



Keys to the Qur'an

Volume 5
Commentary on Juz Amma

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Acknowledged as a master of self-knowledge and a spiritual philosopher, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri's role as a teacher grew naturally out of his own quest for self-fulfillment.

He travelled extensively on a spiritual quest which led to his eventual rediscovery of the pure and original Islamic heritage of his birth, and the discovery of the truth that reconciles the past with the present, the East with the West, the worldly with the spiritual – a link between the ancient wisdom teachings and our present time.

A descendant of five generations of well-known and revered spiritual leaders, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri has taught students throughout the world for over 30 years. A prolific author of more than thirty books relating to the universal principles of Islam, the Qur'an, and its core purpose of enlightenment, he is a gifted exponent of how the self relates to the soul, humankind's link with the Divine, and how consciousness can be groomed to reflect our higher nature.

The unifying scope of his perspective emphasizes practical, actionable knowledge that leads to self-transformation, and provides a natural bridge between seemingly different Eastern and Western approaches to spirituality, as well as offering a common ground of higher knowledge for various religions, sects and secular outlooks.

FOREWORD

The original edition of this commentary was a result of teachings and talks with the objective of exploring the deeper meanings of the Divine revelations.¹ The emphasis had been on the key Qur'anic terms and the subtle facets and connotations of Arabic words. The response by the readers was most encouraging.

The new millennium opens in an age of great complexities, chaos and constant change in values and the way of life. Therefore, what is needed nowadays is the re-discovery of Allah's patterns as revealed in the Qur'anic message so that we can act appropriately in this world.

The message of the Qur'an emanates from the original Divine blueprint which also lies latent in the human heart. All of us seek the path of ease, knowledge, security, love and contentment. No happiness lasts unless it is based on the knowledge of Allah and submission to His intended purpose and ways. The Qur'an is the key to this awakening.

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

White River, 1999

¹ Kindly note that since the eReader devices and apps do not render Arabic text very well, the Qur'anic verses in the original Arabic language have been removed from this eBook. It is recommended that you refer to the Qur'an in its original Arabic while reading this commentary as Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri elucidates on the Arabic words and phrases.

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Zahra Publications series of commentaries on the Qur`an, we present Beams of Illumination from the Divine Revelation, a commentary on the last part (*juz`*) of the Qur`an. *Juz` `Amma* begins with Surat an-Naba (Chapter 78) and ends with Surat an-Nas (Chapter 114) and it contains the greatest number of surahs (37) of any *juz`*. Except for a few *ayats* which were revealed later in Medina, these surahs were revealed in Mecca and contain some of the earliest revelations.

These early surahs are concerned primarily with the aspects of *haqiqah* (the inner reality of creation), the outer reality, the laws governing existence, the destruction of this world, and the Next life. They are extremely potent and served as the fuel of the early Islamic movement which burst forth in Mecca and was established later in Medina.

Following the pattern of the earlier volumes in this series, the specific reasons for these revelations and the historical context in which they descended will not be discussed at length, for these points are well covered and document in many other available commentaries.

The volumes in this series are based on the teachings provided at the American Institute of Qur`anic Studies in San Antonio, Texas. Their main goal is to bring out the immediate efficacy of the Qur`an in purification of the self and in the unfolding of higher qualities within the individual, after which one can then wholeheartedly follow the *shari`ah* and accept the divine laws by which a just and humane society can be established upon this earth.

The roots of key Arabic words are examined and discussed, thus enabling the student to derive the full benefit of the original language of the Qur`an and its unparalleled ability to communicate what is most difficult to transmit by words. At their root levels, Arabic words have many different meanings, and these meanings are sometimes the opposite of each other. This aspect of the Arabic language reflects a very important dimension of the ancient Arabic culture, a dimension which enabled the Arabs to be extremely sensitive to their environment and therefore susceptible to the message of *tawhīd* (divine unity). Although the Arabs were worldly, their language and ecology were well-suited to describing and communicating the unworldly and the Divine.

These revelations offer support and help for the true seeker in his passage through life. To remember these surahs in times of difficulty, uncertainty, weakness, or doubt is to gain considerable strength, because one is reminded of the Ever-Witnessing, the All-Seeing, the Ever-Present – the Creator, Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala*.

SURAT AN-NABA' – THE NEWS (78)

(Meccan Surah)

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

This phrase is the very first of the Qur'an and reappears at the beginning of all the chapters except one. It is said that the entire Qur'an is contained in this phrase. 'In the Name of' indicates what is impossible to name or describe, that is, Allah. The entire creation is 'in the Name of Allah'.

The Attributes 'the Beneficent' and the 'Merciful' are from the same Arabic verbal root. 'The Beneficent' indicates the general mercy and compassion extended indiscriminately to all creation, while 'the Merciful' indicates specific mercy channeled to those who have surrendered to the stream of the One Transcendent Reality.

1. Of what do they ask one another?

2. About the awesome news,

3. Of which they differ?

`Amma is an abbreviation of *`an madha* which means "about what?" What is it that causes them to ask? This is an early Meccan surah. All those who denied the truth, the *kuffar* (those who cover up, who are ungrateful), that is those who objected to the message of the Prophet Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam* (peace and blessing be upon him and his family), those who could not bear the light of the message or could not comprehend the depth of it, those who could not yield themselves to the meaning of *tawhīd* (divine unity), those who considered the life of this world to be the only one and believed that there would be nothing after it – those deniers would naturally deny the ultimate, final event, object to it, and question it.

What is it that impels them to ask? The fact that they are able to ask is due to the spark of life in them, and where there is life there must also be death, for in this existence everything has its

opposite. By reflecting on this fact, one can see that since life and death exist in this consciousness, then it is likely that there is life in another form at another level of consciousness, or life after death, which will be inaugurated by the Day of Rising. Therefore, how dare they question this fact! The absolute, undebatable fact is that whatever has begun will come to an end. Upon further thought, it is obvious that He Who brought this creation into being can also easily bring into being its mirror image as well.

In the total picture of existence, the subtle aspects of this life will be the manifest aspects of the next life, and the gross aspects of this life will appear as only subsidiary or lesser manifestations; for example, the shape of the body, which is of primary importance now, will be only subsidiary in the next experience. The fact that the *kuffar* question the next life is proof of their uncertainty and confusion. On the other hand, the *mu'min* (the believer, who has trust), has complete certainty about his next abode.

Naba' means "news, tidings, information, announcement," here referring to the news about the end of this creation. Those who deny the message of reality as expounded by the Book of *tawhīd*, the Qur'an, wonder about the end and assume that the end of this experience will be the end of all experiences. They question it because they are in disagreement among themselves because and have no idea at all about its nature. They imagine that they can escape the tribulations and turmoil of the last day in one way or another. They do not recognize that on that day Allah's justice will be definitive and absolute, and that all they will bring with them will be the fruits of their own actions.

Man thinks he can overcome the laws that govern existence in this life. He thinks he can escape the fact that his ultimate reward is only according to his actions which, in turn, stem from his intentions. His life in the next level of consciousness will be based upon his actions and intentions; he will be re-created according to the overall make-up of his actions and intentions at the point of his departure from this life.

4. Nay, they will come to know.

5. Again, nay, they will come to know!

Kalla is a rebuke, a positive reprimand to those who differ. Each person will, through his death, experience the end of creation as far as his own life is concerned and will later also experience the end of the entire creation and resurrection. The lesser death, the lesser *qiyamah*, is the death of the person, of the microcosm. At that point those who deny will no longer have any doubt about the news, the tremendous event, which is the end of this existence.

6. Have We not made the earth an even expanse,

7. And the mountains as supports?

The *ayat* (signs; Qur'anic verses, plural of *ayah*; we will continue to use the Anglicized plural, *ayats*, in the remainder of the text) from six to sixteen constitute a single meaning. Allah is presenting the proof to us of the perfection of creation and its cyclical nature. Is the earth not made expansive for our ease of movement so that we may gain a livelihood, and are the mountains not its support? Gravitationally and geologically, mountains are like pillars sunk deeply and connected tectonically, holding the thin crust of the earth together so that we have a semblance of security and stability.

8. And We have created you in pairs,

This refers to the pairs of human beings, male and female, man and wife, and the doubles or opposites in every other aspect of creation, such as good and bad, healthy and unhealthy, the lower *nafs* (the self) and the higher *nafs*. It refers to all the opposites and pairs throughout creation.

9. And We have made your sleep as a rest,

10. And We have made the night as a covering,

The root of *subat* is *sabata*, which means “to hibernate, to rest, to stop action.” *Sabat* means “Saturday, the Sabbath,” the day when the Jews were not supposed to fish or do any work in the worldly sense. The Sabbath was called *sabt*, meaning that all outer action was forbidden so that the people might replenish themselves inwardly. *Subat* is “hibernation, repose,” and that is what

sleep is, a kind of death. Sleep actually recreates one's vitality, serves to re-center one after the troubles of the day, and allows one's physical ecology to realign itself.

The night is *libas*, from *labisa*, which means "to slip something over something, to cloak something, to dress." *Libas* refers to whatever we are wearing, to clothing. Here it describes how the night engulfs us, comes over us like a cloak and hides us.

11. And We have made the day for seeking livelihood,

Ma`ash, comes from *`asha*, which means "to live, to be alive." *Ma`ash* also means "a way of living or lifestyle" and also "livelihood, income." The day is the time for outer action because there is light. Then by the law of opposites, when there is no light, as at night, it is the time for inward light.

12. And We have built above you seven strong ones

Sab`an shidadan means "the seven heavens." *Shidad* is the plural of *shadid*, which means "strong" from the root *shadda*, which means "to be firm, solid, strong, fortified", and "to saddle." This means that the heavens are firmly interlinked and intertwined. There are seven layers of higher physical realities, but it is only the lowest one of these which we can discern, the one wherein the stars exist which we can see and measure.

Bana means "to construct, to erect, to build, to set up." The heavens are held together and constructed by subtle forces and powers. The physical parts of the heavens above are in a way less significant than the myriad unseen forces which hold them in balance during their course of expansion.

13. And We have made a blazing lamp,

This is a description of the sun, depicted as it often is, as *siraj wahhaj* (a blazing lamp). The light of the moon is described in the Qur'an as *nur*, which means "light, ray of light, a lamp." *Wahhaj* means "blazing, incandescent, white-hot, bursting forth in flames, brilliant." The nature of the sun is to emanate light, whereas the nature of the moon is to reflect light.

14. And We have sent down from the rain-clouds water flowing copiously,

Mu`sirat is from *`asara*, which means “to squeeze, to press out.” *`Asir* means “juice.” *Mu`sirat* are clouds from which rain will descend, pressed out like juice. *Ma`an thajjajan* means “water, rain,” which pours down abundantly.

15. That We may bring forth by it grain and plants,

16. And gardens of thick foliage.

Through the agitation that is caused by the rain’s descent and the earth’s throbbing, the grain and new plants spring forth and the gardens that are folded up within themselves open out and produce thick foliage.

17. Surely the Day of Decision is an appointed time –

Then there is a sudden shift. The day of division and segregation is the Day of Reckoning, the day of clarity, when everything is clearly apportioned and put where it belongs, the good with the good and the bad with the bad. On this day there will be no uncertainties. Specifically, *yawm al-fasl* means “the Day of Resurrection.” *Fasala* means “to separate, to segregate, to clearly distinguish between opposites.” It denotes complete discrimination with no possibility of doubt, no gray areas. *Fasala* also means “to wean,” because the act of weaning separates a baby from its mother. *Faysal* means both “a judge” and “a dividing sword.” This form of the word also means “decisive criterion, arbitrator.”

This ayah implies that today is not *yawm al-fasl*, but rather, today is a day of confusion when we do not know whether something is right or wrong or whether we are truly in *iman* (faith, trust, belief). At best, there is some wisdom in this day, and there is at least an attempt to discriminate by *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah). But on that day, after death, there will be no possibility of confusion. The people of the Fire shall be in the Fire, the people of the Garden shall be in the Garden, and everything shall be seen clearly through the eye of a just Creator.

Miqatan comes from *waqt*, which means “a fixed or appointed time, deadline” or “meeting point.” We will all meet on the Day of Appointment which is also called the Day of Gathering, when everyone will be gathered together for the final reckoning.

18. The Day when the trumpet is blown you will come forth in groups,

This refers to the Day when the angelic entity of Esrafil will blow into the horn of light to extinguish all other lights except the one and only Light. One that day there will be no other way of seeing things except by the pure Light of Allah, and the second sounding of the trumpet will be heard, signaling the Resurrection. There will be nothing other than the Light of the Creator, and no interference can take place. Nations will rise in with all the tribes, families and households, and will come in groups. They will come in waves and according to a rhythm, and within these groups will be the souls who led them – prophets and messengers. The Qur'an says that that day, according to the measure of Allah, will be 50,000 years of our normal reckoning. The closer one is to Allah, the Timeless, the clearer becomes the relativity of time. An instant of Allah's time could be nearly infinite to us.

19. And Heaven will be opened, and be as doors,

And heaven will be opened up; none of the forces that now hold it together will be present any longer. There is space in which there are doors, and when the readjustment of all things comes about, all the energies of creation will slip through these doors which will open in heaven. Heaven will no longer be held together as one single structure (*bina'*), but will be subject to a new trend, which is its destruction, and will return to its original state, its annihilation in the Creator. It will be as though it were all moving backwards in time. There will no longer be seven strong layers; rather, they will have become channels.

20. And the mountains will be set in motion as if they were a mere mirage.

The mountains which now appear to us as solid will be made to move. The common translation of *sarab* is “mirage.” Its root is *sariba*, which means “slip away, slither away, to disappear before one's eyes, to slip away unnoticed.” *Tasarraba al-ma'u fi'r-raml* means “the water found its way into the sand,” that is, secretly.

The mountains will recede and disappear like a mirage. The closer one gets to a mirage, the further away it appears – it is elusive and always escapes us. This implies that there is another level of consciousness, that matter and energy will interchange and exchange. Mountains as such will not become a mirage, but they will be transformed. They will take a course that cannot be understood, a course that is secret, and the secret is that they will dissolve back into their subtle reality, back again into a subtler and subtler energy form, back to the nothingness from which they originally sprang.

The collapse of creation will be a transformative and will be the reversal of creational processes. From nothingness came the subtlest matter, followed by the manifestation of gas, which then liquefied and became molten. After it cooled and solidified, the water cycle started. Next came plants and the constant, creational cycle which we, in our lives, have been able to witness for a moment. Later, however, that process will be reversed, and step by step, manifestation will return to its source.

21. Surely Hell lies in wait.

Jahannam (hell) is one of the names used in the Qur'an to designate the opposite of *jannah* (the Garden), and it means "hell." The word is connected to the root *jahuma*, which means "to frown" and *jahm*, which means "grim, gloomy, sullen, morose." *Jahnim* means "a bottomless pit" that has no resting place, no place of stability, no peace. *Jahannam* is a name for this hellish state because it is man's nature to seek security as well as certain knowledge, and the worst uncertainty that a man can experience is being flung into a bottomless pit to flounder helplessly forever.

Mirsad means "an ambush," from *rasada*, which means "to watch something intently," as a cat watches a mouse waiting in ambush for it at the mouse hole. *Mirsad*, in modern Arabic, means "telescope," for by the use of a telescope we ambush a star, corner it in our field of vision. Thus this ayah is saying that the bottomless pit, that state which will cause us trouble, is in fact looking for us, scanning the landscape to catch those who qualify in its "field of vision."

22. A place of return for the transgressors,

Tagha means “to transgress, to go beyond the boundaries.” Every system has a boundary. If in our system we do not keep within the bounds, we will eventually be destroyed. *Jahannam*, the final stage, perpetual bottomlessness, is the state to which *at-taghin* (those who transgress) will return. This implies that they were in *Jahannam* already, that they were already on their way towards that final abode in this life. By their wrong actions and intentions, they were moving into the field of fire and confusion.

The Qur’an defines the ultimate Fire as the *nar al-Kubra* (the great Fire, the permanent one). The implication is that small fires are the ones we taste in this existence because of our ignorance and injustice. Many other ayat tell us that the man who has transgressed is already in a mini-*Jahannam* within this realm of existence. He may not be aware of it himself, but he is fueling it with his anger, insecurity and hate. If a person can truly reflect upon his state, he will see that he is moving towards the state of either of *Jahannam* or of *Jannah*. The ayah says: *Li’t-taghina ma’aban*. They return to *Jahannam* in the next experience as if taking refuge in it. The same is true of *ahl al-jannah* (the people of *Jannah*). The Qur’an tells us that when they find themselves in the Garden in the next life, they will say, “We remember this!” This means that they have already experienced aspects of the Garden.

