which he was on the top of a mountain while his son Yusuf was down below, in the field. Suddenly ten wolves appeared and attacked Yusuf who disappeared amongst them. This is why Yaqub expressed his anxiety about a wolf devouring him. However without realising it, he gave them a hint as to how to deceive Yusuf and how to cover up their act.

Because up until that point, Yusuf's brothers did not know that a wolf would eat a person.

The Messenger of Allah has said:

"Tribulation is dependent on the words that come out of one's mouth" (Suyuti, Jami' al-Saghir, I, 110)

Ibn Sikkit, who was killed having had his tongue cut, said:

"The one who meets with a calamity as a result of a slip of his tongue, would never have experienced that same calamity if he slipped with his feet. This is because the wound that results from falling will heal with time, but the mistakes that arise as a result of a slip of one's tongue, can lead to losing one's life".

Despite the dream and sign that Yaqub saw, he helplessly allowed Yusuf to go with his brothers. The following nicely expresses this state of his:

"When the decree and destiny of Allah are to come about, one loses all discernment and judgement".

A person who trusts in his *nafs* and says: "I will never ever do such and such" will have opened up a path for Satan and Satan will not leave him until he makes him do what he wants and makes a mockery of him.

This is why one should not 'speak big' but rather seek refuge in Allah.

The betrayal of the brothers

'But when, in fact, they did go out with him and gathered all together and agreed to put him at the bottom of the well, We then revealed to him that: 'You will inform them of this deed they perpetrate at a time when they are totally unaware' (Yusuf 12:15)



Based on the above verse: “We then revealed to Yusuf” most commentators say that prophethood was bestowed on Yusuf from that age.

When his brothers persisted in taking Yusuf to the field and when Yusuf himself was willing, Yaqub gave permission out of his contentment with whatever was to be decreed. His brothers carried Yusuf on their shoulders in order to please their father, until they were out of sight. When they were out of his sight however, they immediately went back on their word and threw Yusuf to the ground saying:

“Hey false dreamer! Where are the stars that you saw bowing down to you now? Let them come now and save you from us”.

They began to beat and torture Yusuf. Yusuf sought help from each brother in turn, but every time he sought help from a brother he was beaten more, scolded and struck.

Unable to bear it anymore he began to cry and said:

“Dearest father! How quick did they forget the promise they made to you and the conditions you gave them. If only you could see what they are doing to your son. This would not be done to the son of a slave...”

According to accounts, Reuben lifted Yusuf up and threw him to the ground, then he quickly sat on his breast and tried to kill him. His brother Levi wanted to break his neck. Yusuf called out to Judah, the most compassionate of his brothers:

“Judah, fear Allah and prevent those who wish to kill me”

Judah felt sorry and regaining his conscience, he said:

“Do not kill him! Did you not give me your word on this matter?”

They replied: “Yes”. Judah then said:

“In that case, throw him into that well”.

The prophet Yusuf is thrown into the well

When the others agreed to Judah’s suggestion, they decided to throw Yusuf into the well. The mouth of this well was narrow but it became wider as one went down. Eventually they came to the well. Yusuf was clinging to the clothes of his brothers, crying but they pushed and shoved him. They took off his shirt and tied his hands so that he could not hold onto anything. They also decided to slaughter a sheep and wipe the blood over his shirt in order to convince their father.

Yusuf said to his brothers:

“O my brothers! Give me my shirt; if I die it will be a shroud for me; and if I live I will have something to wear”. However they did not give his shirt back to him.

Then they hung Yusuf halfway down the well and then cut the rope so that he would fall and die. There was some water at the bottom of the well. As Yusuf fell he clutched onto a stone in the corner of the well. In the hope that his brothers would feel sorry and take him out of there, he stood up and began shouting.

However when his brothers realised that he had not died, they began throwing stones at him in order to kill him. Judah again prevented them.

At that point, Allah Most High cried to Gabriel:

“Go and help my servant”.

Gabriel immediately obeyed the command and took Yusuf and placed him in a safe place inside the well. He placed the shirt of Ibrahim on him and fed him and provided for him from the bounties of Paradise for the time that he was in the well.

When Yusuf was thrown into the well, he cried out to Allah as follows:



“O My lord who witnesses every thing but He unseen. O the One who is not far but very close. O the One who Overcomes and is never overcome! Remove me from the distress in which I am now in. Bring me ease and open a door of salvation for me...”

According to accounts Yusuf remained in the well for three days. There is also a report that he stayed there for one hour.

In the well Gabriel taught the following prayer to Yusuf:

“O My Lord who removes all manner of distress. O the One who responds to every prayer. O One who heals all wounds. O One who makes easy every difficulty! O Lord of each lonely one, and Friend of the lonely. O my Lord besides whom there is no other god. I absolve you of all faults. I ask you to give me relief from the distress that I am in and to open a door of salvation from this tribulation. My Lord! Place a deep love for you in my heart so that I no longer have any worries, so that the remembrance of any other than you will not be found there, and protect me, o Most Compassionate of the Compassionate!”

Yusuf began to make *zikr* of his Lord in the well. When the angels heard his beautiful supplication they asked permission from Allah to listen to him. Allah gave them permission and then reminded the angels of the words they had spoken in the past:

“(The angels said): ‘Why put on it one who will cause corruption on it and shed blood when we glorify You with praise and proclaim Your purity?’ Allah said, ‘I know what you do not know’ (Baqara, 2:30).



The heart and soul of a person are driven towards the spiritual world whilst the *nafs* and those faculties and lowly feelings associated with it tend towards the animal world.

If a person does not purify his *nafs* and leaves it to itself, the *nafs* will overcome the spirit and begin to rule over the body.

This is the state of the sinner. When the beautiful virtues arise in the heart as a result of *zikr* and conversing about Allah, the authority passes over to the heart and to the soul.

The *nafs* and the body then submit to the spirit. And this is the state of the fortunate and blissful Muslims.

Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, decreed for both Yaqub and Yusuf an intense sorrow and sadness. The wisdom in their difficult and painful tribulation was so that their closeness to Allah would increase even more.

In this way they were able to turn towards Allah all the time, and were together with Him always, reaching a high rank as a result of freeing themselves from all mortal beings.

There are such ranks and stations with Allah that it is only possible to reach them by forbearing tribulations and difficulties.

In the same way the reason Yusuf stayed in prison for twelve years was so that he could be perfected by seclusion, abstinence, difficulty and struggle.

This may not have been possible if Yusuf had remained with his father. And so it is for this reason that the prophets live far from their homeland and remain foreigners for a certain period of time.



Yusuf’s brothers made their way home and lied to their father:

‘That night they came back to their father in tears, saying, ‘Father, we went out to run a race and left Yusuf together with our things and then a wolf appeared and ate him up but you are never going to believe us now, not even though we really tell the truth’ (Yusuf, 12:16-17).



‘They then produced his shirt with false blood on it. Yaqub said: ‘It is merely that your lower selves have suggested something to you which you did; but beauty lies in showing steadfastness. It is Allah alone who is my Help in the face of the event that you describe’ (Yusuf, 12:18).

According to accounts, when the blood-stained shirt of Yusuf was brought to him Yaqub wiped it over his face and began weeping:

“Until this day, never have I seen such a gentle-natured wolf. He devoured my son but did not tear his shirt”.

Sabrun Jameel (The best of patience)

This heart-breaking lamentation of Yaqub was expressed in a poem by Yunus Emre:

*I was Yaqub keeping to myself,
The name of my Lord was on my tongue
I lost Yusuf in the land of Canaan
Now cries does Yaqub: o my Yusuf!
They took my Yusuf and let his red blood flow
They made slander that he was eaten by a wolf,
I know not what they did with Yusuf’s shirt;
Now cries does Yaqub; O my Yusuf!*

For the weeping Yaqub there was nothing left to do but remain patient. This he did in fact do and neither did he tell anybody about his state nor did he complain.