In this life we are preparing for the state or condition that will engulf us in the next consciousness. The next life, therefore, is the fruition and continuum of our state in this life and is the outcome of our intentions and actions at the point of death.

23. Living in it for ages.

24. They will not taste in it any coolness or drink,

25. But boiling water and a paralyzing cold,

People whose intentions and actions have not been unified, who have lived a life of disconnectedness and dispersion, end up in extreme agitation and conditions not conducive to peace and centeredness. They will remain in *Jahannam* for ages because the next consciousness is in a timeless zone that seems to go on forever.

The condition of *Jahannam* is extreme heat and cold and agitation; it is a perpetual fall, neither life nor death, the opposite of the love of connectedness, fusion, and certainty ingrained in man's spirit. If a soul has lived a life of confusion, then its natural progression will be to an abode wherein that dreadful state reaches its perfection. The same is true for a soul that has lived in harmony: its natural progression is toward the Garden. This life and the next are not disconnected, but rather, they form a continuum; what differs is the level of consciousness and the clarity and purity of experience. This can be illustrated by the example of a dreamer who, upon awakening from dreadful nightmares, sees clearly pure dreadfulness, or a dreamer who, upon awakening from joyful, satisfying dreams, finds himself in an absolute joyful reality.

26. A fitting recompense.

This is the appropriate reaction to a life of covering-up and the appropriate reward, *jaza'*, which means "outcome, reward, recompense." This is the perfect end corresponding to that which came before. Allah's creation and decree are in perfect harmony.

27. Surely, they did not anticipate an account,

Those people, those nations, expected neither a final account nor a reaction to their actions, nor did they think that they would ultimately meet the reflection of what they had themselves created by their actions and thoughts.

28. And they called Our signs lies with strong denial.

And they denied. *Kadhaba* means "to lie." *Kadhdhaba* means "to accuse someone else of lying" or "to deny." This means they have denied the truth which is within themselves, the truth of the news that Allah is the One Lord, that the creation's purpose is *tawhīd* (divine unity), and that the *nubuwwah* (the prophecy) and *risalah* (the message) speak of the necessity of acceptance of *tawhīd*. By denying this, they have deluded themselves.

29. And We have recorded everything in a Book.

Everything in this existence is gathered in the one and only Book that contains everything. Everything *is* the Book, and the Book contains everything. All creation is contained therein and

everything in existence is interconnected and is ultimately brought to its conclusion from one point. Nothing is separate. Those who transgress against themselves have denied all this, yet everything has been considered and is included in the Book of reality, the Book of manifestation, the comprehensive Book of *qada' wa qadar* (fate and divine decree). The Qur'an is the clear manifestation of that Book.

30. So taste! For We shall not add to you anything but punishment.

“So taste!” means “connect!” We will taste, in the sense of knowing full what our intention was. He who has denied, therefore, will be denied. If he denies that there is only oneness, that he has come into existence by the grace of that oneness, that through oneness man is sustained, and to this oneness he will return; and if he denies the fact that there were prophets and messengers who confirmed this truth leaving behind the document, the song itself, in the form of the *kitab* (the Book), then he is in dispersion, separation, and delusion. It will be these which he will fully taste in the hereafter. He is blind now and moreover refuses to be conscious of his blindness, but in the next consciousness he will live only in blindness.

31. Surely, for those who have fearful awareness is achievement,

The *muttaqin* guard themselves and are fearfully aware of the boundaries. They live as if between two sheer cliffs in terms of what lies beyond those boundaries, and thus move straight. *Iman* (faith, belief, trust), enhances *taqwa* (fearful awareness – of exceeding the boundaries, thereby causing harm to oneself).

32. Enclosed gardens and vineyards,

33. And companions with freshness of youth, equal in age,

Here the argument of the surah comes down to the level of our understanding, our human needs, and our expectations in this world. Our expectations are lush gardens and companions who are compatible, compassionate, of the right age and who give us solace. *Kawa'iba atraban* means “women,” or “companions of the appropriate age,” of the appropriate understanding.

34. And a full cup.

Their cups are full: thus there is no need, no anxiety. Desires and expectations are completely neutralized.

35. They will not hear in it any foolish chatter or falsehood,

Laghw means “foolish talk, nonsense, ineffectual, null.” *Lagha* means “to speak, to be null, to cancel.” *Lughah* means “language.” When a person speaks, he nullifies and cancels out the silence; the energy of linguistic communication by its very grossness overrides what was there before, that is, the world of silence. The condition described here is a very high state of the Garden; there is no distraction or break in a most sublime and tranquil consciousness of peace.

36. A reward from your Lord, a gift according to a reckoning.

This is the reward and natural outcome. *Rabb* means “Lord, Sustainer,” the attribute that brings our growth in knowledge to its full potential and causes us to realize that in this life we will be rewarded according to our actions and intentions, and in the next life we will also be re-created according to our actions and intentions. This process of action and reaction is in perfect balance, and it comes about according to a just measure. This balance is so intricate that it encompasses both meaning and form; for example, a physical action in this world may have its reward at the mental or intellectual level, or in the same way a good intention may result in a physical reward.

37. The Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, the All-Merciful, they are not able to address Him.

Here Allah refers to Himself as the Lord of the heavens and the earth. The Sustainer of the heavens, of all that is in the heavens, is the Container and Holder of the forces in the heavens, of all that is on earth, and of the interspace between them. It specifies the interspace between different systems and emphasizes the fact that physical and energy subsystems, obeying the laws of measurement and predictability, are bonded together by another aspect of reality. What governs the earthly realm is often discernable and measurable. What governs celestial entities is also reasonably measurable by human beings because these two systems are not separate. That no-man’s land, the interspace, whose nature may escape us when we shift our attention from Newtonian physics to quantum mechanics, is under the same Lordship. In our modern world, in

so-called “science,” we have studied various systems and have found laws that are not applicable to all. Between these systems there are interspaces which we do not understand. Each module makes sense, but the interrelationship between them does not. Newtonian physics makes sense, but only to a certain point. Quantum mechanics applies to a zone where Newtonian physics is nonsense. One can also consider subatomic physics, which is different from both. Each science has its self-contained laws. In the interspace, in between *as-samawati wa’l-ard* (sky and earth) are also heavens or zones, and they are all under the sustainership of the Lord.

Khitab comes from *khataba*, which means “to speak to a group of people,” and also “to ask for a woman’s hand in marriage.” *Khitab* means “speech, letter,” or “communication,” while *khutubah* means “courtship, engagement,” All of these imply connection and unification. The transgressors were disconnected from what governed physical reality in this life; thus they can only taste even greater disconnectedness in the next life.

38. The Day when the spirit and the angels will stand in ranks – none will speak except he whom the All-Merciful gives permission, and who speaks words that hit the mark.

The Day of Reckoning, the day when action stops, is the day when a new set of laws which have existed from the beginning will take hold. Our bodies are complex systems made up of the subtle interaction of subsystems and forces involving chemical, electrical, magnetic, mechanical and other physical, as well as more subtle, systems, each subject to its own laws. The laws that apply in the next realm, after the end of this existence, are of another nature. Now we are experiencing everything in a certain direction of time; the collapse of creation will occur as if creation has been in reversed time. We can only intellectualize and theorize about it since we have but a very limited comprehension of it.

We are told that in that situation we as individuals will no longer have the power to act – we will be completely and utterly under the control and at the mercy of the new dominion. It will be like the end of a play; it will be sealed. It will be the time for the evaluation of each player’s performance.

Ruh comes from the same root as *raha*. It is also related to *rih*, which means “wind,” *mirwahah*, which means “fan,” and *istirwah*, which means “respiration.” It is the subtle element

that is blown into us in the form of the soul, as we call it. The *ruh* issues from the command of the Sustainer and is the subtlest manifestation which covers itself with the body, rendering it sentient and capable of vast, conflicting and diverse possibilities. The process of death is that of the *ruh* slipping out, leaving the body behind where it belongs: in the earth.

La yatakallamuna is from the verb *takallama*, which means “to speak,” *Kalimah* means “spoken word,” or “words.” *Kalam* is the act of making sound, speaking, discussion, expression. It is an action. We generally take for granted our ability to act and speak, but on the Day of Resurrection no action or verbal interference can take place. Only the Merciful and the Perfect in every way will prevail. There will no longer be any possibility for anybody to perform harmful acts. We can transgress only in this realm of existence, in this dimension, along this direction of time. The only choice we have here is to recognize that in reality we have no choice. Choice is really ignorance, and the knowledge of having no choice is wisdom. If we know what the best action is in each new situation, we have no choice; it is clear to us what action we must take.

39. That is the true Day – so whosoever desires should seek refuge with his Lord.

On that day, in that new state of affairs, justice is perfect: *haqq* (truth) will prevail in every way, with absolute certainty. It also prevails in every way in this existence, but as limited beings we are often uncertain about this fact. From the point of view of Allah or of *haqiqah* (the truth), there is never injustice; everything is absolutely just. It is only our ignorance which results in seeing injustice in this life. Allah says, “I created them for the Fire and I do not care.” Allah has created everything in justice, *bi'l-haqq*. It is only man who transgresses the balance and thereby creates the climate or appearance of injustice.

Fa man sha'a't-takhadha ila rabbihi ma'aban means, “So whosoever should seek refuge with his Lord.” This indicates that Allah is talking to people who are not aware of the fact that they are sustained and contained by the Lord. The warning conveyed is, “Those of you who now heed, or wish, return there – find a way back! You have transgressed; you have acted wrongly, so return back to the only reality in which you have been given freedom to rebel.”

Huwa-t-tawwab, “He is the Often-Returning,” He accepts our return over and over, as does a loving father who knows his child is so rebellious that he will constantly leave. Whenever the

child returns, the father says, “This is the last time I will take him back.” The father welcomes him, knowing full well that in the next moment he will be off again.

The Creator knows that we are full of nothing but doubt and bickering. From the point of view of someone who trusts in the absolute mercy of Allah and so submits to it, doubts cannot arise, because he accepts what comes to him as being the best for him, and from that very acceptance the knowledge that it is the best arises.

This ayah says that on the Day of Judgment, the Day of Truth, all doubt and questioning will stop. He who wants to return to that state of unity, which is his true heritage and is already contained in his essence, will have to find a way, and that way lies in the recognition of all that is not the way. The way towards knowledge of the Lord is through knowledge of the *nafs*, the experiencing self; that is, being able to recognize the lower *nafs*, the animal *nafs*, the commanding *nafs*, the doubting *nafs*, the whimsical or inspired *nafs*, and the trouble caused by all of these aspects of the lower *nafs*. Recognizing all of these traits, men of reason will be able to avoid them in future situations, and the higher aspects of the *nafs* will spontaneously begin to predominate and become nourished.

The secure and contented self, the *nafs* that is purified, is at ease and at peace in the hands of its Lord, serenely allowing the Lord to do with it what He wills according to perfect destiny. The path to the Lord, therefore, lies in recognizing and avoiding all that is going to cause us harm and confusion. By avoiding what is clearly wrong we will move toward that which is right.

40. Surely We warn you of a punishment near at hand: The Day when man will see what his hands have sent ahead, and the one who covers up will say: O, would that I were dust!

The Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, said, “I am only a warner. I am warning you where the Fire begins, where tranquility ends, and where loss begins – it is when you do not accept that there is only the decree; and the decree is just.”

The inner meaning of this ayah is that we bring affliction upon ourselves right now, but we may not notice it because we cover our selves up with all kinds of excuses and justifications. As an all-encompassing *nafs* which has within it the meaning of *Rahman* (Allah, the All-Merciful), as

well as the meaning of *Shaytan* (Satan), a person can justify any action, high or low, good or bad. Justification is in fact just connecting one thing to another and is an aspect of *tawhīd* (divine unity). By uniting his intention with his action, everyone is actually in a state of worship. It could be at the altar of the high, which results in knowledge of the Almighty Lord, or at the altar of the low, which is that of delusion and illusion.

The condition or state of the Day of Resurrection, in which everything is exposed and nothing is hidden, can be partially tasted now by each one of us if we are willing and able to stop our minds and actions and to take complete stock of ourselves. If we have the ability and bravery to face our intentions and can recognize the degree of the self's purification, we will catch a glimpse of the meaning of the Day of Requital and the meaning of balance.

On the Day of Judgment we will be reconstructed according to our intentions and actions in this world. If we want to know the condition of our hearts in the next life, all we need to do is look at the condition of our hearts in this life. If the condition of the heart is pure, our home in the next life will be close to the pure Source of creation. If not, it will be somewhere along a spectrum, at one end of which is eternal Fire and at the other end of which are the highest Gardens. If we live totally in the present, remaining aware and taking account of ourselves, then we are living *yawm al-qiyamah* now.

“And the one who covers up will say: O, would that I were dust!” He who has denied in the past, who has been disconnected and who suddenly sees that he has wasted the treasure of his time and life, will say, “I wish I were nothing – I wish I were dust, forgotten!” Unfortunately for such a one, nothing is forgotten. Every person, every *ruh*, will be fully brought to life and will totally recognize his full significance. He cannot hide; he cannot be like dust lost in the desert. Allah says that if a man has done one iota of good, it will appear before him. No more recesses of the *nafs* will be allowed; all the corridors will be opened. That is why if a person faces himself totally right now, this act is his personal *yawm al-qiyamah*. That is the meaning of the saying, “If you know yourself, you know your Lord,” because that is the business of Lordship – to show everything openly, in every way.

We seek permanency in everything in this life, in relationships and knowledge, and that is why we distinguish between true knowledge and mere information. Information about things changes,

such as when new medicines are developed which cure certain diseases. True knowledge does not change, however. It is absolute, and for this reason we seek it. All of us are seeking absolute knowledge and absolute knowledge is the news, is the *naba'*. What are they asking about? What news do they want? What higher information or news do they want other than that there is Allah, and by His Grace we have been created. When we abandon ourselves to Allah and follow the men of Allah, we will enter this sought after realm of absolute knowledge.

SURAT AN-NAZI'AT – THOSE WHO TEAR OUT (79)

(Meccan Surah)

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

This is a late Meccan surah concerning this life and life in the next phase and which also gives a description of the occurrences on the Day of Judgment.

1. By those who tear out violently,

The surah begins by describing various forces of which everyone is aware. A very common interpretation is that it refers to the angelic powers, those myriad forces which perform various functions throughout the creation.

An-nazi'at comes from *naza'a*, which means “to take away, to strip off, to quarrel,” implying two forces opposing each other.

Ghariqa the root verb of *gharqan*, means “to go under, to be drowned.” There is an ambiguity here whose explanation only Allah knows for certain. This could be a reference to the moment of death, when the angels of death forcefully strip life away. It could also be a reference to the souls of the people who do not want to depart from this life, who are not prepared for the next experience and whose souls have to be forcibly stripped out of their bodies in order for them to continue the course of destiny. It could also refer to the cosmos. The first five ayat could equally refer to the different types of planets and stars since they are all energy centers which keep the cosmos in a state of constant motion.

2. And by those who draw out gently,

This might refer to those souls which become *nashit* (vigorous and active, healthy and dynamic). Imam `Ali Zayn al-`Abidin, *`alayhi-s-salam* (peace be upon him) said, “Death for the *mu'min* (believer, one who trusts Reality) is like the stripping off of a filthy, smelly, garment.” That soul looks forward to the next experience because he knows that the next life does not contain the

turmoil and tribulation of this world. Clearly, under the guidance of the one-and-only direction of Allah, no interference can take place there; we cannot intervene or interject. We will be actionless, at peace.

This ayah might also be a reference to distant stars whose light reaches us after hundreds and thousands of light years and which are ever increasing their speed in the cosmic expansion.

3. And by those who float in space,

Sabaha means “to swim, to float, to drift.” The soul flows with destiny and moves along its course with no resistance. It could also refer to those entities whose substance is similar to energy wavebands, the angels, who make it easier for the souls who are willing to surrender. Again, this could also apply to the planets spinning along their orbital paths.

4. Then those who are foremost going ahead,

These ayats can also be taken entirely on the level of the *mulk* (earthly dominion, having to do with worldly things). *Sabaqa* means “to go ahead of, to outdistance.” Often *sabiq* refers to horses, especially good racehorses. Some commentaries say that this ayah means “to see the thoroughbred, to see the winning horse.” The horse that has been true to its breeding is a winning horse. It may also mean planets that move faster than the others or stars or galaxies which move faster than others in their trajectory.

5. Then those who regulate the affair.

This may refer to those forces, powers, planets, and energies whose objective is *tadbir*, which comes from *dabbara*, meaning, “to make arrangements, organize,” that is, to perform actions that interconnect the various happenings in this world, actions that eventually manifest as movement of wind, clouds, volcanoes, or human beings; in other words, a movement of the outward elements which hold all elements together. Anything which is *mudabbirat* is concerned with *tadbir* or arranging affairs.

This surah opens us up to begin reflecting on all the powers and forces from which we are not separate and which affect us outwardly and inwardly, such as the spirits within our bodies and

the surrounding environment. These first ayats are a prelude to the explanation of what will occur when this creation, with its cosmic expansion issuing from the initial explosion, comes to an end.

6. The Day when the quaking one will quake,

This is the first occurrence heralding the end of the expansion. When that expansion stops, a major disturbance in the entire cosmic system will take place. As far as the earth is concerned, there will be a quaking and violent trembling: *rajifah*.

When a system follows its course, it moves smoothly. Once its course is changed and redirected, that break manifests in itself a resistance which takes the form of trembling. This first occurrence is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'an. The Qur'an describes in detail how the world will come to an end. This ayah indicates the stopping of the first system. Systems always interact with one another; thus, when one stops another begins. What holds these systems together is beyond our intellectual comprehension.

7. What comes after will follow.

The next quaking then will come, the next sounding of the trumpet, which will herald the new course in the *`alam al-arwah*, the world of subtle energies rather than the world of gross energies. *Radifah* comes from *radifa*, meaning "to follow," and *radif* means "the next one, what follows." The first quake, then, the first sounding, will be the rending apart of the existing system, its cessation, and the second quake will be the start of the next system.

8. Hearts on that day will throb,

This statement implies that all that will remain of us then is what was implanted in our hearts, that which had been constructed by our actions and intentions in this life. The hearts of those who have denied this occurrence, who have denied the truth of the message that there is only one reality and one creator and that we are never separate from our decreed destiny, those hearts will be completely at odds. When the Resurrection begins, they will then feel the separation sharply and will feel that they are not flowing smoothly with the current, but struggling against it.

9. Their eyes cast down.

Man's sight, his faculty of perception, will no longer function as it had before. Man's vision and the expectations in his heart will be low, subdued, disconnected from events. Rather, they will be cast aside.

10. They say: Will we indeed be restored to (our) first state?

The state or situation of those hearts echoes a rebellion which is based on their doubt and questioning: "Are we going to return? Is there a return? Are we going to start all over again? Is there going to be a continuation? Is there going to be another cycle?"

11. What! When we are rotten bones?

The questioning continues with a firmly voiced doubt: "How can that be? We never expected it!" Being gross, they were only judging it from the clumsy attitude of a physical point of view. They say, "How can these bones be restored after they, the hardest elements of our bodies, have decayed?" They must understand that this question is not concerned with flesh and bones but with the *ruh* (spirit) and what it has done during its passage through this world.

12. They say: This, then, would be a return with loss.

As soon as they realize that they must enter into a new situation, they conclude that they have returned to a situation of loss, because their *ruh* is not ready for this next realm of existence. They already realize that it will be a loss to them and that in the next experience they will be completely bereft.

13. But it will be only a single cry –

Zajara, the verbal root of *zajrah* (cry), means "to drive back, to drive away, to prevent, to rebuke." For those people who have been astray, the ones who have denied the truth of the message that there will be a return, an afterlife, there is but one shout, one major reminder. After the first movement, this life with all its varying facets will continue, but the awakening will come with the next cry. The first shout or jolt will stop this system, and the next jolt will begin the next

system. Instantaneously, with one jolt, the souls will realize that they are at a loss. They will recognize it and say it openly, for it is embedded within the soul.

14. When behold! They will be awakened!

The ordinary meaning of *sahirah* is “the surface of the earth.” The inner meaning is derived from the root of the word *sahira*, which means “to be sleepless, to stay awake (in some activity).” *Sahar* means “insomnia.” This all implies that the surface of the earth is always alive. Here the meaning is that once these souls have been awakened, they will then be awake to reality forever. They were asleep to the truth before, but suddenly they will awaken. The outer meaning of this ayah is that the dead bodies which had been previously hidden in their graves will be cast up to the surface of the earth. The inner meaning is that those souls will suddenly be fully awakened. There will be no more sleepiness of the kind we may experience in our consciousness in this life.

15. Has the story of Musa not come to you?

Now we are brought to this world, Allah asks, “Have you not heard the story of the prophet of Allah, Sayyidna Musa, *`alayhi-s-salam*, when his Lord, his Sustainer, called him to action, called him to move along the path of reality in this life?”

16. When his Lord called upon him in the holy valley of Tuwa:

Sayyidna Musa, *`alayhi-s-salam*, was brought into the sacred valley. His heart was held by *ar-ruh al-qudus*. The sanctity of the heart was caught and held by the *rububiyah* (Lordship). He had no option but to serve his Lord, and he was inspired by Him to strike at the top of the pyramid of corruption.

17. Go to Fir`awn, he has certainly transgressed the bounds!

When a man is a slave to the Highest, then his task will be the highest, his responsibility will be the highest, and his rewards will be the highest. Hence Sayyidna Musa, *`alayhi-s-salam*, was commissioned to direct his message of unity towards Fir`awn (Pharaoh) because Fir`awn had transgressed and, as a result of this transgression, the entire nation was brought into a state of loss.

18. Then say: Will you purify yourself?

Allah commanded Sayyidna Musa: “Give him the message: Why have you not purified yourself? Why have you not given up your self in submission? Why do you not move along the path of self-abandonment? Why do you not leave off this garb that you have taken on, in which you are hiding, playing at being God?”

19. And, I will guide you to your Lord so that you fear.

The implication here is that Fir`awn had no fear of anything and no respect for anything; he had no knowledge of the boundaries of behavior. Guidance (*hidayah*; from *hada*) here implies fear (*khashyah*; from *khashiya*, to fear or dread something). The door to guidance is the fear of transgression, the fear of making mistakes and the fear of displeasing Allah by breaking His laws which govern both this existence and the next. This was the message of Sayyidna Musa, *`alayhi-s-salam*, to Pharaoh. He was saying, “If you are willing, if you want to purify yourself, if you want to live a life of pure existence in true preparation for the next world, I will show you the way, clearly indicating the boundaries, so that you will have *khashyah*. Then you will be guided to the one and only Truth. If you do not have fear, then you cannot receive guidance.”

20. So he showed him the great sign –

Sayyidna Musa, *`alayhi-s-salam*, had many signs, and many of them were tangible in this world – his staff which became a serpent; his white, shining hand; the appearance of blood and frogs, and many others. These were the ordinary signs. Here the reference is to *al-ayat al-kubra* (the great sign), which is the knowledge of Allah. Sayyidna Musa said, “If you have fear, you will have guidance, and from that will come to you knowledge of the one and only Reality from which you are not separate!”

So the message of Sayyidna Musa to Fir`awn was a high message, not an ordinary one, because Fir`awn was not an ordinary king. He was a king involved in knowledge and sciences that were very sophisticated. He had innumerable powers but they were not in accordance with the *sunnah* (way) of Allah. He and his people used supernatural powers, such as the harnessing of the *jinn*. It is not correct for us to do these things. For a true man of Allah, such powers mean nothing – they

are just insignificant gifts. The highest of all signs is the knowledge of Allah, while the lowest signs are outer ones. There is only Allah, and we have come into this world to be baffled and tested and afflicted in order to surrender and submit to Him. The way is through *hashyah* (fear of transgression).

21. But he denied and disobeyed.

Fir`awn, having invested all his life in his system of power-mongering and control, could not accept this message that he should be fearful of transgression. In his powerful arrogance, he could not receive it. His reaction to it – to the fearful sign that there is only Allah, and that he, Fir`awn, was of no significance – was to deny what was already truthful in himself, to deny the spark of truth that was in his heart.

Fir`awn denied – he said, “No!” *Asa* means “to disobey, to resist, to defy, to oppose.” Then, after denying, he sought to be reconfirmed in his position. We all want confirmation in this life; we all seek security. We want confirmation that what we are doing is right. We are lovers of the One Reality and so, if our thoughts are perverted, we will want to be connected to people who are also perverted in their thinking.

At all times we worship and adore the divine attributes. Everything in creation is in perfection, and we are only witnesses of it. There is nothing we can add to it. Only those who have been chosen for a higher mission will have to come out and act, teach, and follow in the footsteps of the prophets, like Sayyidna Musa, *alayhi-s-salam*. Fir`awn, quite naturally and understandably, did not comprehend this message. He veered off in his own perverted direction.

22. Then he went back hastily,

Speedily he went to collect himself and to connect with his own system, the system of *kuf*r (covering up), and of building power for himself.

23. So he gathered and proclaimed –

He collected his supporters together because he felt vulnerable. He felt isolated in the illuminating beam of the message of Sayyidna Musa, *`alayhi-s-salam*, so he gathered all his supporters together in order to gain reassurance.

24. Then he said: I am your Lord, the Most High!

Again, he fell back into his old habits, safe and sound under the crown of leadership and lordship with which he had crowned himself. He was playing at being God, trying to set himself up in that most powerful, impossible position. This is a grave danger for all human beings. The higher we go, the more this danger becomes accentuated. People of insight and inward strength especially must be kept within the limits of the *shari`ah*, the parameters of the outward law, for the danger of self-delusion lies within all of us. We have seen it in this life, both among people of the *zahir* (outward), and people of the *batin* (inward). There is always a tendency to fall prey to this danger unless we continue the *suluk* (journey on the path of knowledge), within the *shari`ah*, through constant performance of the prayers and worship.

Fir`awn said, “I am your Lord, the Most High,” to his people. No man can exist in isolation because he is either connected to the one and only Reality and can only act as a slave, or he is connected to a perverted and distorted version of the truth, as in this case.

25. So Allah seized him with the punishment of the hereafter and the first.

The reaction of Reality to Fir`awn in his self-elevated position was punishment. *Nakal* means “punishment.” Fir`awn received a rebuttal from Reality for both his early deeds and his later deeds, both for those he had committed before Sayyidna Musa came to him and for those he was committing at that time. This ayah refers to the suffering with which he will be afflicted in this life and later. As we know, Fir`awn and his people were drowned crossing the Red Sea. But “last” and “first” could also mean “outer” and “inner;” outwardly he was challenged, and inwardly he was tormented. He could not do anything in the face of the outer actions of Sayyidna Musa, *`alayhi-s-salam*, and inwardly he was shattered as well, because he did not know how to react to the message.

26. Most certainly there is in this a lesson for he who fears.

`Ibrah means “admonition, example, lesson.” The root of it is *`abara*, which means “to cross, traverse, to interpret (a dream), to shed tears.” The word for “Hebrew” (*`Ibri*) comes from the same root, because they crossed to the safety of the other shore. It also implies crossing to the shore of knowledge for he who is wary, eager to know, and concerned about not remaining in ignorance. Such a person wants to have safe conduct, which is secured by correct behavior.

In these ayat we have been given the example of a man of reality, a man of Allah, in this case the prophet Musa, *`alayhi-s-salam*, and his polar opposite, a man of *bu`ud* (remoteness, separation), a man of *shaytan*, a man of loss. We are told in the Qur’an that the two systems cannot meet: “To you your way and to me my way.” (Qur’an, 109:6), One will be destroyed, and the other will prevail.

Reflecting on the power of Fir`awn and what happened to him and his people, we are asked in the next ayah, “Are you stronger than the heavens?”

27. Are you harder to create, or the heaven? He erected it.

Sama` implies that which is holding our cosmos together. The root of the word means “high” – not just high in the vertical sense, but of a subtle height, elevated and lofty in meaning, anything that is *latif* (subtle, of exalted, subtle realms, sublime). *Rajulun samin* means “a man of high values, of high moral character.” To refer to an action as *samin* means that the action is of a high moral value.

The ayah is asking, “Are you stronger in creation, tougher and more permanent than all the heavens, both outer and inner?” This refers to the nearer heavens of the planetary systems and the outer heavens beyond them. In Qur’an those heavens of which we can conceive and perceive, which to us are unfathomable, are in fact the lowest heavens. Above these are six other heavens. It is the lower heaven which has been decorated with the planets and stars. As there are seven heavens, so there are seven layers, or phases, in the earth, the innermost being molten metal. There are also seven heavens of energy levels of electrons around the nucleus of the atom.

It is true, however, that in Arabic the numbers seven or seventy imply a very large number. In ordinary speech, if we say that someone has told us something seven times, it does not

necessarily mean an actual seven times but could simply mean many times. The same is true for the number seventy. In many of the *hadith* (traditions) of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, we find these numbers mentioned, as for example when he said, “No day has passed without my making *istighfar* (asking pardon of Allah) seventy times.” Now, this does not necessarily mean that he used a *tasbeih* (Muslim rosary) or that he sat with date-pits, as was common at that time, counting out the number of times he said, “*astaghfiru 'llah*,” I ask God’s pardon. Rather, it means that he said this a great number of times, probably at least seventy.

28. He raised high its height, then put it in order.

Samk means “roof” or “ceiling,” *sumk* means “thickness,” while *samik* means “thick.” *Rafa`a samkaha*, “He raised up its height,” means that the width of the heavens was increased to what in our perception was an unfathomable degree. In this ayah the word implies that the heavens are exploding. It is possible to read into this ayah the inner meaning of the Big Bang.

Fa-sawwaha is one of the earliest references to the word *sawa*, meaning to be equivalent, to even, to level, to smooth, to equalize, to regulate, to put in order.” *Sawa* and its derivatives overlap in meaning with *`adala*, which means “to act justly, to be equal, to equalize, to set in order,” From it comes the word *musawah*, which means “equality before the law,” and *taswiyah*, which means “arrangement, equalization.” So after the great explosion order was established.

29. And He made dark its night and brought out the light of its morning.

This refers to the duality of existence: the night was rendered dark; the day, the early morning, was brought out and made more visible. *Akhraja* means “to bring out, to bring forth.” *Kharaja* means “to go out, to come out.” *Kharaj* is what we are supposed to pay from our wealth or whatever we have as our tax or *zakah*.

30. And the earth, He expanded it after that.

The earth is part of the heavens, part of the total creational balance. Here the earth was stretched out flat and made usable. *Daha* means “to spread out, flatten level, unroll,” and *dahyah* means “egg.” This refers to the fact that the earth was created in an egg-shape, a fact that modern man

has known for only a few decades. This ayah is saying, therefore, that the earth was made small, usable and plain, and was shaped like an egg.

31. He brought forth from it its water and its pasturage –

In the early stages of creation, the earth was made solid from what appeared to be molten or gaseous material. The fluid catalyst that was needed in order to transform solid matter into more usable, more sentient matter, and into plants, animals and human beings, was squeezed out of the earth.

Mar`an means “pasturage” or “a place for grazing.” *Ra`a* means “to graze,” and it also means “to tend a flock of animals” or, more generally, “to take care of someone or something.” *Ra`i* is “a shepherd.” *Ra`ini* means, “Take care of me.”

Thus, fluidity from the earth comes, a fluidity which both renders life possible and gives us the possibility to graze on it, letting our animal instincts express themselves, having as we do the earthly elements of bodies and robust health.

32. And the mountains, He made them firm –

Here again we have an example of how the earth came about, settling into a solid form. *Arsaha* means “that He made them fast in a liquid medium, He anchored them,” and it comes from *rasa*, which means “to be firm,” and “to anchor.” This firmness exists in order for us to settle and seek provision and to give us the stability we need to help us go through life’s journey. The Qur’an told us 1400 years ago what modern geologists have only recently been able to describe about the original formation of the earth.

33. A provision for you and for your cattle.

Thus, there is ease on this journey of ours on this earth which culminates in the great calamity, referred to as the *at-tammatu’l-kubra*.

34. But when the great calamity comes –

Death is the great calamity for those who regard the experience of this world as the main objective of our existence, but it is only a prelude to the next.

35. The Day on which man will recollect that for which he strove –

It is on that day that a man will remember all that had gone before, and all that he strove for will unfold for him, revealing his intentions.

36. And hell will be manifest to him who sees.

The sight of all of us will be sharper then and *jahim*, which is another name for hell, will become vividly evident. Those who have been leading their lives in that direction will clearly descend into it.