‘He said, ‘I make complaint about my grief and sorrow to Allah alone because I know things from Allah you do not know’ (Yusuf, 12:86)

The Messenger of Allah (saw) once asked Gabriel:

“To what extent did the heartbreak and sorrow of Yaqub for Yusuf reach?”

Gabriel answered:

“It was as much as the sorrow and heartbreak of seventy mothers who have lost their sons...”

The Messenger of Allah (saw) then asked:

“In that case, how much reward is there?”

Gabriel replied:

“There is the reward of seventy martyrs. He did not form a bad opinion of Allah even for an instant” (Suyuti, al-Durru al-Mansur, IV, 570).

And so this patience is the best form of patience.

‘Sabrun jameel’ is to endure the trials and tribulations that befall one without complaining to anyone else.

If one complains about the trials and tribulations that a person faces then the patience shown in the face of events loses its characteristics.



The prophet Yusus is removed from the well and sold as a slave.

Whilst Yaqub was in a state of *sabrun jameel*, Yusuf was in a state of reliance upon Allah and submission to him, whilst still in the well.



At that point:

‘Some travellers came that way and then dispatched their water-drawer who let his bucket down. He said, ‘Good news for me, I’ve found a boy!’ They then hid him away among their goods. Allah knew very well what they were doing.

They sold him for a pittance, a few small coins, considering him to be of little worth’
(Yusuf, 12: 19-20).

Despite being bedazzled by the beauty of Yusuf the people who sold him reasoned that his owners would come and fearing that they would take Yusuf back, they made haste and sold him for a very paltry price.

The 38th verse of Chapter Ahzab states:

‘...Allah’s command is a pre-ordained decree’

Shaykh Akbar (may his spirit be sanctified) has interpreted this as being that whenever Allah wishes to realise a decree relating to His servant, he first allows him to make a mistake before doing so.

One day the prophet Yusuf was looking at his face in the mirror, observing his beauty and said:

“If I were to be sold as a slave, my worth could not be estimated and I would be sold for a very great amount”.

As a result of this mistake he was sold as a slave and for a very paltry price at that.

The following event which explains how he was sold for a small price is very significant.

According to one narration, one day when the prophet Muhammad (saw) was returning home from the mosque some children approached him and said:

“If you do not give us what you have given Hasan and Huseyin we will not leave you alone”.

The Messenger of Allah then turned to Bilal and said:

“Go home, find whatever you can and let me buy my soul from these children”.

Bilal went home and brought back eight walnuts. The Messenger then bought his soul from these children with these walnuts. Then he said jokingly:

“They sold my brother Yusuf for a worthless price. And now they have sold me for eight walnuts...”



In another hadith the Messenger of Allah is reported to have said:

“Most certainly Allah does not look at your appearance or your belongings and wealth, but He looks at your heart and your deeds...” (Bukhari, Nikah 45, Adab 57, 58, Faraiz 2)

In the same way Hagar was given as a hand maid to Sara as a gift from Pharaoh.

It was from her lineage that the prophet Ismail was born and from him the prophet Muhammad (saw).



A person's physical appearance does not have a great deal of value. The body is a case for spirit. A person either gains honour and dignity on account of the condition of their spirit or they become disgraced as a result of it

That is, if a person has a clean and pure heart and performs good deeds, then this is worthy in the sight of Allah. Otherwise his or her beautiful face and appearance or wealth or lack of it, are unimportant. When the person's body is sold as a slave, then see how low a price it is sold for...

Then consider the value of the one on the Day of Resurrection, who enslaved his heart and his spirit to his carnal desires.

Consequently the believer must know what true worth and dignity are, and never be a slave to their *nafs*.

The Holy Qur'an states:

“(O prophet) Have you seen him who has taken his whims and desires to be his god? Will you then be his guardian?” (Furqan, 25:43).



‘The Egyptian who had bought the prophet Yusuf told his wife, ‘Look after him with honour and respect. It is possible he will be of use to us or perhaps we might adopt him as a son.’ And thus We established Yusuf in the land to teach him the true meaning of events. Allah is in control of His affair. However, most of mankind do not know’ (Yusuf, 12-21)

According to commentaries the slave trader who bought Yusuf later sold him to the Egyptian minister for finance. The minister for finance perceived the intelligence and potential of Yusuf and believed that he would benefit from him in the future and maybe even adopt him, as he and his wife did not have any children.

After being sold for a paltry price Yusuf was then sold to the minister of finance, which indicates that he was then sold for a very high price. The man who first bought Yusuf adorned him and then sold him by auction that lasted for three days.

Eventually the price paid for Yusuf was his weight in musk, pearls, gold, silver and silk.

The prophet Yusuf and Zulayha

‘And then when he became a full-grown man, We gave him knowledge and right judgement too. That is how We reward all doers of good’ (Yusuf, 12:22).

In time the prophet Yusuf grew up, becoming a well-developed, handsome and gallant young man.

This led to Zulayha, the woman of the household in which he was living, to begin to develop certain feelings for him.

‘The woman whose house it was solicited him. She barred the doors and said, ‘Come over here!’ He said, ‘May Allah preserve me! Behold, goodly has my master made my stay (in this house)! Verily to no good end come they that do (such) wrong’ (Yusuf, 12:23)

‘She wanted him and he would have wanted her, had he not seen the Clear Proof of his Lord. That happened so We might avert from him all evil and lust. He was Our chosen slave’ (Yusuf, 12:24).

In the commentaries the ‘clear proof’ is explained as follows:

Out of nowhere the prophet Yusuf heard a voice saying: “Beware, beware”. He was thus able to ignore the calls of Zulayha. After the voice repeated itself three times, an image of the prophet Yaqub appeared. The prophet Yusuf then immediately turned his face from Zulayha.



By the permission of Allah, the prophet Yaqub was able to help his son in spirit and thus prevented him from turning towards his '*nafs al-ammara*⁴⁶' represented by Zulayha. This event which is explained in the verse is an example of *istiane* (seeking spiritual help) and *rabita* (spiritual connection with Allah)

Ali ibn Hasan says in one narration:

In Zulayha's room which she had prepared, there was an idol⁴⁷ which she revered. Before making her invitation to Yusuf she covered this idol with a cloth. Seeing this Yusuf asked:

"Why did you do that?" Zulayha replied:

"I am ashamed that he would see me at the moment that I am sinning".

Upon this Yusuf said:

"You are ashamed of a piece of stone which can not hear or see and which is unable to perceive anything, so do I not have the right to be ashamed in front of my Lord who created me in the best way, and from whom nothing can remain hidden?"



When Yusuf saw the clear proof of his Lord, he ran to the door in great terror and haste. Zulayha ran behind him:

'They raced to the door. She tore his shirt at the back. They met her husband by the door. She said, 'How should a man whose intention was to harm your family be punished for what he did except with prison or painful punishment?' (Yusuf, 12:25).

The governor said:

"Who is it that wishes evil for my family?"

Zulayha added a second crime to her first one by slandering Yusuf. She said:

"I was lying on my bed. This young man came and removed my dress trying to take advantage of me".

Her husband turned to Yusuf and said:

"Young man, is this the response I get from all of the favours that I have favoured you with? You should not have saddened me so..."

Trying to clear himself of this slander, Yusuf said:

'It was she who tried to seduce me.' A witness from her people then declared, 'If his shirt is torn in front, she speaks the truth and he has clearly told a shameless lie' (Yusuf, 13:26).

'If his shirt is torn at the back, then she has lied and he has clearly told the simple truth' (Yusuf, 12:27).

According to one narration, her husband said to Zulayha:

"I will not believe you unless you show me proof".