37. Then, as for him who has transgressed the bounds –

38. And prefers the life of this world –

39. Then certainly hell, that is the abode!

For those who transgressed in this world, preferring the life of this world to the next, for those who have denied and been engulfed in their denial, certainly *jahim* is their final resting place.

40. And as for him who fears to stand before his Lord, and forbids the self from low desires

–

As for he who had *khashyah* (fear), who feared the overwhelming power and position of his Lord, who always stood as though he were in the hands of his Lord, who always acted as though he were an extension of that Lordship, he is someone who forbade his soul low desires, who stayed in remembrance and did not transgress. He who was always aware of the havoc the *nafs* can play by its whims, by its *hawa* (desire), always remained on the *sirat* (the Path).

41. Then surely the Garden – that is the abode!

For whoever had the fearful awareness of Allah's presence, naturally *jannah* is his final abode, since he had been preparing for it here and now and had already learned its condition and its state. He had already entered into a state of the Garden in this world in preparation for his final and perpetual state in the next world.

42. They ask you about the Hour – when it will come.

This is a reference to the Hour of Reckoning, the hour of complete and total unfolding, the hour in which action and reaction meet and are united, in which man's intentions, his deeds, and his own spirit, will be connected and unified. This is when man will see himself to be the result of his actions which are, in reality, the manifestations of his intentions. He will see nothing other than the subtle nature which was his all along, and it will be clear that he was always presented with the option of either polishing it or causing it to be increasingly covered by his *nafs*.

43. About what! You are of its reminder.

44. To your Lord is the goal of it.

How can you remind them of its goal, its end? All time stops with the Lord; the Lordship of Allah is beyond time. That Hour, that stoppage of time, that end or resting place, is with the Lord.

45. You are only a warner to him who fears it.

All we can do in this realm, which is subject to time, is to warn others, to make them aware that a situation will come about in which time will stop. All that we will have will be our capital, that which we have earned, and the knowledge which we have brought forth from the source of knowledge within us, by our *khashyah*, by our wariness, by our fearful awareness that this experience will come to an end.

46. On the Day that they see it, it will be as though they had not tarried except for the latter part of a day, or the early part of it.

The final hour can be tasted here, but in the absolute final hour time will stop. When we experience that, the long years of this life will seem like just one day, or part of a day and a night. Life will seem short and insignificant. When time comes to an end, and we look at it from the angle of that state of consciousness, our total existence in this world will look completely distorted. We will leave time to go into timelessness, which is the essential backdrop to time; and Allah is the Timeless.

SURAT `ABASA – HE FROWNED (80)

(Meccan Surah)

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Each surah came down on a specific occasion and has direct relevance both to the instant and to posterity as well, because words of wisdom are always applicable. The occasion of this surah arose when the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, was sitting one day with some important *kafir* Quraysh leaders who were against *islam*, the attitude of positive submission, and was interrupted by a blind man. This blind man, `Abd-Allah ibn Umm Maktum, was of excellent character and whenever he came upon the Prophet, he would ask him, “Give me from what God has given to you.” The Prophet would then try to illumine his heart and give him the good news. On this occasion, however, the Prophet frowned at the interruption, since he was in all likelihood about to convert these leaders of the Quraysh to Islam, an event which would have strengthened its position and increased its number. This surah came down to him as he returned to his chamber after the interruption, and was overwhelmed by an inner awareness.

- 1. He frowned and turned away,**
- 2. Because a blind man came to him.**
- 3. And what do you know that he may purify himself?**

The third ayah is a reference both to leaders of the Quraysh and to the blind man. *Yazzakka* is from the verb “to purify oneself”; purification must take place in order to make *salah* (prayer), which is one of the pillars of Islam. *Salah* not only means prayer, but also recharging and connecting; and this is done five times a day until one is permanently connected. *Tazkiyah* means purification, and that implies increasing or enhancing the quality of something. For example, the quality of water is enhanced by purifying it; one purifies oneself by paying *zakah* (alms tax).

The third ayah asks, “And how do you know that he may be purified?” The whole subject of life is purification, for if there is purity, there is peace. Man always seeks to purify his mind and

actions in the best way he can. The purification of some people's actions may come through taking an action to its extreme, whereupon a balance will be recognized and the lesson will be learned. Some scholars say that this ayah refers to the Quraysh, while others say that it refers to the blind man since it is not about quantity but about purification, for if one man is fulfilled it is enough.

4. Or become reminded so that the reminder should profit him?

“Or that he will remember,” says the fourth ayah. All the practices of the men of Allah are attempts to be in a state of remembrance and awareness. We may ask, remembrance of what? Remembrance of what causes fulfillment and of what causes lack of fulfillment. We all suffer from a lack of fulfillment that we ourselves bring about. Each person, as an individual, has prescribed that his fulfillment will occur only if certain events happen. If they do not happen, then he is miserable. He is the author of his own fulfillment, and nobody else can help him, from the womb to the tomb. So *dhikr*, from the word *dhakara*, which means “to remember,” is the beginning of reflection; it is not even meditation. Remembrance is difficult in the modern world because we are always in such a hurry that we do not even take time to look at our reflections in a mirror.

The fourth ayah asks, “How do you know that he will remember so that it might be of use to him?” It is positive remembrance that is referred to. If remembrance is only a romantic notion, then what use is it? That is why we say we must neither dwell on yesterday nor concern ourselves with what comes tomorrow, but only do our best today. This is all that we have. If all our energies are preserved, then each day will be the best possible one, because we will always be alert. Unfortunately, most of us are not able to do this.

5. As for him who considers himself free from need,

Istaghna is derived from *ghaniya*, which means “to be rich, to be free from want.” There is no independence, but only the Independent, the One. Separateness does not exist – everybody affects everybody else. One fly affects the whole cosmos, even though its effects are minute. Some of us, however, think we have recently discovered ecology. Only after having caused the extinction of fifty species do we discover an imbalance in the ecology of nature. There is no

freedom from want or need. We neither own anything nor possess anything, for there is no *we* to own or possess.

6. So you address yourself to him.

Tasadda is from the verb “to occupy oneself, to turn, to oppose, resist.” As for those who appear to be self-sufficient, they will have obstacles thrown in their way. They will be intercepted.

7. And it is not upon you for him to be purified.

The job of a true messenger is to address the other. He can do nothing other than try and share his state. It is an essential element of the human condition; it is our birthright to share those aspects which we ourselves like. Yet, the messenger cannot purify another and the burden of it is not on him. He can only provide the means and the example.

Outwardly, *zakah* involves giving. Inwardly, it is to abandon and purify oneself, because it indicates the recognition that whatever a man possesses is going to tie him down. Since he is already tied down by his body and out of necessity has possessions, he must give *zakah*. *Zakah* is obligatory from a *shari`ah* (revealed Islamic law) point of view. It is equally obligatory from an inner standpoint, for if the outer does not move towards the inner, it is of no use.

8. And as for him who comes to you striving hard,

This ayah refers to the same event, that of the blind man coming to the Prophet seeking knowledge. *Sa`y* (running seven times between Safa and Marwa) is derived from the same verbal root as *yas`a* and means “to move quickly, to strive for.” *Sa`y* is what we do on *hajj* (pilgrimage), and is symbolic of what we, as intelligent human beings, do every day of our lives. In all of our attempts we are struggling.

9. And he fears,

Whoever has come to him with a firm resolve (because he will come seeking knowledge like that blind man) is fearful of anything that is not conducive to his fulfillment. He does not come out of fear alone, but out of a fearfulness of that which helps neither his progress nor his enrichment.

10. And you are distracted from him.

Every Arab knows what a *malha* is – a nightclub. Originally, however, it meant anything that distracts. One only has to look at the state of a society's language to see its degeneration. Anything that distracts one from pursuing a goal is *lahw* (amusement, diversion), except inward abandonment, since outward abandonment is only useful if it takes the direction of inward abandonment. If there can be equal inward abandonment that is not connected to the outward, that is fine. It is our attitude towards the material which counts – are we in charge of it, or is it in charge of us? If we experience loss, do we experience a lessening of our selves, or are we absolutely the same as before the loss? Each of us knows the answer.

This ayah is a reprimand – the voice of Reality within the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, reprimanded him, telling him that he was being distracted by that blind man who had come to him seeking guidance. This distraction, however, was a positive one since, as a human being, the Prophet was showing a preference for a man (the Qurayshi) who had a higher station in life than that of the blind man. As a man of abandonment, he should have been available, and he should have recognized that the blind man could not have known that the Prophet was with someone else. As a result, he was then completely seized by Reality, from his forelock down.

In every culture, seekers have always retained some of their hair, even when required to shave their heads. The forelock and the beard symbolized the Adamic reality; it symbolized being caught by Reality, held in its grip. The Prophet here was totally in Its grasp. One slight deviation caused the shock of recognition, a reminder of Allah.

This ayah signifies more than a mere reprimand, however. It describes an event which affects all of us, lost as we are most of the time, not knowing where we are going or why. In his Diwan (odes) Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Habib says, *Astaghfiru'llaha min `amalin bila niyyatin*, “We ask forgiveness from Allah for any action taken without intention.” We ask forgiveness for having done anything without a clear intention. This is how every instant of life is to be lived, every breath, every pulse of it. The relevance of this ayah is that since this happened to a man such as the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, what can happen to us? What are our intentions? Indeed, we are in a state of confusion.

11. No! Surely it is an admonishment.

When “no” (*kalla*) appears in the Qur’an, it means “yes” and is used in order to reinforce the point. It is a reminder, and a reminder such as this one extends beyond time. Looking back over the past year, can we remember an occasion when we had clear intentions and were moving towards their fulfillment? If we cannot, then can we say that we were even alive? Those years should be counted against us, because they were only years in passage, not years in actual experience. This ayah is a reminder for us to become sensitive, alert, and alive.

12. So let whoever wishes heed it.

The choice is in our hands. Reality has been manifested in just this way and in no other. There is nothing other than mercy in this system, and it is so vast and enveloping that even our own actions will look good to us whether they are or not.

The ayah says whoever wishes to remember will do so. The choice is up to each individual, not to any other entity, because each of us, as a human being, is the highest creature in creation. We are that mutation in the creational reality which has been given the opportunity of trying to live in defiance of Allah’s laws even though we are not, in reality, separate from our Creator. There is no separation, no two. The Qur’an states: “The way has been shown to him whether he is in gratitude or in *kufir*” (76:3). Thus, he is either in a state of gratitude, fulfillment, and inward drunkenness, or in one in which he covers up, makes excuses, and becomes fossilized. Man must choose! As soon as he comes into being, he is faced with duality, with alternatives. A pregnant woman is still one entity until the baby is born and then there are two.

We will remember to avoid whatever is not conducive to our happiness from our own direct experiences. We will become fearful of causing harm to ourselves by simply remembering what already exists within us.

13. In honored pages,

Suhuf is the plural of *sahifah*, which means “a page of a book.” A *sahifah* in current Arabic parlance means “newspaper.” What does a newspaper do? It spreads out the news, shows the

situation. *Suhufin mukarramah* means “honored scriptures,” which have the stamp of the creational reality. This refers to the honored writing which is inscribed in our genes from the beginning of creational time, not to something written by a wise man called Ibrahim (Abraham). What is written is what is inherent in the creation.

We are conditioned in that we are given a certain overall physical disposition as well as an emotional one, and, on a deeper level, a spiritual one. Whatever we may call it, we nevertheless are given an overall disposition which exists within an even greater disposition. Our disposition is interacting with that greater one all the time. If we think of it as a fully written computer program, then we can completely predict what is going to happen. A person who is given to changing his mind *will* change his mind. It is scientific; it is perfection. Only we are in ignorance, and so do not know what is going to happen because there are a thousand and one different permutations. We do not know what result will emerge when the outer interacts with the inner. A person who is given to chatting and is driving a car with well-worn tires may not see a large stone ahead on the road while speaking enthusiastically with his passenger. As he approaches the stone, he might suddenly jerk the car so that the tire hits it and is punctured. Another person, aware of the factors involved in this situation, would be able to warn the driver against the potential puncture. The man in the car himself does not foresee it, however. This is destiny. This is what *suhufin mukarramah* means, and it is repeatedly referred to in the Qur'an, the Bible and all the other scriptures. There are many other names for it, such as scroll or tablet (*lawh*).

Man is the tablet personified, made flesh. If man abandons himself to the full reality of the tablet, then he is the tablet. But if he restricts himself, then he is only part of it.

14. Exalted, purified,

That scripture, reality, or genetic encoding, is high and pure. What is absolute purity? The degree of purity here is immeasurable; it cannot be captured or gauged. There is no truth, for example, in describing something as pure electric current, for there is no purity in it. It is actually dissipating itself, since it is flowing against resistance. As long as something can be measured, it is not pure, and as long as man exists, he is not pure. This ayah alludes to that abstract encoding which is in the tablet.

The “honored books” are exalted and high in order to give us an example, for all gross things go downward, being subject to the laws of gravity. Anything that is heavy goes down, while anything that is light moves upward. That is why when we address God we unthinkingly look up and not down.

15. In the hands of scribes,

Safarah is the plural of *safir*, meaning “scribe.” *Safar*, from the same verbal root, is “travel, journey,” while *safir* is “an ambassador, emissary, or mediator.” *Yad* (singular of *aydi*) means “hand,” which is an instrument of action. The voice of Reality says that this encoding, which is absolutely abstract and pure, has come about or been created through the hands of emissaries. An ambassador is only an ambassador if he fully represents whom he is supposed to represent. If he is not faithful to his mission, a good leader or king would dismiss him. The process of recording the message is one of grossification. Those hands symbolically represent all the powers and forces which brought about this world from a dense speck into its explosive, fiery, and molten state.

16. Noble, virtuous.

These words describe the powers of execution which bring about this creational reality. We must bear in mind that the Qur’an joins the echo of eternity with humanity. The Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, was that vibrating, pulsating entity who said it in words into which we can dive deeply. We cannot examine them superficially. *Kiramin bararah*, therefore, does not only mean “noble and virtuous.” *Karam* means “absolute, total generosity,” If a man is totally generous, then he is a conduit through which things pass, whether they be wealth, knowledge, or anything else. If he is *karim* (generous), he will only be an instrument, while he himself is absent. This is generosity in its ultimate form.

The root of *bararah* is *barra*, which means “to be pious, just.” *Birr*, from the same root, is defined in Arabic dictionaries as “righteousness, reverence, or devoutness,” but this is only partially correct. If a person refers to his son as having *birr*, he means that he is faithful to his heritage and has followed the proven path that has been laid. By abandoning himself into that faithfulness, he is freed.

Kiramin bararah means that those forces which executed the creational reality were not interfered with. Only the human being, as the culmination of creation, is given the choice of being either foolish enough to think that he is something special or wise enough to be desperate for abandonment as a spiritual seeker.

17. Accursed is man! How ungrateful he is!

Qutila is the passive form of the verb “to kill,” and as such changes its meaning slightly to “may he be cursed.” Being cursed in this case retains the strong connotations of being doomed, of dying.

The Qur’an has just taken us to a very subtle point and then suddenly brings us back to our human grossness. *Kufr* is covering up in order to justify the antics of our ego. Everything in life is perfection – we get what we deserve, not what we desire. Life is totally perfect, but because we have expectations, we are usually frustrated. The whole world moves in one direction, but our expectations veer off in another. Man says, “I am not liked,” or “They don’t really know who I am,” as though he were something!

What does being killed really mean? When something is killed it means it has been stopped in its tracks. It has been wasted. How many of us are wasted as human beings between the womb and the tomb! This brings to mind the story of an Iraqi who went to Sweden. Upon visiting a cemetery in a village, he noticed one tombstone which read, “Johann Herenson, born 1910, died 1976 at the age of two years.” This did not make sense to him. He looked at another tombstone which read, “Here lies Maretta Henretta, born 1890, died 1938, at the age of two months and one day.” All these graves had similar inscriptions. Not being able to figure it out, he asked a villager, “What is this? Am I crazy, or is it that you in the West count differently from us?” “No, we count the same,” replied the villager, “but in this village we only count the days in which these people certified they had lived happily.” The Iraqi exclaimed, “Allah!” He sat down on a tombstone and said, “Please, if I die here, write: ‘Here died Jabr, from his mother’s womb to the tomb,’” (in Arabic, of course, the words rhyme). The man in *kufr*, on the other hand, has not seen a single day, nor even a moment of enlightenment, joyful bewilderment, or happiness. This is what the ayah means.