In another account Yusuf prayed to Allah to show them a sign that he was innocent.

At that point, the son of Zulayha's uncle, who was either three or four months old, miraculously spoke and bore witness that Yusuf was innocent.

“(The woman's husband) saw the shirt torn at the back and said, ‘The source of this is women's deviousness. Without a doubt your guile is very great.

46 *Nafs al-ammara*: the lowest level of the *nafs*, the rebellious soul that incites the human being to evil and distances him from his lord. '*ammara*' means the one who commands much. The only aim of the *nafs* that bears this attribute is its unlimited satisfaction with its desires and whims. It is the slave of its passions and a helper of Satan; it is addicted to pleasure and sin.

47 At that time certain people had their own personal idols.



‘Yusuf, ignore all this, and you, my wife, should ask forgiveness for your evil act. There is no doubt that you are in the wrong’ (Yusuf, 12:28-29).

News of this event began to spread through the community.

‘Some city women said, ‘The governor’s wife solicited her slave. He’s fired her heart with love. We see that she’s the one to blame’ (Yusuf, 12:30).

The women who see Yusuf cut their hands

Hearing the gossip that was spreading about her, Zulayha decided to teach the women of Egypt a lesson.

‘But when she heard of their malicious talk, she sent for them and made a sumptuous meal and then she gave a knife to each of them. She said, ‘Go out to them.’ When they saw him, they were amazed by him and cut their hands. They said, ‘Allah preserve us! This is no man. What can this be but a noble angel here!’ (Yusuf, 12:31).

‘She said, ‘You see! It’s him you blamed me for. I tried seducing him but he refused. If he does not do what I order him, he will be put in prison and brought low’ (Yusuf, 12:32).

Yusuf, whose face shone like the sun whilst walking the streets of Egypt, and who was more beautiful than the full moon, opened up his hands to seek refuge in his Lord, fearing that he may disobey the commands of Allah in the face of the seduction of this woman,

He pleaded with Him to protect him. The wiles of a woman ignorant of Allah can be more perilous than the traps of Satan.

‘(Yusuf) said, ‘My Lord, the prison is preferable to me than what they call on me to do. Unless You turn their guile away from me, it may well be that I will fall for them and so become a man of ignorance’ (Yusuf 12:33).

We must realise that it is not possible to be free of the evil of our *nafs* by compromising with it or succumbing to its desires. The only way to be free of it is to seek refuge in Allah and embrace His commands. So too did Yusuf seek refuge in Allah and was relieved.

‘His Lord replied to him and turned away from him their female guile and deviousness. He is the One Who Hears, the One Who Knows’ (Yusuf, 12:34).

Even a heart that is as mature as the heart of a prophet cannot be free of the trappings of this world, the whisperings of his *nafs* or the suggestions of Satan without the protection of Allah because he is still a powerless human being.

The ‘clear proof’ mentioned in the previous verses explains this truth.



Prison

In accordance with the prayer of the prophet Yusuf being accepted:

‘Then, after they had seen the Signs, they thought that they should still imprison him for a time’ (Yusuf 22:35).

They removed Yusuf’s clothes and made him wear a cloak made of coarse hair and they tied his hands and feet.

When Yusuf came to the door of the prison, he bowed his head down saying ‘Bismillah (In the Name of Allah)’. Everybody gathered around



him. A little while later, Yusuf began to cry: Gabriel then came and asked Yusuf why he was crying. Yusuf told him that he was sad because there was nowhere for him to pray.

Gabriel then said to him:

“Pray wherever you wish! Allah has rendered pure for you, the inside and outside of forty yards of this prison⁴⁸”

‘Two servants entered prison along with him. One said, ‘I dreamt that I was pressing grapes.’ The other said, ‘I dreamt I carried bread upon my head and birds were eating it. Tell us the true meaning of these dreams. We see that you’re one of the righteous (Yusuf, 12:36)

‘(Yusuf said to his two fellow prisoners): ‘No meal to feed you will arrive before I have informed you what they mean. That is part of what my Lord taught me. For I have left the religion of a people who clearly have no faith in Allah and are disbelieving about the world to come’ (Yusuf, 12:37)

Whilst in prison the prophet Yusuf took the opportunity to preach to these two young men the creed of the oneness of Allah. This is why before interpreting their dreams, He tried to guide them to this belief and prepared them by saying that he was on the true religion, that knowledge was bestowed by Allah and that the Egyptians were on the wrong path.

Then he began to preach about the true religion of Allah.

The lesson to be learnt here is that a believer must never abandon his duty of *‘amr’i bi al-maruf wa nahy an al-munkar*⁴⁹ that is, enjoining to good and preventing from evil even in times of great difficulty.

This is what this and the following verses are concerned with:

‘I hold fast to the creed of my forebears Ibrahim and Ishaq and Ya‘qub. We don’t associate anything with Allah. And that is how Allah has favoured us and all mankind, but most do not give thanks’.

‘My fellow-prisoners, are many lords better, or Allah, the only One, the Conqueror?’

What you serve apart from Him are only names which you and your forefathers have made up. There is no mandate for them from Allah. Allah alone is qualified to judge. His order is to worship none but Him. That is in truth the straight and upright religion, but most of mankind simply do not know’ (Yusuf 12:38-40)

The prophet Yusuf interprets their dreams

After inviting these two fellow prisoners to the religion of Allah Yusuf said:

‘My fellow-captives, one of you will serve his lord with wine, the other of you will be crucified and birds will eat his head. The thing you asked about is foreordained.’

‘He said to the one of them he knew was saved, ‘Please mention me when you are with your lord,’ but Satan made him forget to remind his lord, and so he stayed in prison for several years’ (Yusuf, 12:42)

According to some commentators, the fact that the prophet Yusuf asked for other than his Lord to help him displeased his Lord. For a prophet this is considered to be a slip.

48 The (religious law) shariah of previous prophets and their communities did not give them permission to pray everywhere. They could only carry out their worship in particular places. One of the traits of the prophet Muhammad (saw) was that all of the world was made a place of prostration for his community. He is reported to have said: “...All the world is a place of prostration and has been purified for me...” (Bukhari, Tayammum, 1).

49 *‘amr’i bi al-maruf wa nahy an al-munkar* is to command to good and prevent from evil. *Ma’ruf* are those things which the shariah has commanded, whilst *munkar* are all the things that the shariah has prohibited. In other words, *ma’ruf* are the things that are in harmony with the Qur’an and the sunnah, whilst *munkar* is the term given to those things that Allah is not pleased with, things which have been rejected, sins and the forbidden things.



Because of this mistake, Yusuf stayed for seven more years in prison after his original five years. In this way he was imprisoned for a total of twelve years.



According to a narration by Malik ibn Dinar Yusuf said to the winemaker:

“Mention me when you are with your lord”. Allah Most High is then reported to have said: “O Yusuf! You took somebody as your trustee other than Me. I am therefore going to increase your stay in prison.”

Yusuf then began to cry and said:

“O my Lord! A hardness must have formed in my heart as a result of the great sadness and tribulations I have encountered but God willing, from now on no words like these will ever come out of my mouth”.

Hasan al-Basri would weep whenever he read this verse and say:

“Whenever something befalls us we immediately run to people for help. What is to become of us? The prophet (saw) said:

“May Allah have mercy on my brother Yusuf. If he had not have said to that winemaker: Mention me to your lord”, he would not have had to stay in prison for seven more years” (Bursawi, Ruhu al-Bayan, IV, 264)

However let it be known that Allah does not give tribulations, distress and various difficulties to the prophets and saints out of punishment but rather as grace. The prophet Muhammad (saw) is reported to have said:

“When Allah loves his servant, he burdens him with tribulations over and over again...” (Ali al-Muttaqi, Kanz al-lummal, III 334).

The dream of the King of Egypt

‘(One day) the King declared, ‘I dreamt of seven fat cows which seven thin ones ate and seven green ears of wheat and seven others which were dry. O counsellors! Explain my dream to me if you are those who can interpret visions!’ (Yusuf, 12:43)

‘They (the fortune-tellers) said, ‘A jumbled mass of mixed-up dreams! We do not know the meaning of such things’ (Yusuf, 12:44)

‘Upon this the freed of the two prisoners finally remembered Yusuf years later and he said: “Let me give you the interpretation of your dream ; take me to the prison immediately’ (Yusuf, 12:45)

‘(When Yusuf arrived in the presence of the King, he said to him: O truthful Yusuf, tell us of seven fat cows which seven thin ones ate and seven green ears of wheat and seven others which were dry so that I can return to them and let them know’ (Yusuf, 12:46)

‘(Yusuf said in reply): Sow for seven years in the normal way and leave that which you harvest in the ear except for a small amount from which you eat’ (Yusuf, 12:47).

‘Then after that seven hard years will arrive in which you can eat from what you set aside for them, except for a little which you store’ (Yusuf, 12:48)

‘Then after that another year will come in which the people will be helped by rain in plenty and when they once more will press’ (Yusuf, 12:49).

‘The King said, ‘Bring him to me straight away!’ but when the envoy came to him, he said, ‘Go back to your master and enquire of him what happened about the women who cut their hands. My Lord has knowledge of their cunning guile’ (Yusuf 12:50).



Out of courtesy and in deference to her rights, the prophet Yusuf did not mention Zulayha by name⁵⁰. He also believed that she was still hostile to him and he was cautious of any new forms of deceit on her behalf.

‘(The King asked the women): What was this past affair of yours when you solicited Yusuf? Then they said ‘Allah forbid! We know no bad of him.’ The governor’s wife then said, ‘The truth has now emerged. Indeed I tried to seduce him then and he has simply told the honest truth (Yusuf, 12:51).

‘In this way he may know at last that I did not dishonour him behind his back and that Allah most surely does not guide the deviousness of the dishonourable’ (Yusuf, 12:52).

The discernment of the prophet Yusuf

The prophet Yusuf did not wish to be released from prison before the King of Egypt was fully aware of the events that took place and before things were fully explained to him.

Yusuf wished everybody to know that he was thrown into prison unlawfully.

Thus by using his intelligence he showed great patience and dignity and he was able to prevent those who envied him from further mischief making. He only accepted being released from prison after all of the claims made against him were proved to be lies and

slander and he was fully free of any suspicion.

The same kind of sensitivity shown by the prophet Yusuf in freeing himself from any suspicion can also be seen by the prophet Muhammad (saw). Safiyya bint Huyay (ra) narrates:

“One night when the Messenger of Allah (saw) was in *itiqaf* I went to visit him and spoke with him. When I rose to go back home he rose also to accompany me. At that point we encountered two people (May Allah be pleased with them) from the Ansar. When they saw the prophet Muhammad (saw) they immediately fled, trying to distance themselves from him”.

The prophet said to them: “Wait! Slow down. This woman you see beside me is my wife Safiyya bint al-Huyay”.

They said:

“*Subhanallah!* We would never suspect an inappropriate act from the Messenger of Allah!”

He responded: “*Satan flows through a person’s body like blood. I was afraid that he would place some evil or a doubt in your hearts*” (Bukhari, I’tiqaf, 11; Muslim, Salam, 23-25).

Due to the importance of this truth, Allah Most High warns us in the Qur’an as follows:

‘Do not pursue what you have no knowledge of. Hearing, sight and hearts will all be questioned’ (Isra, 17:36)



Once the prophet Yusuf was proven innocent and removed from all suspicion he was freed. However this time he sought refuge in Allah in order to avoid falling for the deceits and wiles of the *nafs*:

‘And yet, I am not trying to absolve myself; for, verily, man’s inner self does incite (him) to evil, and saved are only they upon whom my Sustainer bestows His grace. Behold, my Sustainer is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace’ (Yusuf, 12:53).

50 Despite everything he went through, the prophet Yusuf did not mention Zulayha’s name openly, out of a courtesy due to his prophethood and in order not to offend Zulayha, in whose home he had previously stayed and out of deference to her rights. Instead he mentioned the ladies who cut their hand. When Yusuf was released from prison he married Zulayha, whose husband had passed away, and they had two children. It is narrated that Yusuf said to his wife: “Is this not better than what you wanted before?” (Razi, 9/18, 166; Beirut 1995).



In another narration he tells of how it is only possible to be free of the dangers of the *nafs al-ammara* by the protection of Allah.

“...Allah purifies whoever He wills. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing” (Nur, 24:21)



In truth what befalls the servant of Allah is to seek refuge in Him and plead with him with a sound heart.

If Allah so wills He can make a slave a king

The King of Egypt was able to perceive the subtle discernment, foresight and superior pure intention of Yusuf. He said:

‘Bring him to me straight away! So I may draw him very close to me.’ When he had spoken with him, he declared, ‘Today you are trusted, established in our sight’ (Yusuf, 12:54).

When it was time to leave the prison Yusuf washed himself and wore new clothes. He prayed for the good of those in prison.

When he left the prison he wrote the following on his door:

“This is the place of tribulation, the grave of the living, the place of commotion of enemies and the place where friends are tried”.

When he entered the presence of the King he said:

“O Allah! I ask for good from you before any good that is to come from here. And I seek refuge in your dignity and power from its evil”.

The King knew many languages. However Yusuf knew more languages than he did, and when the King realised this he was very surprised and wished to listen to the interpretation of the dream that he had seen.

Yusuf then told him what he had told the messenger before. The King was left in awe of this nice form of speech and expression and asked him how he was to take precautions according to this interpretation.

Yusuf replied:

“Plant many grains during your years of plenty so they can be a stock. In this way you will be able to provide for your own livelihood and by exporting the goods you will have enabled income for yourself”.

This time the King said:

“Well who is to oversee this?”

Yusuf replied:

‘He said, ‘Entrust the country’s stores to me. In truth I am a knowing guardian (I will protect, preserve them and I know this task well)’ (Yusuf, 12:55)

According to this verse it is allowed for a person who is just and capable of establishing the laws of the *shariah* to ask for a managerial position. However such a request amongst the Muslims and running after their own desires would be frowned upon.

This verse also indicates that it is obligatory to remove an oppressor from a position of management in order to make the commands of Allah dominant over the earth and to establish justice. However the responsibility of this duty is heavy and great. Consequently this is the duty of those who are worthy.

Thus Yusuf took on the duty of minister for finance with the purpose of reform. He had all of the conditions necessary to the utmost degree and these conditions motivated him to do so.

‘And thus We established Yusuf in the land so he could live in any place he pleased. We grant Our grace to anyone We will and We do not allow to go to waste the wage of any people who do good’ (Yusuf, 12:56)



'But the wages of the hereafter are the best for people who have faith and fear their Lord'

(Yusuf 12:57)

The King left the disposal of the entire lands under the authority of the prophet Yusuf.

As a chosen servant and messenger of Allah, Yusuf then began to invite him to the belief in the oneness of Allah.

Some time later, the King became Muslim in the presence of Yusuf and as a favour from Allah. Many people with him also became Muslim.



As soon as Yusuf took on the duty of the management of Egypt and the spending of the treasury, he began by giving more importance to agriculture. He increased production and stored the excess grain in silos. Eventually when the day came that the famine that he had seen in his dream began, he used the extra grain to supply the needs of the Egyptian people.

He also provided extra income for the treasury by exporting the excess grain to neighbouring countries.

People from different countries, writhing from shortage of food came to him and bought their provisions.