18. From what thing did He create him?

19. From a small life-germ, He created him, then He shaped him according to a measure.

From what has man been created? He has been created from a sperm. “Then He shaped him.” *Qadr*, which is related to *qaddarah*, means “destiny, divine decree.” A decree is measurable. We must reach that conclusion scientifically within ourselves to understand the meaning of destiny. If we do not understand destiny, then we understand nothing. Individual destiny is the outcome of one’s will interacting with the decree, and it is perfect. There is no truth in saying that since everything is predestined, there is nothing we can do.

This ayah means that the complete encoding of man is in that sperm. What remains for man is to come out into gross manifestation, interact with the rest of existence, and find his way back to his Source. The Qur’an takes us up into absoluteness and then brings us back to this earthly reality in order to shake us up so that we may then dissolve into Reality.

20. Then the way – He has made it easy.

Again, this refers to the positive. *Sabil* is the same as *tariq* and means “road, path.” What is a path? Why do we all want a path in life? The *sabil* is sought in order to avoid the pitfalls of not being on a clearly marked road. This “road” may be one of a transactional situation, a marriage, a business, a holiday, and so on. We want a path because we have strayed due to the bad choices we have made in our ignorance or *zulm*.

Let us look at the word *zulm*, which means “darkness.” Darkness is described in the Qur’an as a shield which should be removed because the essence of everything is light. Light is knowledge; thus we have the description: “Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth” (24:35). *Zulm*, in covering that light, occasionally becomes a blessing. Everything is a blessing, but we do not always perceive it as such. If a person knew that within six months he would be hooked onto a kidney machine, he would be sick with anxiety from now until then. The darkness that covers his knowledge of what is to come is, therefore, a blessing.

Yassarah is from *yassara*, meaning “to smoothen, level, pave, make easy.” *Yusr*, from the same root, means “ease, prosperity, abundance.” *Yasar* also means “ease, luxury,” and means “left hand” as well. In all cultures, during periods of great spirituality, the right hand symbolized positive action and the left hand negation. Man takes, gives, and eats with the right hand. He discards and does away with superfluity with the left. He knows what is positive by negating the negative. At first, however, he does not know what is positive. He may not know, for example, that it is a positive action to avoid an electric plug: he simply negates the negative. Wisdom is already there; all that must happen is for it to unfold. Unfolding is uncovering. That is why Muslims fold themselves up in *salah* (ritual prayer), in order to disappear, to fold up the so-called “I”. In doing this, they maintain the lowest profile. Whoever fails to understand any of these meanings is not truly fulfilling the outer practices. Every action is as good as its intention and, therefore, if a person carries out these practices in good faith, even though in ignorance, some benefit will be derived from them.

The path has been made quite easy. Allah says in the Qur’an that the path towards realization, towards inner knowledge, is easy. Why is it easy? The implication is that we must simply avoid what we have already experienced as being inconducive to us. The Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, said, “The mu’min (the man who has faith, who trusts that he will reach his reality in its totality) will not fall into the same hole twice.”

21. Then He causes him to die, then buries him.

The story of creation is described in these three ayat: From a sperm we have been created, measured; the way has been made easy for us, if only we would desire to be awake and in constant remembrance; then we die and are buried! If we think of this whole process when we are angry, how hilarious our anger will appear, how ridiculous the whole scene will become. “By remembrance your heart is made tranquil,” says the Qur’an, because man does not accept that this life is the whole story. The only thing which every one of us, at any time, in any situation, can say is that we are dying. At the moment of birth, if a baby could speak, it would say, “I am dying, each moment I am closer to the grave.” This is the only rational statement anybody can make, whether or not he himself is rational.

The second true statement which only rational people can make is, “I don’t want to die.” Some of us, when we are in a romantic mood, may say to our partners, “Oh, I would like to die with you,” or when we are exasperated with the whole world we may say, “I want to die!” Therefore the second statement can only be made in a rational state of mind.

Here, then, we have a conflict. Yet how can there be a conflict? Allah is Merciful, and there is no mercy in conflict. The only possible implication, then, is that this entity which sees death and life as only an aberration, an echo of something which is permanent, is seeking permanence. Each one of us seeks permanency, in all aspects of our lives, whether it be manifested in wealth, relationships, or in the things we desire. We worship life; therefore we worship the Creator of life. Each one of us is a worshipper, and all that is necessary for true worship is to extricate ourselves from that perversion of worship which looks to what is transient, and instead to subsist in the absolute permanency of the Creator. The whole biography of man is encapsulated in these three ayats one after the other.

22. Then when He pleases, He raises him to life again.

This ayah again refers to Reality. One could paraphrase it to read, “And if Reality wants it (because everything is related to the conditions set by Reality), it will be exposed, opened, known – meaning *here* and *now*.” The attempts of other religious practices to arrive at this state of openness, as, for example, in the practice of confession in Catholicism, are superseded by this ayah, because by following this, there will remain nothing more to confess. Everything will be out in the open.

Ansharah comes from *anshara* (to resurrect from the dead), which in turn derives from *nashara*, meaning “to unfold, spread out, publicize.” If a person looks back on his own life, he sees that he tended to publicize whatever he did that pleased him, preferring to hide those deeds which did not please him. We all participate in this dissimulation at night when we draw the curtains, and crimes are committed in this dim light. Those who like darkness do so because it hides things which they find obnoxious.

23. No! But he has not done what He commanded him.

This means that man has tried to go against the order of creation. Everything will occur, however, as it has been ordained.

24. Then let man look to his food!

Ta'am does not only mean “food”; it also has a broader meaning and includes everything from which we derive nourishment. It refers to what we can assimilate from our taste of life.

25. That We pour down the water, pouring (it) down in abundance.

26. Then We cleave the earth, cleaving (it) asunder.

27. Then We cause the grain to grow in it,

Habb means any type of “seed, cereal, berry, or kernel.” It is related to the word *hubb*, which means “love.” *Hubb* is the unique link between a mother and her child. The root of love is this seed-like link; it is a conduit. A human can only say he loves if that conduit is completely open. A Christ-like love, totally overpowering and bewildering, is the only true love.

28. And grapes and green fodder,

Qadb means “green fodder,” that is, any herbage that is edible, and *`inab* refers to grapes which are attractively bunched, inviting man to pick them.

29. And the olive tree and the palm tree,

Why does Allah mention these two trees in particular? Palm trees and olive trees have always been links between cultures. They are both symbolic and practical. Every part of both the olive and the palm tree is usable; the trunks for houses and roofs, the leaves for rope, and the fruit for food. The Arabs, as well as the early Christians, had little other than these trees which served them so well.

30. And thick gardens,

31. And fruits and grasses,

32. A provision for you and your cattle.

With these ayats we go into another, more sophisticated realm. These ayats speak of plentiful and rich gardens; *mata`* means “enjoyment, provision.” Provision is that which helps you get from one point to another, from point A to point B, from the womb to the tomb.

33. But when the deafening cry comes,

Sakhkhah (deafening cry) is a reference to the second cycle of movement or the process of creation in reverse. Whenever cries and shouts are mentioned in the Qur’an, they herald the reversal of the earth and the beginning of the resurrection of those entities that are left behind, the energy forces, the *arwah* (the plural of *ruh*), which means “soul” or “spirit.”

34. The Day when a man flees from his brother,

When that day comes, it will be not only the end of this cycle, but also the beginning of a new cycle. At that instant, man will run away from his brother. *Yawm* in the Qur’an does not mean “day” alone, but also “moment,” or “instant.” The word “brother” means all those persons with whom one has an affinity.

35. And his mother and his father,

He will also flee from his own mother and father. The implication here is that a person will abandon those whom he loves, his mother and father; otherwise, running away from them would have no meaning in this context.

36. And his female companion and his children,

His wife and children are also those people whom he loves, with whom he shared and enjoyed life.

37. On that Day every man shall have an affair that will occupy him.

For every one of them on that day there will be a concern which will occupy and consume them, and there will be no room for anything else. When the whole of existence is shattered and shaken up, when the absolute becomes manifest, then only the individual will remain. This will be beyond the boundaries of time, and man will not be given a chance to be philanthropic or on his best behavior.

38. Faces on that Day will be bright as dawn,

Musfirah is from *safara*, which means “to remove the veil, to travel.” When one is moving, one is exposed. *Sufur* means “unveiling of the face,” that is, having nothing left to hide. “Bright, shining faces” indicate that they are not in *kufur* (covering up, ingratitude), but rather they are open and at ease, in complete self-abandonment. If one is free now, one is free forever; if one is fulfilled now, one is fulfilled forever. It says in the Qur’an, “A garden which encompasses the heavens and the earth” (3:133). This garden is in the heart, and the key to its gate is abandonment.

39. Laughing, rejoicing at good news.

All the messengers were charged with giving the good news (*bushra*), which is that man is an eternal creature whose path goes from Allah to Allah and whose duty is to leave the state of sleep for that of wakefulness. *Mustabshirah* derives from *istabshara*, “to rejoice, be delighted (at good news).” It means that men will have been given the good news again. At this time, it will be fully confirmed that the good news was the totality of creation, and that man is the representative (*khalifah*) of the Creator. He therefore encompasses the characteristics of the entire creation in his genes. The whole story of the cosmos exists in man; he is the microcosm.

40. And faces that Day, dust will be on them,

Ghabarah, dust, comes from the verbal root *ghabara*, “to elapse, pass, be bygone,” and in its more closely related form, *ghabbara*, meaning “to soil, or cover with dust” Dust is something that descends and sticks to a surface to which it does not belong. This ayah says that their faces will be covered with dust, meaning that they will have allowed their eternal, pure reality to be covered with something foreign to it.

41. Darkness will cover them.

Rahiq, “to come over or overtake someone,” is the root of *tarhaquha*. *Murhiq*, which is from the same root, means “oppressive.” The implication of this ayah is that one will be oppressed by this blackness. This is a description of the basic duality, indicating the happiness of those who are in abandonment and the misery of those who are not. These conditions are polarized and exaggerated here into black and white so that they can be clearly seen.

42. These are the ones who cover up, the wicked.

Those beings who have been encompassed by this gloomy, black tiredness are those who are in degenerate *kuf*. This is the description of an act, i.e. covering up, which does not occur within a normal arena of action; rather it occurs at the level of pure psyche, or *ruh* (soul, spirit). This is why even the most sophisticated human language can only allude to it. Knowledge of it can come about only when the *ruh* which in fact is man’s true self, is recognized. That is why it is said that if one truly knows oneself, one knows one’s Lord.

This is the whole purpose and meaning of a spiritual path, of reflection. If reflection does not lead to this point, it will at best give an experience of transcendence. If it does not lead to this realization, it may at least make one a better Muslim or a better Christian. But the message from all the prophets, including the prophet Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, is *tawhīd*, the independent Oneness of Allah, and the oneness of man’s own reality.

SURAT AT-TAKWIR – THE FOLDING UP (81)

(Meccan Surah)

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

This surah begins on a cosmic scale: “When the sun is rolled up, when the stars shrink, and when the mountains are moved. . . .” Next it shifts to a human one: “And when the girl-child that was buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed.” Then it focuses on the inner life: “And when all the secrets are opened.” It starts with the cosmos, returns to man, and then refers to the open manifestation of all hidden things in order to expose us inwardly and outwardly so that we find the unity in ourselves.

1. When the sun is folded up,

Kawwara means “to make into a ball, to compress, to fold something upon itself, to roll up.” A *kurah* is a “ball,” *Takwir* is the act of something collapsing upon itself in a spherical manner.

The knowledge that the sun is explosive and expansive was obviously already present at the time of the revelation of the ayah since this is a reference to the reversal of this solar process, the end of the creational expansion. As far as the sun is concerned, it is in constant explosion. The same process occurs in a hydrogen bomb, that is, fusion or constant self-explosion. When the self-exploding creation comes to an end, the sun will completely collapse upon itself.

2. And when the stars darken,

Inkadarat comes from the verbal root *kadura*, which means “to be muddy, cloudy, turbid, swarthy”. According to some sources, *inkadara* means to shoot or swoop down. Man is expansive; he reflects in his own being the expansiveness of the entire cosmos. The Qur’an is a manual of existence; it is concerned with man’s role and state in creation. The Prophet Muhammad’s own inner reality pulsated out in words, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, as a revelation for all mankind. Therefore, if the Qur’an is not regarded as a manual of existence, as something we can understand in our current state – or in any other state we may be in – then we

have not unraveled it and made it useful to us. We must resonate the Qur'anic reality in our day-to-day existence; we must take from it as much as can be of use to us. At every stage of life, the Qur'an is able to remove some of the tarnish which has covered the source of knowledge in us. That source of knowledge is in us, and the purpose of the Qur'an is to bring us into a state of awareness.

Man intrinsically dislikes collapse, because he is a reflection of the expansion of the cosmos. We are lovers of Allah's attributes, and Allah's attribute in creation is expansion. None of us likes to lose; we only like to succeed, and success nowadays means expansion. Sometimes, however, success lies in contraction. Since man is always dying, his success lies in shrinking away to nothing before he dies. Life, his essence, continues so he should not be concerned with his own personal death. The essence lasts forever; why, therefore, should he be miserable? All that is needed is the right attitude.

This ayah refers to the collapse of the stars. The implication here is that the stars are all held together by the centrifugal, electromagnetic, gravitational forces between them, making up one complete entity which is in a state of expansion. When the expansive forces are interfered with – which will occur because of the advent of a certain phase in the process of the whole story of creation – they will collapse. Anything that is created must end in due time, whatever it may be. This surah is a description of how this end will occur on a cosmic scale, starting with the most expansive and general, then shrinking to the scale of the individual.

We can also look at the meaning of the ayah from the microcosmic point of view. As far as the individual is concerned, the sun is his *ruh* (spirit), and the *najm* (star) is his *nafs* (self). When the sun, or the spirit, stops giving nourishment to the *nafs*, or the self, which is the star, and when the star subsequently shrinks or collapses upon itself, the self will submit because at that time it will be darkened, that is, smothered and obliterated.

3. And when the mountains are moved,

Suyyirat is derived from *sayyara*, which means “to set in motion, start up, send out.” *Sayyarah* means “car.” When the mountains begin to move, they will not do so with a single jolt, but in a continuous movement. How will a mountain move in this way, unless the turning and hurtling

process of the earth in space stops? Since we are hurtling through space at so many thousands of miles an hour, when the end comes and the earth is seized and brought to a sudden stop, the mountains will, of course, be wrenched from their places and shattered. One only has to stop suddenly in a car going 20 miles an hour to experience this process. This, then, is a description of the end of our little drama on this tiny earth.

4. And when the pregnant camels are abandoned,

Mountains moving and animals left untended are unusual occurrences. They depict a picture of opposites instantaneously combining. *`Ishar* is a camel that is ten months pregnant. For the desert Arab in those times, it symbolized a most desirable possession. If camels are neglected with nobody to care for them, it means the normal course of events that usually holds desert life together is no longer in operation. The verbal root of *`uttilat* means “to neglect, leave without care, discontinue, stop.” *`Utlah* means “holiday or unemployment,” that is, a break in one’s normal routine. When the natural creational processes are disrupted, there will be a total breakdown in the life-process.

There are three phases in the total life process: creation, maintenance, and destruction. The maintenance phase is particularly characteristic of a woman’s inclination. Women usually want to achieve stability, whereas men’s roles are, generally speaking, more creative. A man builds the house and starts up the home, and the woman maintains it, because she is responsible for the process of continuation on this earth. Her role is the key –she is the center of the universe. The word for “mother” in Arabic is *umm*, and also means “source, origin, foundation, essence.” *Ummah* means “community, nation, people,” the linguistic root of which is the same as that of *umm*.

The third phase in the life process is that of destruction, an act of which man is quite capable. The reference in this ayah is to the process of stopping. What has been created will also come to an end and stop. In other words, nothing more will occur at an initial creational level: there will be no more pregnancies. When the world comes to its end, no sane person will go to tend a camel!

5. And when the wild beasts are herded together,

All wildlife will gather close to each other. *Hashara* means “to gather, assemble, crowd (together).” This again reflects the nature of creation. Everything is by nature expansive. Even though all wildlife tend to move together in herds and groups, they do not press too closely together; they maintain their wildness, their expansiveness. On the day when all systems of life come to an end, they will act in a way that is against their nature, and out of fright they will not scatter but huddle together.

6. And when the seas are set on fire,

Sajjara, the root of *sujjirat*, means “to swell, overflow,” and in its first form *sajara* means “to fire up, burn, boil over.” Often when something ends, one gets a glimpse of what it was at its inception. In other words, this ayah may mean that there will actually be fires bursting out of the ground at the end of creation just as there were when the earth was first created. The earth began as a fireball which later cooled as the creational process unfolded.