The prophet Yusuf's marriage to Zulayha

Meanwhile Zulayha had distributed everything she owned to the public and was left with nothing. Her eyes had dried up from crying out of her love for Yusuf, her body was on the verge of collapse and she had aged greatly.

Eventually she withdrew to a deserted ruins which lay in the path where Yusuf would walk. She reflected upon all of the events that had befallen her, perceived the truth and sat in front of the idol that she used to worship and said:

"Shame on you and the one who worshipped and prostrated to. You have shown no mercy nor done anything to prevent my old age, and my losing my sight or my helplessness.

From this day on I reject your godhead and believe in the lord of Yusuf!.."

She began to thus remember her Lord, morning and night, the Lord who created the worlds, who has no partner nor peer.

One day Yusuf had mounted his horse and, with his companions, was passing by the place where Zulayha lived. Zulayha immediately came out of her house and shouted out behind him:

"I glorify that Possessor of Power, who turns queens into slaves due to their sins, and slaves into kings out of their worship of Him..."

By the command of Allah the wind brought the sound of this voice, which was quite far away, to the ear of Yusuf. Yusuf then began to investigate the owner of this voice which he did not recognise. Zulayha said to those who came to investigate the situation that it was only Yusuf who could be the cure to her problem. She entered his presence and asked Yusuf to pray to Allah to give her back her old beauty and her eyes. Then she asked him to marry her. Yusuf prayed for her and her two requests were granted. By the permission of Allah, Zulayha regained her former beauty and her eyesight. However for the third request, Yusuf bowed his head down and began to meditate. At that point Gabriel came and in regards to Zulayha, who was yet a virgin, said to Yusuf:

"O Yusuf! Your Lord sends you peace and commands that you do not reject this poor woman's offer. Marry her for she is your wife both in this world and the next".

Upon this command, Yusuf married Zulayha and then raised his hands to the heavens praying as follows:



“O Allah who has bestowed this bounty upon me. O Allah the most merciful of the merciful. Endless praise and thanks to you. My Lord I ask that you complete your bounty upon me, that You show me my father Yaqub, and that you bring light back to his eyes by showing me to him and that you give me the opportunity to meet with my brothers.

You are the acceptor of prayers and you have power over everything”.

The arrival of Yusuf’s brothers and the prophet Yusuf’s fine plan

Due to the shortage, Yaqub sent his sons, keeping Bunyamin with him, to Egypt to obtain their provision.

‘The brothers of Yusuf came into his presence and he knew them but they did not know him’.

‘Then, having supplied their needs, he said to them, ‘Bring me your brother, your father’s youngest son. Do you not see that I dispense full measure and am the most hospitable of hosts?’ (Yusuf, 12:58-59).

‘But if you do not bring him here to me, your measure from me then will be denied and you will not come near to me at all’ (Yusuf, 12:60)

‘They said, ‘We will request our father for him. That is something we will surely do’ (Yusuf, 12:61)

‘He told his serving men, ‘Put back their goods into their saddlebags for them to find when they arrive back to their families so that perhaps they will return again’ (Yusuf, 12:62)

‘Then when they got back to their father’s house, they said, ‘Father! Our measure has been denied. Please send our brother with us so we may obtain our measure. We will take care of him.’ (Yusuf, 12:63)

‘He said, ‘How will my trusting him to your care be different from entrusting his brother before? The Best of Guardians, however, is Allah. He is the Most Merciful of the merciful’ (Yusuf, 12:64)

When Yaqub said:

“Allah is the Best of Guardians. He is the Most Merciful of the Merciful”, Allah Most High said:

“Since you have placed your trust in me this way, I will reunite you with your two sons on account of my honour and majesty”.

What can be gleaned from this is that the believers should put their trust in Allah only and not trust in other people’s protection.

This is because everything other than Allah is in need of being protected. Allah Most High on the other hand is in need of nothing.

The sons of Yaqub tried to convince their father, to let them take Bunyamin with them.

‘Then when they opened up their saddlebags and found their merchandise returned to them, they said, ‘Our father! What more could we ask! Here is our merchandise returned to us. We can provide our families with food, and guard our brother and get an extra load. That is an easy measure to obtain’ (Yusuf, 12:65)

Eventually Yaqub was content to let Bunyamin go. Yaqub said:

‘He said, ‘I will not send him out with you until you make a covenant with Allah to bring him home unless you are overwhelmed.’ When they had made their covenant, he said, ‘Allah is Guardian over what we say’ (Yusuf, 12:66).



‘(Yaqub) said, ‘My sons! You must not enter through a single gate. Go in through different gates. But I cannot save you from Allah at all, for judgement comes from no one but Allah. In Him I put my trust, and let all those who put their trust, put it in Him alone’ (Yusuf, 12:67)

The reason for why Yaqub ordered his sons to enter Egypt through different gates is because they were very ostentatious and beautifully dressed and in addition, they were the beneficiaries of honour and dignity from the King on their previous visit. This is because everyone’s eyes were fixed on them in amazement. For them to enter the city together could have made them meet with a frightening welcome.

‘But when they entered as their father said, it did not save them from Allah at all, yet a need in Ya‘qub’s soul was satisfied. He had knowledge which We had taught him, but most of mankind simply do not know’, (Yusuf, 12:68).

I am your brother, Yusuf

‘Then when they entered into Yusuf’s presence, he drew his brother close to him and said, ‘I am your brother. Do not be distressed concerning all the things they used to do’ (Yusuf, 12:69)

According to accounts, Yusuf had a meal prepared for his brothers and sat them at the table two by two.

When Bunyamin was left alone, he became emotional and began to cry:

“If my brother Yusuf was alive, he would have sat with me”.

Yusuf then had him sit at his own table. After the meal he then had his brothers hosted two by two in people’s houses and Bunyamin was left alone once more.

Yusuf then said:

“He has no partner. Let him stay with me”.

Thus Bunyamin spent the night with him.

Yusuf then said to him:

“Would you accept me as your brother in place of the brother who passed away?”

Bunyamin replied:

“Who could refuse a brother like you? But your father is not Yaqub and your mother is not Rachel...”

Yusuf then began to cry and standing he embraced Bunyamin and then told him the truth:

“I am your brother! Do not be distressed by what they did to us”.

In these last words of Yusuf to Bunyamin are an indication that Allah will never allow the wiles of envious people to succeed.

The things they did to Yusuf, how they envied him, how they caused him pain; but still they did not achieve their aims.

Allah Most High first of all reunited the two brothers and then he reunited Yaqub with Yusuf.

The prophet Yusuf detains Bunyamin

After revealing himself to Bunyamin Yusuf then said to him:

“O my brother! I am going to keep you back here with me. You know that my father’s distress and worry at being parted from me is great. If I keep you here with me, his sadness will increase even more. However, this is what we must do in order to be reunited with him as soon as possible.

I am going to devise a plan...”

After speaking as such to Bunyamin:



‘Then when he had supplied them with their needs, he put the goblet in his brother’s bag. A herald called out, ‘Caravan! You are thieves!’ (Yusuf, 12:70)

‘They turned to them and said, ‘What are you missing?’

‘They said, ‘We’re missing the goblet of the king. The man who brings it will get a camel’s load. Regarding that I stand as guarantor.’

They said, ‘By Allah, you know we did not come to corrupt the land and that we are not thieves.’

They said, ‘What is the reparation for it if it in fact transpires that you are liars?’

They said, ‘Its reparation shall be him in the saddlebags of whom it is discovered. With us that is how wrongdoers are repaid’ (Yusuf 12:71-75)

In the shariah of Yaqub, when a thief was caught he was made to serve the owner of the stolen goods for a year as recompense for his crime.

In the laws of Egypt, however, the thief was beaten and made to pay twice the price of the stolen goods.

Yusuf wished to enact the shariah law of his father in order to keep his brother Bunyamin with him.

‘He started with their bags before his brother’s..and then produced it from his brother’s bag. In that way We devised a cunning scheme for Yusuf. He could not have held his brother according to the statutes of the King – only because Allah had willed it so...’ (Yusuf, 12:76)

‘(His brothers) said, ‘If he steals now, his brother stole before.’ But Yusuf kept it to himself and still did not disclose it to them, saying, ‘The plight that you are in is worse than that. Allah knows best the matter you describe’ (Yusuf, 12:77)

According to accounts, the paternal aunt of Yusuf loved him very much but when he had grown older his father wanted to take him back. However his aunt was unable to part from Yusuf. She thus tied a ribbon that was left to her by the prophet Ibrahim, around Yusuf’s waist. Then she announced that her sash was lost. The sash was searched for and found on Yusuf. According to the law she kept Yusuf with her. This is the event to which Yusuf’s brothers were referring.

‘They said, ‘Your Eminence! He has an old and venerable father, so take one of us instead of him. We see without a doubt that you are of the people who do good’ (Yusuf, 12:78)

‘(Yusuf) said, ‘Allah forbid that we should take anyone but him with whom our goods were found. In that case we would clearly be wrongdoers’ (Yusuf, 12:79)

‘When they despaired of him, they went apart to talk alone. The eldest of them said, ‘You know full well your father had you make a covenant with Allah concerning this, and how before you failed him with Yusuf. I will not leave this land until I have permission from my father, or Allah decides about the case on my behalf. Truly He is the most just Judge of all’ (Yusuf, 12:80)

‘Return now to your father and say to him, “Your son stole, father. We can do no more than testify to what we know and we are not the guardians of the Unseen’ (Yusuf, 12:81)

‘Ask questions of the town in which we were and of the caravan in which we came for we are surely telling you the truth’ (Yusuf, 12:82)

They then rose and went to their father and told him exactly what their brother told them to.

The pain and suffering that opened the door of reward

‘(Their father) said, ‘It is merely that your lower selves suggested something to you which you did. But beauty lies in having steadfastness. Perhaps Allah will bring them all together. He is indeed All-Knowing and All-Wise’ (Yusuf, 12:83)



Because Yusuf's brothers had lied to him before when they threw Yusuf into the well, their father did not want to believe them now even though this time they were telling the truth:

"No, your nafs' has deceived you and driven you to such a grave [serious] affair, otherwise how would the governor know that in our shariah a thief is taken captive?"

'He turned himself away from them and said, 'What anguish is my sorrow for Yusuf!' And then his eyes turned white from hidden grief' (Yusuf, 12:84)

Ever since the day that he lost Yusuf, Yaqub was unable to sleep. With this state of his he had become so close to his Lord that at that time there was no one more honourable than him in the sight of Allah on earth.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) asked his own community of believers that they be patient with the misfortunes that befall them, be they great or small and seek their reward with Allah.

He gave good tidings to those who were tested with their two beloveds (that is, with the removal of their two eyes) that their reward would be Paradise if they were patient. (see Bukhari, Merda 7).

If Yaqub had not lost his eyesight through so much weeping he would have witnessed this criminal act of his sons, which would have given him greater sorrow and grief.



Do not despair of the mercy of Allah



'(Yaqub's sons) said, 'By Allah, you will not ever cease to mention Yusuf, till you waste away or are among the people of the grave!' (Yusuf, 12:85)

'(Yaqub) said, 'I make complaint about my grief and sorrow to Allah alone because I know things from Allah you do not know' (Yusuf, 12:86)

'My sons! Seek news of Yusuf and his brother. Do not despair of solace from Allah. No one despairs of solace from Allah except for people who are unbelievers' (Yusuf, 12:87).

To despair of Allah is to fail to perceive His attributes of Rahman (Most Compassionate) and Rahim (Most Merciful).

Even the Pharaoh mentioned Allah's name at his last breath.

Allah Most High says in the Qur'an:

'...do not despair of the mercy of Allah...' (Zumar 39:53)

As can be understood from this verse it is only the unbelievers who lose hope in Allah. Yaqub took this as his principle, and never losing hope, he sent a letter to the governor of Egypt (that is to his son Yusuf), through his other sons.

"In the name of Allah, Most Compassionate Most Merciful! From Israel Yaqub, the son of Ishaq (*Dhabihullah*), the son of Ibrahim, the friend of Allah to the governor of Egypt:

"We are a family who have met with great misfortune. My forefather Ibrahim was tried with the fire of Nimrod but he was patient. And Allah gave him peace. My father Ishaq was tried with other misfortunes and he was also patient. Allah rewarded him. As for me, I lost my son Yusuf. I lost my sight from weeping at being parted from him, and my back is bent. My only consolation was my youngest son, whom you now hold in ransom. You say that he has stolen something from you. No thief has ever arisen from our generation and we do not give birth to thieves. If you so will, you will return him to me, if not I will curse you with such a curse that this curse will affect your sons for seven generations".



When Yusuf read this letter, he wept and wrote the following reply:

“In the name of Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful! From the Governor of Egypt to Israel Yaqub:

O old man! Your letter has reached me. I have read it and understood its contents.

In it you mention your righteous fathers and their patience with the misfortunes that befell them. Just as they were patient with their trials, so too you be patient...

Peace!...”

When Yaqub read this letter he said:

“I swear by Allah that this is not the letter of a king, but rather that of a prophet. The one who wrote this could only be Yusuf”. He then sent his sons to Egypt once again to learn the truth of the matter. They immediately set off and:

‘...and when they came into his presence, they said, ‘Your Eminence! Hardship has hit us and our families. We bring scant merchandise, but fill the measure for us generously. Allah always rewards a generous giver’ (Yusuf, 12:88)

‘(Yusuf) said, ‘Are you aware of what you did to Yusuf and his brother in ignorance?’ (Yusuf, 12:89).

According to commentaries, the brothers who threw Yusuf into the well would also constantly insult and harass their youngest brother Bunyamin.

An exemplary pardon

‘(His brothers) said, ‘Are you Yusuf?’ He said, ‘I am indeed Yusuf, and this here is my brother. Allah has acted graciously to us. As for those who fear Allah and are steadfast, Allah does not allow to go to waste the wage of any people who do good.’ (Yusuf 12:90)

‘They said, ‘By Allah, Allah has favoured you above us. Clearly we were in the wrong (Yusuf, 12:91).

‘(Yusuf) said, ‘No blame at all will fall on you. Today you have forgiveness from Allah. He is the Most Merciful of the merciful’ (Yusuf, 12:92).

One of the best methods in teaching and educating a person is to respond to evil with good. To act as such removes the animosity of one’s enemy and good intentions and friendship begin to appear between them. If the one who has committed the evil is a friend, then this will lead to greater closeness and love. This is expressed in the Holy Qur’an as follows:

وَلَا تَسْتَوِ الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ
وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

‘A good action and a bad action are not the same. Repel the bad with something better and, if there is enmity between you and someone else, he will be like a bosom friend’ (Fussilat, 41:34)

The following is an example from life of the Messenger of Allah (saw):

Before the prophethood of Muhammad, Abu Sufyan was his friend. After he became a prophet, however, Abu Sufyan became his enemy and began to write mocking poems about him.

The prophet’s poet Hassan ibn Thabit (ra) would respond to these. Later Abu Sufyan regretted these acts and he set out to Madina to find the Messenger of Allah. He encountered him at the site of Abwa. The



prophet Muhammad (saw) did not look at his face which greatly saddened Abu Sufyan. He apologised to him with the verse that Ali had taught him previously:

'By Allah, Allah has favoured you above us. Clearly we were in the wrong' (Yusuf, 12:91)

The ocean of mercy and kindness that was Allah's Messenger (saw) responded from the chapter Yusuf:

'No blame at all will fall on you. Today you have forgiveness from Allah. He is the Most Merciful of the merciful' (Yusuf, 12:92)

He thus forgave all of what Abu Sufyan and everybody else had done to him.