The allusion to water that is on fire may refer to volcanoes erupting from the seas, setting the whole sea on fire or even to the flaming infernos at sea caused by oil-carrying supertankers that have caught fire. Whatever its exact meaning may be, the reference to the sea being set alight implies that the ordinary is replaced by the extraordinary.

Water symbolizes coolness and calmness, but here we are told that it is going to boil over. Things that we take for granted as being different and separate are joined to their opposites. All of these occurrences are events which will take place when the on-going process of life ceases.

7. And when the souls are united,

Nafs (self) here could mean *ruh* (spirit). *Zuwwijjat* (united) comes from the root *zawwaja*, which means “to pair, couple, unite.” The ayah could mean that the soul will be united with what it gathered together or with what it has known, or that the *ruh* will be joined with that with which it appears to be united, that is, the body. In the cosmos, pairing constantly takes place; the opposites meet. Man is made up of two aspects: a bodily form which is part of the entity of the so-called “I” and something indiscernible which is called *ruh* (spirit or psyche). We may reflect on the *ruh*’s existence by asking, “Where am I in deep sleep? Where am I when I dream?” We

say, “I walked up a steep mountainside while I was asleep,” and yet, the physical body did not move. In other words, the *ruh* is another entity in man which has its own experiences. Perceiving this unification of the two opposite, body and spirit, is one way of looking at the meaning of the ayah.

Another way of looking at it is that we are not in a state of unification because of the diverse states arising from our *nafs*. Our various expectations, desires, and needs must be fulfilled if we are to be neutralized and to experience unity. That is why, in the most gross way, man has to be rehabilitated by what is called “marriage.” Marriage is a means of fulfillment and it is not always something wonderful; on the contrary, it is often miserable. Nevertheless, in most cases it is positive, especially when both parties have respect for each other, knowing that human beings have come into the world alone and will go out of the world alone. If they help each other to reach self-fulfillment during this sojourn, they will have achieved something.

Thus, there are two possible ways of looking at this ayah. When one’s *nafs* is shattered, it is joined to its opposite. Everything in life exists at the level of duality; there is good, and there is also evil. Everything that can be imagined, touched, tasted or in any way perceived, exists in one of two modes. All of us are searching for the One, because we can never be satisfied by duality.

The implication of this ayah is that duality will come to an end. In this life duality will come to an end when man reaches a state of complete self-abandonment and when nothing can fulfill him because he is already fulfilled. This will also occur when man understands the true nature of reality at the point of death. In reality there is only God, there has been only God, and there will be only God. This knowledge comes through inner, experiential realization; it is not necessary that it be learned.

The Qur’an is concerned with deep spirituality. It is concentrated and absolute; it is like a spring whose source, when reached, is bitter. If a person wants to reach its essence, he can only do so by being willing to abandon everything – and that means death. He has to be in *fana’* (annihilation). If not, he is still caught up in the affliction of duality and the realm of wisdom that is only, at best, superficial and existential. Many men of knowledge, therefore, often end up in a little cave somewhere so as to lessen the effects of duality, and truth-seekers must seek them there.

When a person arrives at the Qur'an, he finds that it is vast. The essence of man, however, is itself vast. Understanding depends on how forceful and honest one is. The Qur'an says, "Read what is easy of the Qur'an" (Qur'an 73:20). Read what? What does this mean? We read what is already written, what is written in us. This statement is made only to sharpen us, to unravel what is already in us.

In this ayah we read, "And when the souls are united," meaning when we are united with our opposite or when we are neutralized. At the present moment we are not neutralized. We are always craving something, constantly shifting from one aspect of duality to another by changing our external circumstances. This tendency, however, will ultimately be of no avail. We ourselves must change and that is much more difficult than trying to change the world.

We live in duality, and we seek to neutralize, but how do we neutralize? We neutralize our *nafs* by remaining silent, genuinely and positively. In that silence we have direct knowledge of the meaning of the Black Stone which is set into the corner of the Ka`bah in Mecca.

Few Muslims know the meaning of the Black Stone, even though they perform the rite of circling it and kissing it during the *Hajj* (pilgrimage) every year. Black contains all the colors – it symbolizes death, from which comes life. Life cannot be understood unless one is willing to die. The meaning of *jihad* (literally, utmost exertion, and by extension defensive war against *kufir*) is not blood and misery; it is the willingness to stand fearlessly for life, the life of the spirit. The Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, did not desire war and the death it brought. He used reason to avoid it. He was fearlessly rational, because he used his *`aql* (rationality, intellect), and he departed from the polytheistic heritage of his family as a guide for seekers of the right path to the one God.

Sayyidna Hasan, *`alayhi-s-salam*, used reason with the most treacherous man who ever lived, *Mu`awiyah*, when he abdicated the *khilafah* (caliphate). Sayyidna Hasan had 20,000 followers, but he knew they were all rascals. He knew that they were not going to make up a useful army, that it was pointless for them to be killed, and that they would renege and desert him.

Disloyalty will often come from those closest to a person. Man is born wanting to be one, and basically everyone is dependent on the one and only Reality, Allah. The saying "he bites the

hand that feeds him” arose because when a person perceives himself to be dependent upon another, he will often strike out, “biting the hand” that provides for him, as a means of asserting his independence. The reaction is also due, however, to an inner recognition of our ultimate dependence only on Allah.

Ignorance comes about when one is not being thankful to creation. It is in man’s very substance, because everything contains its opposite. The part of man that wants to live also contains his own ultimate destruction. We all will die and must see the beauty of perfection in this fact. Although we may still echo love of the *Baqi* (the Everlasting), the perfection of man’s life and death lies in the knowledge that they are just a cycle from which awakening occurs.

We will know who we truly are when we arrive at the state of true unification. That understanding is why we are, in reality, all seeking *tawhīd* (divine unity). There is only Oneness, only Allah, but to reach this realization we must progress through stages. First comes the stage in which a person believes in unity and is then able to say “I am beginning to understand!” As long as there is “I,” however, we are in *shirk* (associating other-than-Allah with Allah). When the “I” drops away, we see nothing other than Allah, nothing other than His attributes, and that is the ultimate peace from which action emanates. This peace is dynamic, not static or dead, nor is there any drama and affliction in it. The outsider may see affliction, but the *muwahhid* (the unifier) sees no affliction; he sees nothing other than love. At that point everything else will be acceptable and will be seen as perfection. The outward existential situation may not be desirable as the human being perceives it, but it is perfection. It may not be desirable for us to take a bitter medicine, but its perfection lies in returning us to a state of health, tranquility, and balance. This stage, however, is very subtle and should only be revealed in the most intimate company.

The meaning of this ayah, then, is that man’s essence is one, and -there is only one essence. He starts by *shirk*, by saying, “My essence is one,” and then “There is only essence, there is only Allah.”

8. And when the girl-child that was buried alive is asked

9. For what sin she was killed.

The Arabs at the time of the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, had such arrogance and outer pride that a woman was always frowned upon. They forgot that man himself was the result of woman! They were afraid women would dishonor them by being unchaste and dishonorable. In looking back at that culture, we see that the ayah talks about the worst thing we suffer from, fear of the unknown. Everything that drains away our energy is fear of the unknown. All of our anxieties come to that one point. If we can say *tawakkaltu `ala'llah*, "I depend on Allah," and then recognize our condition of slavery in relation to Reality, all our anxiety will stop.

Maw'udah is a young girl or female baby that has been buried alive. *Wa'ada* means "to bury a girl-child alive." In old Arabic *wa'ada* also means "to emit the sound of a wall crumbling down." The sound of a wall collapsing suggests that the murder of a baby is a very grave crime, and it implies that the world is coming to an end: a life is being finished without letting it fulfill its rightful destiny. In other words, at the end of time, the true nature of everything will be revealed. The *arwah* (the spirits, plural of *ruh*), no longer exercise their worldly right of emitting spiritual light as the sun and the stars do or as the *nafs*, in its essence, does. The *ruh*, that spark of inner light, is extinguished by man's crime, by his fear, by his *kufir*, by his lack of trust in Allah and the generosity of Reality. Now the soul is being asked, and is asking itself, what crime it has committed. By doing so, it is announcing that it committed no crime, that there was no reason for it to be extinguished. It was man's *kufir* that caused its life to be cut off. The buried girl-child questioning the reason for her death is a *mithal* (a metaphor) of there being no possibility in this experience or the next to suppress something and forget about it forever. We cannot silence something forever simply because it cannot react in this world. Soon everything will be totally out in the open. The spirit is being brought as a witness.

The Qur'an poses the question, "What have you done to deserve being slaughtered?" From the point of view of *shari'ah* (revealed Islamic code of conduct), the Arabs had no right to slaughter the girl-children. But what could have been the motive behind it from the point of view of *haqiqah* (truth)? That motive continues to be a source of dispute even now, although it is covered up as much as possible. According to *shari'ah*, however, man is accountable for his actions; he cannot escape them. If he kills someone wrongfully, it is final, no matter what the intention was.

Outwardly, we are accountable to *shari`ah*, and in this realm of existence, *shari`ah* prevails over *haqiqah*. What a number of people or a consensus of society see – provided they are not hallucinating – is what is considered to be true. If everyone agrees on the identity of the killer, that judgment is considered to be valid. As far as *shari`ah* is concerned, the *hukum* (the judgment) governs the action and the action must be considered murder. The rest is between the killer and Allah. If he killed someone one hundred percent *fi sabili` llah* (in the Way of Allah), then even if the people submit him to the sword, he should be happy. He should say, ‘The sooner I free myself from these people and go to meet my Lord, the better!’

In the next life *haqiqah* will prevail over *shari`ah*; the subtle will prevail over the gross. In this world, however, the gross prevails over the subtle, and we start with the gross in order to arrive at the subtle. We start by being correct, by applying *shari`ah*, by feeding and maintaining ourselves well. If we do not do that, we are mad. If we say we do not care for the world, we are only trying to escape our responsibilities. At the beginning of the journey, we do care. We want to have sufficient clothing and a reasonable diet. This attitude is a healthy one. If from the beginning we do not care for physical needs, we indicate that we cannot attain them, that we have no understanding of them, or that we do not see their use. In having this attitude, we are actually denying Allah’s creation. How can we, therefore, understand the meaning of inner *kufir* (covering up) if we are in outer *kufir* from the beginning?

10. And when the pages are laid open,

Suhuf is the plural of *sahifah*, which means “a scroll, a page,” anything that can be made flat and upon which something is written. It also means “a newspaper,” because it is flat. *Mashaf* also means “Qur’an.” These pages refer to pages of news or to the pages of a man’s heart in which his intentions are laid open.

There is no point in hiding our intentions. The more we hide them, the more we will eventually have to remove them in order to be able to release ourselves. We use such things as drink, drugs, and other stimulants in order to give ourselves relief. Human nature is concerned with relief; life is nothing but seeking relief and freedom.

Our basic human attribute is inner freedom. Inner freedom can be reached through outer discipline, but outer discipline has to be lived willingly; it cannot be forced. For this reason, Muslims insist on being around people of the right orientation, on having proper companionship. All seekers seek each other, and people who want to know truth collect together. If a man keeps the company of thieves for forty days, even if he is decent and honest, he will end up by being affected by them because he does not want to be in isolation. *Insan*, the word for “man, human being,” derives from the verb *anisa*, “to be companionable, friendly, to like to be together.” *Uns*, from the same root, means “intimacy, familiarity.” Man wants to connect; he is a *muwahhid* (a unifier), and he wants to be in *tawhīd* whether he realizes it or not.

In reality there is neither inward nor outward, only Allah manifesting Himself as inward and as outward. At the moment, we are in confusion because we are in duality and see things only from that perspective. Sayyidna `Ali, *`alayhi-s-salam*, says, “The best of affairs are in the middle.” The best place to be is in the middle. Most people cannot survive at the extremes. The Muslim must combine *shari`ah* and *haqiqah*; we cannot have one without the other. In most of the Muslim world, we are at a loss and are struggling because we are not combining the inward and outward in our daily lives. We talk about *islam*, but we do not live it, and for this reason our youth are at a loss and reject traditional values. We have to be in the middle. In the middle both ends of the horizon are in view and so we are strong.

A vast amount of *shari`ah* with no *haqiqah* is like a giant ship heavily laden with goods but with no sail to catch the wind; it sways and flounders in the sea. *Shari`ah* exists for making distinctions, for differentiation. The business of *shari`ah* is to differentiate among things and let us choose correctly between the alternatives that life presents to us so that we can knowledgeably state what is right and wrong. The distinction must be clear. The nature of *shari`ah* is divisive because it is about *hukum*, which means both justice and wisdom. Justice means that one kind of action is correct while another kind of action is incorrect. From the point of view of *haqiqah*, everything is always in harmonious perfection because everything naturally generates its opposite. If one is balanced in the middle, he has both extremes at his command.

In the same way, *haqiqah* with no *shari`ah* is like a ship with a huge sail but with no goods in it. It will capsize. If a Muslim says, “I am only concerned with the inward,” he is lying. The true Muslim is the man who is in the middle, who is a *barzakh* (barrier interval or gap), an

intermediary link simultaneously combining both the outward and the inward. According to the Ahl al-Bayt, the following ayah is a reference to the Prophet Muhammed, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*: “Between the two is a barrier which they cannot transgress” (55:20). The Prophet is the *barzakh* between the perfect man, Imam `Ali, *`alayhi-s-salam*, and the perfect woman, Fatimah, *`alayhi-s-salam*.

11. And when the heaven has its covering removed,

Kashata means “to remove, take off – a cover.” The implication is that everything manifested is only an outer covering. From our point of view, the whole creation was created for us; otherwise, it would have no significance. What is of significance is man. Man’s existence is only meaningful, however, if he keeps to his purpose, which is to know the cause of his existence. The purpose is to gain knowledge of Allah. The entire creation came by Allah in order for man to know Allah. The apparent heavens which are in constant explosion and expansion are, from the point of view of the Creator, mere fantasies: all the billions of galaxies do not amount to even a grain of sand by His reckoning. When the heaven has its covering removed, or is skinned, we will then see its insignificance. The most significant thing, the sky, is described in the most belittling way to show us the independent wealth of Allah. The heavens are only a skin, a facade, a show, which will eventually be stripped away.

12. And when the fires of hell are lighted,

Everything in existence was originally created from one dense mass and greatly expanded by burning, after which all the stars and planets and all of creation burst forth over a period of billions of years. That dense beginning is the equivalent of absolute power or *qudrah*. It cannot really be called density because it is beyond density and because one might imagine that Allah Himself was dense; may Allah preserve us from that view. It is a point of power, total and absolute, not related in any way to anything else.

This ayah describes a new situation which is inaccessible to our conscious understanding because conscious understanding cannot comprehend Absolute Power. Great power is understandable, but not Absolute Power. There is an intermediary link, a *barzakh*, between absolute and very high power. Absolute zero temperature cannot be achieved because all the

laws of thermodynamics would be disturbed, but one can get very close to it, and from that limited point on one can have a subjective understanding or experience of it.

Similarly, one can get only so close to the knowledge of Reality, beyond which it is: “Not by diligence or striving – a gift from the Generous, the Compassionate Giver to the slaves” (From the *Fayturiyyah* of Shaykh Muhammed al-Fayturi). One can only go so close to this knowledge, and passing beyond that point is not a matter of human endeavor.

This same experience is reproducible by those who follow in the footsteps of a perfect man and who imitate him as much as they are outwardly able to. This proximity can also be attained by those who take on the responsibility of being *salihuun* (those who set things right by their example), who put themselves in the shoes of the *salihuun*, and who bring about *islah* (establishment of peace, happiness and order). They take themselves as far as they can toward that point by living as though they were in the constant companionship of the Prophet, *sallallahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*. They are in the *maqam al-ihsan* (the station of excellence). They live in the knowledge that they are constantly watched: they do not see Allah, but they know that Allah sees them.

Attaining such a state is the most one can achieve through his own effort. States beyond this are “a gift from the Generous, Compassionate” and come either in this life or at the moment of death. We can and must do our best: there is nothing more we can do. After that we will become like open conduits, and we will be in harmony with the true meaning of *islam*, the inner meaning of submission. We will be completely and utterly enacting our destiny; there will be no more resistance between ourselves and the decree. As far as it is humanly possible, we must be in a state of perfect submission because that state is the only one in which we can have an experience of the one and only Perfect One. If we are not in that state of perfect inner abandonment, anything else we speak of will be mere religiosity.