This was thus a most beautiful manifestation in a human being of the attribute of Allah, which is called '*Sattaru al-'uyub*', or 'the Concealer of the faults of His servants' (Wakidi, Maghazi, II, 810-811; Ibn Hisham, Sirah, IV, 20-24; Ibn Abdilbar, al Istiab, IV, 1674).

Rub my shirt over my father's eyes

After forgiving his brothers with his deep compassion, the prophet Yusuf sent his shirt to his father for a cure for his blindness and told his brothers:

'Go with this shirt of mine and cast it on my father's face and he will see again. Then come to me with all your families' (Yusuf, 12:93).

Yusuf provided a feast for his brothers morning and night, hosting them in the best manner. When they remembered what they had done to him his brothers were embarrassed by this and sent him a herald with the following message:

"You invite us to eat morning and night! But we are ashamed of how we treated you..."

Yusuf responded to them in a manner which demonstrated his humility and modesty in the face of their shame:

"Up until now, the Egyptians would look upon me as a slave released from prison and they would say: "We absolve Allah of all fault but look at the station that a slave who was sold for twenty dirhams has reached. It is on account of you that I have regained honour. For it is now that they have understood that I am your brother and the grandson of a great prophet such as Ibrahim". He thus dignified and consoled them.

'And when the caravan went on its way, their father said, 'I can smell Yusuf's scent! You probably think I have become senile'

They said, 'By Allah! Your mind is still astray' (Yusuf, 12:94-95)

The prophet Yaqub's sight is restored

'But when the bringer of the good news came, he cast it on his face and sight returned. He said, 'Did I not say to you before, I know things from Allah you do not know?' (Yusuf, 12:96)

This bringer of good news was Judah, the prophet Yaqub's son. It is narrated that he walked barefoot and bareheaded from Egypt to Canaan with the following thought in mind: "It was I who took Yusuf's bloody shirt to my father drowning him in sorrow, and so it should be I who takes this shirt to him to envelop him in bliss".

Jalalluddin Rumi says about this verse, that *ledunni ilm* or intuitive knowledge of Allah is a favour bestowed by Allah and it is only bestowed upon those who have the potential in their heart to accept it.

"The extraordinary features that Yaqub saw in the face of Yusuf were the very same traits that he himself possessed. His brothers were unable to see the light in the face of Yusuf that Yaqub was able to witness due to his own foresight. This is because the inner hearts of Yusuf's brothers were unable to see and were far



from perceiving the superior characteristics of Yusuf. However, when Yaqub, the prophet of Allah, saw this in Yusuf, his heart inclined towards him.

In Yaqub was a certain attraction for Yusuf. This is why he was able to smell the scent of his shirt even from a great distance. Yusuf's brothers however, who were carrying his shirt in their hands, were deprived of its scent. This is because Yusuf's shirt was a trust in the hands of his brothers. His brother's were responsible only for delivering it to Yaqub. That is that shirt was like a chosen slave in the hands of a slave trader. This slave belonged not to the slave trader but to the person who knew its true worth and purchased it thus.

The connection between Yusuf's shirt and the restoral of Yaqub's sight is an indication that there is a certain connection between a person and an object that has spiritual value and that this can be a means of spiritual help.



'(His sons) said, 'Our father, ask Allah to forgive us for the many wrongs that we have done. We were indeed greatly mistaken men' (Yusuf, 12:97).

'He said, 'I will ask my Lord to pardon you. He is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful' (Yusuf, 12:98).

By saying 'I will ask my Lord to pardon you', and postponing this to a later time, attention is brought to the necessity of the offender asking the one they have offended to forgive them first.

The prophet Yaqub did in fact postpone asking for forgiveness for his sons until they had met with Yusuf.

Reunion after a long period of yearning, happiness and a dream come true

Together with Yusuf, the King and all of the people came out with him to welcome Yaqub and his family. When Yaqub and Yusuf came face to face, Yaqub and those with him descended from their horses and the two prophets embraced each other longingly.

Allah Most High says in the Qur'an:

'Then when they entered into Yusuf's presence, he drew his parents close to him and said, 'Enter Egypt safe and sound, if Allah wills' (Yusuf, 12:99).

Great reward always comes after showing beautiful patience in the face of great misfortune and tribulation and difficult trials.

After this reunion, Yaqub immediately raised his hands to the heavens in gratitude to Allah and prayed as follows:

"O Allah! Forgive me for my lamentations about Yusuf, for the lack of patience shown in his absence and for what my sons did to their brother".

The prophet Yusuf was also in a state of great gratitude and thanks:

'He raised his parents up onto the throne. The others fell prostrate in front of him. He said, 'My father, truly this is now the interpretation of the dream I had. My Lord has made it all come true; and He was kind to me by letting me out of prison and brought you from the desert when Satan had caused dissent between me and my brothers. My Lord is kind to anyone He wills. He is indeed All-Knowing and All-Wise' (Yusuf, 12:100)

'My Lord, You have granted power to me on earth and taught me the true meaning of events. Originator of the heavens and earth, You are my Friend in this world and the Next. So take me as a Muslim at my death and join me to the people who are righteous (Yusuf, 12:101).

According to narrations, the prophet Yaqub stayed in Egypt with his son for twenty four years before he passed away. As he requested, he was buried near his father Isaac's grave in Damascus.

Because they were very fond of Yusuf, the Egyptians wished for him to stay in their country.



After the death of his father, Yusuf did in fact remain in Egypt for twenty three years.

When he passed away his corpse was placed in a marble coffin and buried in the Nile. Later the prophet Musa found this corpse and buried it next to his father Yaqub.

Peace be upon them all...



QUESTIONS

A. Answer the following questions

1. What was the reason for the revelation of the chapter Yusuf?
2. What was the ugly trait that caused Yusuf's brothers to become so enraged as to intend to murder him?
3. How did the prophet Yusuf implore Allah after he was thrown into the well?
4. Despite all of the hardship and pain of life in prison the prophet Yusuf preached the religion of truth to those inside with his words and his state. How is this an example for us?
5. What was the reason for the prophet Yusuf being released from prison?
6. What do you understand from the statement: "The body of a human being when it becomes a slave is sold at the slave market for a very paltry price. What price then will it fetch on the Day of Judgement when he makes his heart and soul a slave to his carnal desires?"
7. What lesson can we take from Zulayha when she was on the verge of committing a major sin and so covered the lifeless idol in her room out of shame?
8. When the prophet Yusuf responded to the evil of his brothers with goodness they felt embarrassed. What were the words of Yusuf that showed his humility.
9. Explain the reason for why the prophet Yaqub loved Yusuf more than his other children
10. Explain the benefits of learning and teaching the chapter Yusuf.
11. How many types of dreams are there?
12. What can be done in order to prevent love from leading to jealousy?
13. Why does Allah Most High subject the prophets, the saints and His righteous friends to challenging tribulation?
14. Do the words of the prophet Yusuf: "Make me responsible for the treasury", conflict with the understanding of modesty and humbleness in Islam? Explain.
15. The prophet Yusuf forgave his brothers and treated them with great kindness and compassion. What does this remind us of?
16. What are the benefits of remembering death often?

B. Fill in the gaps

1. The story of Yusuf is referred to as in the Holy Qur'an.
2. The first chapter to be revealed as a story in the Qur'an was the chapter



C. Choose the correct answer from the following options

- 1. Despite everything they had done to him, the prophet Yusuf forgave his brothers and his words: ‘No blame at all will fall on you. Today you have forgiveness from Allah. He is the Most Merciful of the merciful’ (Yûsuf, 12: 92) are a beautiful example of clemency for us. Which of the following would not be a result of responding to evil with goodness?**

 - A. Animosity and ill will between people will be removed.
 - B. If the good response takes place amongst people who were previously friends the love and friendship between them will increase.
 - C. Responding to evil with good will make the person who committed the evil go even further in his evil.
 - D. Because one would have obeyed a command of Allah, one will gain peace of mind as a result of gaining His pleasure.

- 2. Which of the following words would come at the beginning of the following statement: “..... is like the state of a person who throws a stone at another person but then that stone then rebounds and hits him in the eye, blinding him?”**

 - A. Arrogance
 - B. Greed
 - C. Envy
 - D. Laziness

- 3. The throwing of the prophet Yusuf into the well and all the other events that befell him constituted a difficult test for many people around him. Which of the following is incorrect in relation to this?**

 - A. The prophet Yusuf was forced to marry his enemy Zulayha.
 - B. The prophet Yaqub was separated from his most cherished and beloved son, the apple of his eye
 - C. The prophet Yusuf saw that beauty meant nothing and understood that one should not seek refuge in any other than his Lord.
 - D. The kind treatment they received from Yusuf despite the evil they committed was a good lesson for the brothers of Yusuf.

- 4. Which of the following is not a characteristic of a person who possesses beautiful patience (‘sabrūn jamil’)?**

 - A. Knowing that all misfortune and tribulation comes from Allah and thus that their result will be good.
 - B. Since everything is from Allah, one does not make any effort to find relief from tribulation and misfortune.
 - C. One does not fall into heedlessness by complaining to the servants of Allah about a trial that He has tested one with.
 - D. One is content with any situation one finds oneself in and does not neglect to thank his Lord.



5. **Which of the following conclusions can we make from the following prayer of the prophet Yusuf?: ‘My Lord, the prison is preferable to me than what they call on me to do. Unless You turn their guile away from me, it may well be that I will fall for them and so become a man of ignorance’ (Yusuf, 12:33).**
- The sole way to be rid of the wiles of the nafs and its evil is to seek refuge in Allah and hold tightly to His commands.
 - Even though Yusuf was a prophet he was still capable of committing a sin.
 - The person who strengthens his spirit against the desires of his nafs will not make any mistakes nor commit any sins.
 - Everybody who is confronted with the danger of obeying their nafs should prefer prison.
6. **Which of the following was the real reason for the prophet Yusuf keeping Bunyamin him with him?**
- He loved Bunyamin the most out of all his brothers.
 - He was preparing the ground for being reunited with his father Yaqub.
 - Bunyamin was to be punished for taking the King’s goblet.
 - Yusuf wanted to protect Bunyamin from the evil of his brothers.
7. **Yusuf drew his brother close to him and said, ‘(Know that) I am your brother. Do not be distressed concerning all the things they used to do’ (Yusuf, 12:69). Which conclusion can not be drawn from the above verse?**
- Yusuf was trying to console Bunyamin.
 - Yusuf wanted Bunyamin to know that his brothers’ evil intention and aims would not harm them.
 - Yusuf wanted to placate Bunyamin who wanted to take revenge upon his brothers.
 - Yusuf advised Bunyamin to be patient against their brothers’ envy and bad treatment.
8. **The chapter Yusuf was the first chapter to revealed as a story. It contains very subtle, profound and deep meanings for those who are discerning. The individuals mentioned in it, the prophets Yaqub and Yusuf, Rachel, Yusuf’s brothers, Zulayha all represent the different spiritual aspects of the human being. Which of the following is incorrect in relation to this?**
- The prophet Yusuf represents the heart of the human being.
 - The prophet Yaqub represents the spirit while the mother Rachel represents the body.
 - Yusuf’s brothers represent the carnal desires of the human being.
 - Zulayha represents the sound mind (akl-i selim).



9. **Allah Most High took away the ‘physical eyes’ of the prophet Yaqub which beheld the apparent beauty of Yusuf, however he bestowed upon him ‘eyes of the heart’ that were able to witness the attributes of divine beauty that were manifest in him. Which of the following conclusions can not be made in relation to this?**

- A. Allah Most High took one bounty away from the prophet Yaqub, but He bestowed upon him a more precious bounty in its place.
- B. Allah Most High wanted the prophet Yaqub to see manifestations of His own beautiful attributes, which is absolute beauty (husnu mutlaq), in place of the apparent beauty found in creation.
- C. As long as a person does not remove from his heart the worldly beauties that he sees with his physical eyes, and as long as he cannot overcome them, he will not be able to witness true beauty.
- D. Allah Most High took away the prophet Yaqub’s sight as punishment for a sin that he committed.

10. **Allah’s Messenger and the believers were subject to many difficult and various tribulations in the year that the chapter Yusuf was revealed. Which of the following trials did not take place in this year?**

- A. Seventy believers were martyred at the Battle of Uhud.
- B. The prophet Muhammad’s wife Khadijah passed away.
- C. The prophet’s uncle Abu Talib passed away.
- D. The oppression and cruelty of the pagans towards the believers increased.

11. **Which conclusion can not be made about the miracle of the prophet Yaqub gaining his eyesight back after Yusuf sent him his shirt?**

- A. The scent of Yusuf’s shirt cured the sight of Yaqub.
- B. Yusuf’s shirt carried spiritual value for Yaqub who loved his son greatly.
- C. The connection between Yusuf’s shirt and the recovery of Yaqub’s sight is due to connection between a person and an object that has spiritual value and divine help.
- D. The shirt of Yusuf did not bear much meaning for his brother’s who were in possession of it for days.



ANSWERS

The prophet Adam

B. Fill in the gaps

- 1- The human being 2- *Abu al-arwah* 3- *Tawba – istighfar*
4- *Ilm-i Ledunn* 5- The pre-dawn

C. Multiple Choice Answers

- 1- C 2- C 3- B 4- D 5- D
6- B 7- C 8- D 9- D 10- C

The prophets Idris and Nuh

B. Fill in the gaps

- 1- 1000 2- 30 3- The heavens
4- Allah's confidante 5- Islam 6- This is your magic

C. Multiple Choice Answers

- 1- C 2- B 3- A 4- D 5- B
6- B 7- D 8- C 9- C



The prophets Hud and Salih

B. Fill in the gaps

- 1- Ignorance
2- Their arrogance – their insolence
3- *Rih-i Sarsar*
4- 40
5- *La ilaha illallah salihun nabiyullah*
6- Bring the punishment that you threaten us with

C. Multiple Choice Answers

- 1- D 2- D 3- C 4- D 5- C
6- C 7- C 8- A 9- C 10- D
11- A 12- D

The prophets Ibrahim, Ismail and Ishaq

B. Fill in the gaps

- 1- *Khalil ar Rahman*
2- Jinni – Hajar
3- *Abu Adyaf*
4- The prophet Ibrahim's
5- amascus – Palestine
6- Yaqub
7- Kings – Sultans

C. Multiple Choice Answers

- 1- D 2- B 3- C 4- C 5- D
6- D 7- D 8- B 9- A 10- D
11- D 12- B 13- D 14- C 15- D
16- C 17- A



The prophets Lut and Dhu'l Qarnayn

B. Fill in the gaps

- 1- The prophet Ibrahim 2- Baked stones – Frightening clamour 3- Cursed
4- The prophet Nuh 5- Alexander the Great 6- The Barrier of Dhu'l Qarnayn
7- To the west

C. Multiple Choice Answers

- 1- D 2- B 3- C 4- C 5- D

The prophets Yaqub and Yusuf

B. Fill in the gaps

- 1- *Ahsan al Qasas* 2- The chapter Yusuf

C. Multiple Choice Answers

- 1- C 2- C 3- A 4- B 5- A
6- B 7- C 8- D 9- D 10- A
11- A



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