13. And when the Garden is brought near,

Those who love the *akhirah* (the next world) already have the key to *jannah* (the Garden) in their heart. Those who love Allah love the *akhirah*, because there will be nothing there but the truth for them. In fact, *jannah* is available to us now. The Qur'an is clear about this; it does not say

that it will only happen later, after death, because it describes the people of *jannah* as those who say, “We remember all this! It is similar to that which we have already experienced!” Thus, we have access to that condition here and now by avoiding what brings us to the opposite state. This way is the only one; there is no other.

We have all experienced trouble; we all know what it is and how it comes about – by fears, expectation, lusts, and so on. But if we are aware of it spontaneously, then we will no longer be troubled. At that point of recognition we will be at the edge of *jannah*, and the key to the Garden will become more and more clearly shaped in our hearts until our hearts are pure; and since the pure heart will be with the Maker of the Garden, it will be beyond *jannah* itself. *Jannah* will no longer interest us since we will be with its Maker, with our Maker, Allah.

Our heritage, which we are all seeking, is the Garden. We all love the Garden, the state that the Garden gives us, tranquility, fullness, abundance, protection, security, and enjoyment of all the good things of life. A visible, physical garden on this earth helps us to enter into the mood of contentment, generosity, and helpfulness. The Garden of bliss is our real and natural heritage and is to be found by following our hearts. We must be honest about it and recognize that it is there. There is nothing closer to us than truth, and our essence is truth. In our essence is the lover of the Garden, of tranquility and peace. Our essence is neither life nor death: it is that from which both have come, the Creator. This is the *bisharah* (the good news).

“And when the Garden is brought near” refers to the beginning of self-abandonment. In fact, there is nothing other than the Garden. The Qur’an says that the Garden’s width is the expanse of the heavens and the earth, so why are we in misery here? Obviously we are miserable because we are not receptive to the station of self-abandonment. We can receive only that to which we are receptive. When we become receptive to the Ever-Living Eternal, nothing else will exist for us, and we will live fully from moment to moment. When the end of time draws near, we will find it easier to experience full self-abandonment.

14. Every self will know what it has brought with it.

In our own lifetime we may not see this, but our individual ends will come, and as far as we are concerned, our end is the end of the cosmos. We do not care if there are more or less stars up

above. The rational man understands that he sees creation according to his interpretation: he is its center. From a rational point of view, he also knows that his end does not mean the end of the total cosmos. It is quite probable that at our individual death other people will continue their experience of life, and it will not be the end of the outer cosmos, but it will be the end of *our* cosmos, the end of what we experience.

When we remember that the end may come at any minute and we remember that we are suspended in air (one word related to *nafs* is *nafas*, meaning breath), we become more human. The Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, said, “People are asleep, and when they die they wake up.” True seekers want to die while being awake – they want to enter a state of total silence. All the practices of the men of Allah from time immemorial lead man, the seeker, to inner death while still alive. If, while we are conscious, aware, and scintillating with life, we can enter a state of self-abandonment, then we will understand what inner death is. If we cannot reach this state, then we will remain in the turmoil of *sa`y*, that is, running between Safa and Marwah in Mecca, or moving ceaselessly around and around. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with that because we are made that way; man is born in *kabad* (trouble, misery). If he recognizes his reality, then that *kabad* becomes like a game, and the trouble becomes most useful. The word *kabd*, from the same root, means “liver,” man’s most important organ because it is the purifier of his blood. The liver checks any potential trouble the body may experience from a build-up of toxins.

When any sort of event befalls one, a person should say, “*al-hamdu li’llah*.” Such a person is already in the Garden: he is laughing as does a man of knowledge. Man is only qualified to laugh after he has wept; he is only qualified to live after he has died. Before he was born, he was dead, and the so-called “I” had no life. Man came from death; thus, in order to know his essence, he has to die inwardly, and he has to be in silence.

Recently, studies have been made of people who have died and were immediately resuscitated. At the point of death, they reported experiencing a rapid review of their entire lives. Everything they had ever done instantly appeared before them. Upon entering death, we take with us what this entity called *nafs* has earned in this life. Everything is as good as it ends, which is why the Qur’an always talks about the *akhirah*. It is for this reason that we want to educate our youngsters to do things which will have a positive effect in the *akhirah*. In a material sense, we

like them to invest in something which has a good return. In relationships, we advise them to keep the companionship of people who are good to them and to whom they also are good. In other words, they should invest in something worthwhile.

We all long for the end because we want a better life at the end, and for this better life we are willing to put up with inconveniences now. The Qur'an says that every self knows what it brings with it into death because we ourselves know that what we are taking with us is in our hearts and our psyches. Even now we are preparing ourselves for the end.

It is only when the experience of death occurs to the *nafs* that "every self will know what it has brought with it." If the sun, the "I," is extinguished, and we are brought to a state of extinction which is what *fana'* (annihilation) is, then we will know our nothingness. We will know that whatever we did was out of ignorance, and that, at best, we could have behaved as decent, conscientious human beings. We are only qualified to act if we have surrendered the power to act, if the sun in us has collapsed entirely.

15. But no! I swear by the stars

16. That run their course and hide themselves.

The surah now moves into another phase. *Uqsimu* means, "I swear by (something)." *La* here is actually a negative article which emphasizes and positively affirms what follows it. Here what is affirmed is the evidence of *khunnas* (stars in general), Qur'anic scholars also take *khunnas* to refer to the five planets that are closest to earth. *Jawar* is the plural of *jariyah*, meaning "vessel, Ark," and in older usage, "running streaming." The verbal root is *jara*, which means "to flow, run, happen," and here signifies the stars that run their course.

Kunnas is a name that is given to the stars, especially to those planets which occasionally hide themselves in the sun's rays, because they are close to it. The verbal root of *kunnas* is *kanasa* "to lie hiding in wait." The relationship between *khunnas* and *kunnas* comes about because all the planets have a retrograde as well as a direct motion. The implication here is that these stars or planets are hidden in darkness. The planets closest to us are not visible most of the time, but they are there nonetheless. This ayah is indirectly telling us to be open-minded and a little more

imaginative, since, as we see these planets some of the time, we know that they are there at other times when we cannot see them. They are then in the *ghayb* (the unseen). The ayah is saying, “see how these five planets are not visible most of the time, even though they are your neighbors.”

17. And the night when it darkens.

18. And the morning when it breathes –

Then, when the night comes, with its utter darkness and silence, we do not see anything. Night implies silence and incubation, darkness and hibernation. Then it says, “And when the morning breathes,” because after hibernation we start “taking in,” and as we do this we inhale. The reference here is to those cycles which go from quiet stillness to life and movement. The juxtaposition of these two ayat shows the duality of existence: one state being inertia, the other motion.

We can also draw a parallel with the earlier reference to the sun and the stars to arrive at the inner meaning of the ayah which states, “But no! I swear by the stars.” This refers to those aspects in us, those stars in us, which suddenly appear after being hidden. The luster in us, the generosity, the compassion, and selflessness in us which were not obvious before, suddenly appear, like stars burning with the same fire as that of the sun, which is the equivalent of our *ruh*. The night is like a state of darkness that often overcomes us, and the day is like the time when we are bright and cheerful. The macrocosm, which is evident in the Qur’an, is reflected in the microcosm, which is our self.

19. Surely it is the word of a noble messenger –

20. The possessor of strength, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne,

21. One (to be) obeyed, and trustworthy.

The reference here is to the words of the noble Messenger, a man of power whose power was from the Possessor of power, He Who in His almightiness is firmly ensconced on the *`arsh* (throne, foundation, support). The Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, was, however,

not obeyed then, and we may ask if he is obeyed even now. What this ayah means is that what he says is the absolute truth. He is obeyed by truth, by reality itself. He is united with destiny, with the absolute Decree. He is obeyed by the orchestration of all existence. If we are not in harmony with this orchestra and only listen to our own inner cacophony, we are disobedient.

At the time when these surats came, the Prophet had only a few followers. The Qur'an says, "A multitude of those of old and a few of those of later times" (56:13-14). The Qur'an always speaks about the few. It speaks about quality not quantity. This is a natural law. From a *shari`ah* point of view, from the creational point of view, this is the truth.

22. And your companion is not mad.

Bi-majnun really means, "he is not veiled, he is not talking obscurely." As the Qur'an says, "it is nothing but a reminder and a clear reading-out" (36:69). There are no aspects of his intellect which are hidden. *Majnun* (from *janna*, to cover, veil, hide) in Arabic means "madman," but the reason it means "madman" is because it refers to someone whose intellect is hidden, whose discriminative quality is not evolved but is covered and shaded over and does not express itself outwardly in the form of *`aql* (rationality, intellect). The ayah means that he is not hiding things, he is not uncertain. He does not say one thing and mean something else; he is not unclear.

This ayah assures us that this Prophet is not mad. We need this reassurance because we have invested in our own system of understanding and when someone tells us that we do not own anything, that we are nothing, that we have come from nowhere and will return to it again, and that we must give up everything, we naturally want to declare this person insane.

23. And certainly, he saw him on the clear horizon.

24. And he is not avid for the Unseen,

25. Nor is it the word of Shaytan, the accursed outcast.

26. So where then are you going?

An outer meaning of the twenty-third ayah is that it refers to the Prophet's having seen the angel Jibra'il on Mt. Hira, peace be upon them both. The Prophet saw the truth, saw the message as it came to him, and saw the truth on the horizon, which comes to man from a distance, from the other side of his heart, as is described in Surat Ya Sin. "And there came, from the farthest part of the city, a man (i.e., prophet) running" (36:20). This is because if truth had been near, it could have also been clear from the beginning. The implication is that when the message comes, it must come from far away. The mercy of Reality showed Jibra'il to the Prophet in a visible form so that he would not be confused about "inner voices" and "inner visions," which could lead to excesses and abstractions. The Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, always had a direct, outer sign, in the form of a man, Jibra'il, who appeared to him, because he was in a state of *tawhīd*.

The word *shaytan* is from the verb *shatana*, which means "to be obstinate, perverse, to be cast off a path, to be distanced." *Rajim* means "stoned, pelted, driven away with stones," and "damned, accursed." Then the surah continues, "where are you going?" Coming from the womb, going to the tomb, we are caught in this interval. We are simply a vibrating thread between that beginning and that end; there is nowhere to go.

This is the meaning of surrender, of *islam*. It means to surrender to this reality which is in our hearts. We can only do our best, be available every minute, every second, willing to put our faces in the dust from which we have come and to which we return.

If we reach that state, we will be closer to hearing the joy of the song of the Qur'an, and all of it will be clear to us. We can touch it, however, only if we are pure, which means pure of heart, and have no expectations. Our suffering and misery are the result of our own expectations. We believe certain things will happen, and when they do not, we suffer and blame other people. Nobody is to be blamed but ourselves for having had those expectations in the first place. If we come with no expectations, then the whole drama of existence is a beautiful piece of theatre. We enjoy it, do our best, play our part. We cannot experience it in this way except by being pure, so we must start purifying ourselves from the outside-in, the outside being the easier point from which to begin.

27. This is nothing but a reminder to all the worlds –

28. To whomever of you wants to go straight.

Mustaqim is “right, upright, straight.” The root of its verbal form is *qama* and means “to stand fast or firm.” Many important words are derived from this root. *Al-qiyamah*, which means “the Resurrection,” is from the same root, *Al-qa'im*, literally, “standing firm, upright, certain to come,” is an epithet of the Mahdi, Imam az-Zaman, *`alayhi-s-salam*. It means that he is forever present. *Qum*, also from the same root, means “stand up, be ready” and is the name of what is now a famous city in Iran. The words related to *qama* imply stability, and if one is stable, one is alert. Alertness does not come when our heads are heavy, dull, and low, but rather when we stand up straight and our heads are held high. If our heads are drooping low, our thoughts will not flow well. It is for this reason that when we do *dhikr* (remembrance – here, actual practice thereof in which the Divine Names are invoked) our backs have to be straight and our heads must be held in their highest position.

29. And you do not will except what Allah wills, the Lord of all the worlds.

Man cannot wish for anything other than what has been wished for by the Creator. The Creator’s law is that man has a choice: “Surely we have shown him the way; he may be thankful or unthankful” (76:3). If man is in *shukr* (gratitude) he is content and happy, and if he is happy he is efficient and alive, available, drunk with light. This, then, is the worship of free men who are as near as possible to being absolute, free by being absolute slaves. We cannot have one without the other. The root of freedom lies in servitude.

But whoever is in a state of *kufir* (covering up, denial, ingratitude) covers up and makes excuses for not taking action now. He does not realize that every second is auspicious and every breath a blessing. If we regard each breath as the final one, then all our debts will be settled, we will behave correctly, we will not disbelieve, and we will be generous. We will give only joy to others. If we have no expectations, we will not talk to people who do not want to listen. We will be like the bird who just sings for the sake of its song. The free bird has no expectations; it sings whether one feeds it or not. That is its nature, its mission; that is its reality.

Rabb is that entity which brings every system to its full potential. *Rabb* is “the Creator, the Lord, the Sustainer.” He gives a being what is due to it in order to cause its growth and full

blossoming. When we pray, we surrender to that entity, to that power or force which brings everyone to his full potential, and that full potential is *jiwar ar-Rabb* (closeness to the Lord).

Allah says in the Qur'an, "We are nearer to him than his jugular vein" (50:16). Where are we then? Are we in *jiwar* (closeness), or have we separated ourselves from Him? Allah is omnipresent; there is nothing other than Allah. Since this is true, why are we not encompassed and taken over by that Reality? The answer is that we have identified ourselves with this so-called "I." The Qur'an is here only to remind us that this so-called "I" has only come in order to die and that we should give it up quickly and enter into the enjoyment of lordship. Through *tasbih* (glorification of God), man enters into that which encompasses all, and this *tanzih* (worship having no association with a created or anthropomorphic thing) is something which is pure beyond imagination, totally untarnished. Man must bring himself to that state and be sustained therein, and that is the meaning of closeness. One must live outwardly to his utmost according to the *shari`ah*, and be true to his word, because every second counts. In this way, he will reach *haqiqah*.

SURAT AL-INFITAR – THE CLEAVING ASUNDER (82)

(Meccan Surah)

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

This surah has a theme and pattern similar to Surat at-Takwir, yet it is very different. It reminds us that there will be an end of creational manifestation and describes how this will take place in a way that we intellectually understand. Our intellect accepts the fact that everything created has come from dense matter that expands and is diluted and then regenerates within itself. We also know intellectually that whatever begins will come to an end and that there is nothing manifest in any form or manner that will not come to an end. This end will come with the unfolding of time, and until this occurs the object of our search must be absolute knowledge which does not change with time, knowledge which is forever true and correct.

This surah, in a pattern similar to Surat at-Takwir, begins with a view of the cosmos and the heavens, and then comes to an earthly level, the graves, which are the final end of conscious reality. Even the reality which we thought of as final will be dissolved.

1. When the heaven is cleft asunder,

Infatarat comes from the verb meaning “to crack, to be rent or cleft asunder.” *Fitrah*, from the same original root, means “innate nature, instinct,” The word *fitrah* inherently recalls the idea of “origin,” and, as we see from its related word forms, implies that the origin of anything springs from a crack. The Qur’an says that the earth was egg-shaped, and when water came, it cracked in order to facilitate growth from within itself. Visibly and symbolically, everything comes from the initial single source bursting into the manifold stream of creation.

The heavens are held together by all the different forces which maintain the stars and planets in organized orbits. If that system were to crack, this order would be undone. The inference here is that when the system of existence in this realm – both for us and for other beings, such as the *jinn* (spirits) – reaches a point beyond which it can no longer expand, it will begin to collapse. Every system in existence has a limitation except for the essence, which is Allah. That Essence

encompasses all systems; it is Boundless and for this reason meaningful boundaries exist. Every limitation comes from the Limitless, and since it comes from the Limitless, it must be limited. Time can be understood only because there is timelessness, the meaning of which is already contained within man. This ayah, then, speaks of the end of time and the beginning of the next experience.

2. And when the stars are scattered –

This is what happens as a result of the first ayah. *Intatharat* means “haphazardly scattered.” *Kawakib* are “planets.” As far as we are concerned, when the heavens crack, the planets closest to us will be scattered. The forces that formerly held them in orbit will themselves be destroyed. A new system must be found after this collapse, because the old system of continuity in creation will have come to an end.

Kawkaba, the verbal root of *kawakib*, means “to shine brilliantly,” and especially is used to describe the shininess of iron. If a day is described as *kawkabi*, the day is one of particular significance or difficulty. In this case, the word refers to those elements in the cosmos which are outstanding, as far as we are concerned, because they are connected with the solar system, and they shine for us with brilliance greater than that of the other celestial bodies.

The root of the word *intatharat* is *intathara*, which means “to be scattered or strewn about, be dispersed,” indicating that this scattering is haphazard but also part of a pattern. It is a random action, yet it is not a meaningless, abstract randomness. The word *intatharat* evokes the image of scattering seeds on the ground. From the point of view of the scatterer, the actor, this follows a certain pattern, a pattern dictated by factors such as the size of his hand and his normal movement and rhythm, even though from the point of view of the seed or that of the observer, it appears to be haphazard. The act of sowing itself is a scattering, yet it is a scattering according to a certain decree.

Nathr is the opposite of *shi`r*. *Nathr* is “prose,” and the expression *rajulun natharun* refers to a man who is talkative, always scattering his words around. *Shi`r*, on the other hand, means “poetry.” By the act of intensifying and making words compact and concise, poetry is created, whereas by scattering the words loosely on the page, prose is produced.

3. And when the seas are made to surge forth explosively –

When the forces or systems that keep the cosmos intact stop, there will be an explosive result. *Fujjirat* is from *fajjara*, which means “to cause to flow, to split, explode.” The existing” system will go beyond its original boundary and decay rapidly.

A word that is similar in meaning to *fajjara* is *shaqqa*, “to split, cleave; to grieve, trouble, harass.” *Mashaqqah* means “difficulty, hardship, trouble.” This difficulty arises because of the cracking apart when what we really want is for things to stay together, in *tawhīd*. *Shaqqa*, “a crack, or break,” implies difficulty. Outwardly, a split or fissure appears to be against *tawhīd*, but in reality it can only exist within *tawhīd*. How could we know that it is cracked if everything were not already connected? Everything is together because there is only oneness, and this shows itself clearly when something splits apart and we are distressed. We do not even like it outwardly, because we are lovers of the One and Only Hand that holds and binds everything together.

The verb *fajara* is a rich source of words, the meanings of which are all logically related, and therefore is worth some further attention. *Fajr*, meaning “dawn,” is related to *fajara*. The night, that all-enveloping darkness, is broken by the first beams of morning light, hence the word “daybreak.”

Infijar is an “explosion, eruption, or detonation,” indicating that the object to be detonated began as a solid, but by the act of *infijar* has been rendered momentarily mobile.

In the Qur’an *fujur* (wickedness, immorality, profligacy) normally implies transgression, acting out of line, beyond the limits of the path. Transgressing the bounds is bursting beyond them. If *fujur* is used to describe a person, it means he or she has committed the worst of all human crimes, which is *zina*’ (adultery, fornication). When a people is said to be *fajir* it means that they are degenerate and shamelessly debauched.

One of the most important meanings of *fajjara* in the Qur’an is to be found in the following ayah: “A spring from which the slaves of Allah drink, making it gush forth abundantly” (76:6). From the point of view of *haqiqah* (“the truth”), the implication here is that the spring is within

oneself. That spring, that point of *fitrah* (original nature) is within the heart of man, but it has to be detonated, made to gush forth, and in order to do that, one must be able to reach it. In order to detonate open the safe in a bank, one must go through all the corridors. The same thing is true for the heart – in order to get to it, we must go through all those corridors which have become horror chambers that we have invented and constructed in our passage through this life.

Hasan al-Basri, may Allah be pleased with him, who received his teaching from Sayyidna `Ali, `alayhi-s-salam, said that the meaning of this ayah refers to the “water drying up” because it is a reversal of the norm. At that time everything will be extraordinary and abnormal; the planets which were holding us in orbit, with which we were connected and which were most influential upon our lives, will be scattered. Similarly, the seas will be empty. From the point of view of the Creator there will be no reversal, but will only seem to occur from our point of view. We will perceive everything to be turning upside-down because we are subject to it. From the point of view of Reality, however, it will be according to a perfect plan, according to the perfect laws which govern this existence.

4. And when the graves are laid open.

Now the collapse of the world comes even closer. The final resting place is the grave, which is therefore a place of peace. *Ba`thara*, the root of *bu`thirat*, means “to scatter around, turn upside down, throw into disorder.” What we have here is a description of another result of the breakdown in the gravitational and centrifugal forces, among others, holding the world together. The ground of the cemeteries will heave up and the graves will split open completely. Whatever every self has been hiding and keeping secret will be exposed in this opening.

5. Every self will know what it has sent ahead and held back.

Nafs here means “soul,” or “self.” The root of the word is connected to *tanaffasa*, which is the verb, “to breathe.” *Nafs* is that complex entity which encompasses the pure cause of its existence, the *ruh*, meaning “spirit, soul.” (The word *ruh* in Arabic is related to “wind,” alluding to its free-flowing quality.) The *nafs* also encompasses all the acquired features that are grafted onto the *ruh* as a result of its manifestation. The words *nafs* and *ruh* are sometimes interchangeable. Their relationship is like that of the sun to the earth: the self is rendered sentient by the spirit.

When all the outer props have collapsed, as on the *Yawn al-Qiyamah* (the Day of Resurrection), every self will experience its reality, which is a state of pure beingness, according to what its deeds were and what it had nurtured before the outer, gross world collapsed.

Qaddamat, rendered here as “(it) sent ahead,” is derived from the same root as *qadam*, which means “foot,” that is, what we put in front of us in order to move ahead toward something new. Why do we wish to transport or move ourselves? Why do we wish to present ourselves with something new? When we do so, what we perform is an act of worship and adoration. Let us take the example of eating. We eat because we want to live, because we love life and perpetuity. This shows we are striving for the attributes of Allah, the Everlasting. If one’s intention is clear, then one’s actions will be coherent. If we know that we put a foot forward in order to worship Allah, then it is perfectly all right to say, “I want to eat,” or “I want to become wealthy.” In order to uphold and propagate the laws of Allah, we must understand our priorities. If we want to undertake an action, we must ask ourselves why. What is put forth is as good as its intentions. If we eat in order to live, serve, and gain knowledge, all the energies around us will come to help us in that regard.

This ayah says that when all the aforementioned events occur, man’s intention will become clear to him even though previously he may have barely given a thought as to why he did things. Thus, it is said that it is better not to lift a finger until one’s intention is made clear, because actions are only as good as intentions, and one’s very life is put to the test. If one starts with what is real, one will make progress. Serving one’s family, for example, is a commendable action. Through acting on good intentions, one reaches a point where he thirsts for knowledge, and this brings him to the point of *dhikr* (remembrance), which in turn leads to inner silence. If one acts in sincerity, that point will be reached regardless, for as it says in the Qur’an, “Certainly He is the Forgiving, the Merciful!”

One usually turns to the Qur’an in desperation, for it is the final medicine. The extent to which the Qur’an is clearly revealed to man is directly proportional to the extent to which he is honest in abandoning himself to it. The Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, always recommended reading the Qur’an with a tearful eye and reciting it as though it were the voice of eternity.

Akhkhara means “to delay, postpone, hinder, put back,” indirectly referring to what has been hidden. We are the result of what we have left behind us, our past. As individuals, as human beings, we are the sum of our past actions, thoughts, hidden, postponed, or revealed. What potentially exists in the future are our intentions and what will in fact come about will be the enactment of our intentions. These two elements interact with each other as well as with the outer environment, and the result of these interactions is the future. If man knows what is behind him and what is in front of him, then he has covered the whole horizon and connected with it.

The ayah means that on that day every *nafs* (self) will completely reveal itself, its true color, tone, and tune. The *ruh* (soul) starts as pure power, and its substance is made of an element with which every other soul can connect. Therefore every soul will see the other clearly, unlike now, when we can hide the parts of ourselves which we do not want others to see. Therefore, the more exposed we are here and now and the more ready we are to live here and now, the more prepared we are for what is to come later. We must concern ourselves with how to live now, fully and totally. If a person genuinely wants to apply this, he will reach the conclusion that the way to do it is by clarifying every intention and coupling it to its correct action and by being completely open, exposed, and ready to be questioned.

6. O man! What has deceived you from your Generous Lord?

After giving the news that all of this complex and fantastic world will come to an end and that all that will be left of each one of us is the self, this surah then addresses itself directly to man. *Insan* (man) is by nature sociable, friendly, companionable. The deeper meaning of this ayah is “O you who are already a worshipper of unification, by whatever name you may call it, what made you so arrogant as to imagine that you are separate from your Ever-Generous Sustainer and Lord?” When the outer shell of the world comes to an end, what excuse does man have for having elevated himself apart from the One Reality? Man’s essence is generosity and blessing, so what has made him so conceited?

The appeal here is to the real nature of man, which is what will survive once all the worldly trappings have fallen away. What made him not recognize the *rububiyah* (Lordship)? It is love of *dunya* (this “world”), of being in a state of confusion. The correct answer essentially, however, is

that there is no excuse. When the confrontation with the Lord occurred, why did man not do what he was born to do, which was to seek the truth? There is no valid answer.

All that is other than Allah is false. One cannot be deceived by “nothing,” by an abstraction. Whatever attracts man away from the line of truth is the *dunya*, which is transient, quickly passing away and causing us to be in *ghaflah* (forgetfulness, heedlessness). We become glued to this world through our self-imposed illusions, although we are actually seeking security. The Ever-Secure is already within the heart, and its influence transposes itself into this outer situation in which we adhere to things that are transient. Once there is no longer that element which caused us this attachment, then we are free of forgetfulness and can recognize our Lord.

The greatest glue of attachment is the appearance of “I,” the ego. When creation occurred, the *shaytani* (satanic) element said, “I am better than he” (7:12), and thus began the rise of attachment to something that did not originally exist. When this apparent world comes to an end, that which appeared to be propping it up will no longer be there. *Shaytan* will no longer be there either, since that energy that causes separation will no longer be there.

7. Who created you, then made you complete, then proportioned you –

Had man not been created, he would not have had a chance to reach knowledge, nor to have the bliss and satisfaction of inner existence, nor to see hundreds of flowers all exemplifying the same thing and yet different in color and smell.

Sawwa has many meanings, including “to even, level, straighten, regulate, put in order, equalize.” Why, then, is man in this arrogant state if he sees how potentially harmonious and complete he has been made?

`Adl means “straight,” and therefore most efficient (the quickest way to connect two points is, after all, a straight line). It also means “justice, fairness and uprightness.” Everything is created in an amazingly balanced, just, and ecological way, both in the outer and the inner realms, which are, in fact, one and therefore balanced. Balance is *mizan*, which is also the name of the Qur’an. Therefore, we see that everything is in the Qur’an and *is* the Qur’an, because the reality that is read in it is the one that is exuded by creation. We understand our Creator through wondering at

and seeing His creation. If we do not see His Hand at work through us, how can we rightfully talk about other, outer aspects of creation?

8. Into whatever form He pleased He constructed you.

Surah is a “picture, form, shape, likeness, or copy.” It comes from the verb “to form, create, illustrate, photograph.” *Rakkaba* is “to fasten, build, to put together.” Its root is *rakiba* which means “to ride.” Looking at creation in its totality, we see that anything can and indeed does take place. It is beyond our intellectual comprehension to understand why a particular cell or being moves in a particular way, and so instead we call it an abstract or haphazard movement. There is nothing haphazard about it; it is only that we cannot understand it. In fact, it is the pattern of our intellectual pursuit that can be either along a path of understanding or along a path of confusion. From the point of view of *haqiqah* everything makes perfect sense and nothing is out of place, but if we transgress the norms of *`aql* (intellect) and thought, we enter a realm of confusion.

9. Nay! You deny the Judgment Day.

Kalla (nay) is meant to reassure us here. Put in other words, *kalla* means, “It is certainly the case.” Denial, for man, is quite natural: “Surely man is in loss” (103:2). It is quite understandable that we transgress and forget and are not in *dhikr* (remembrance). This is why Allah is The Forgiving, the Most Merciful and why we turn to Allah in repentance. This is normal. We deny ourselves correct transaction, correct behavior, which is the only way of living, of being prepared, of being in a state of abandonment in which we can appreciate and witness abundance.

This ayah addresses us on a deep inner level. The *din*, in other contexts, is usually translated as “religion.” The word, however, implies a transaction, that of paying a debt to one’s Creator. The root of *din* is *dana*, which is “to be indebted, to owe, to be subject, to yield, and to profess the true faith.” It is in man’s human nature to deny *islam*. Like the salmon struggling upstream, only very few reach their source. This was true for the people of Mecca for whom this ayah was specifically revealed, and it is applicable to all people at all times. Man’s true nature seeks his source. His lower nature denies the contract of mercy which can only be known by the payment of the debt – by the living of the *din* – for which he finds himself indebted. Then the pathway to

all-encompassing Mercy is made smooth, *ta`abbada* (to be paved, made level, smooth), through the song of *`ibadah* (worship, service).

10. And most surely there are guardians over you,

How is *al-Hafiz* (the Guardian) manifested? The name is an attribute of Allah, the Keeper, the Protector, the Guardian. It derives from a verbal root which means, “to preserve, protect, guard, sustain, remember.” *Hafiz*, in ordinary Arabic, means someone who knows the Qur’an by heart. The Creator would not have created the laws of existence unless He were going to maintain them. Thus, we are assured that the laws do not and will not change for any person, be he a prophet, messenger, or ordinary man. The laws of creation apply equally to all. Many of these laws we take for granted because we are subject to them at all times, such as the law of gravity.

To illustrate this point, let us recall a story concerning Imam as-Sadiq, *`alayhi-s-salam*. He went to his house one day and found a slave-woman with one of his children on the roof, although he had forbidden the members of the household from going there. The woman, in her extreme agitation at being caught in her transgression, stopped paying attention to the child. At that moment, the child fell from thereof to its death. Imam as-Sadiq immediately said to the slave-woman, “You are free!” He came out of the house completely shattered, and when the people asked him why he was disturbed, he answered, “I am disturbed because I caused this woman a great deal of agitation and fear.” He was such a lover of Allah that he did not want to disturb anything in the creation. He suddenly saw the law of Allah in front of him, done, the decree fulfilled, and he could not go against it. All he had was human judgment, and from the human point of view he said, “I caused her great affliction and fright and as a result she lost hold of my child and this caused his death.” Again, from the human point of view, when he was questioned about the death of his son, his answer was, “Now he will be brought to *rububiyah* (Lordship) and will become perfect. The angels will bring him to his fruition according to the decree.”

A true lover of Allah must know the meaning of “Every moment He is in a state (of glory)” (Qur’an 55:29); otherwise his *islam* is at best mere superstition, not the fullness of direct knowledge.

11. Noble recorders.

Noble powers and forces, angelic or otherwise, lead us in the direction of the creational pattern and decree. These powers are referred to as *hafizin* (guardians, protectors) for their task is to reflect one of the attributes of Allah, *al-Hafiz*. The words “Guardian, Keeper, Protector,” refer to Allah, the one and only true Guardian. Man’s actions are recorded spontaneously, and his reward is instantaneous, to be found then and there *in* himself. Both the serious and mild sicknesses we suffer from are the direct results of our actions. Our reward *is* our action, and the meaning of our action is its intention. We are manifested intentions; we are now the sum total of all our past intentions. If they were free – *fi sabili-llah* (in the way of Allah) – then we are free. We are as tarnished or as pure as our intentions, and that is what dictates the state and condition of our hearts.

If a man’s intentions are as pure as they can be, and yet he acts ignorantly because he does not have enough outer worldly knowledge, others will consider him a fool or even a criminal if some people may be made to suffer from his actions. Allah, Who is the All-Wise, forgives him, however. In this world *shari`ah* (outer law) prevails over *haqiqah* (the eternal truth). Everything follows the laws of Allah, and only Allah is in charge. If a man of pure intentions is put in jail for outwardly rendering disservice to others, it is correct according to the *shari`ah*. A real man of Allah would, in jail, be perfectly content with Allah’s decree upon him.

Kiraman katibin (noble recorders) means that the highest act of generosity is to be on the path, according to which man has been created. The angels, or the powers which keep existence going forward smoothly in this world, are *kiraman katibin*. They are those powers and energies within man, around him, and by him, that record from within. Every single cell in his body echoes his entire beingness, containing the history of all that has happened, all that is happening, and all that is going to happen.

If man has been in a state of denial, *kufr* (covering up, denial), the possibility of its outer expression is that the cells will devour each other like cancer. Cancer is an outer manifestation which actually is a mercy, because it is signaling the dichotomy that is occurring, possibly without one’s knowledge. This does not necessarily mean that the person with cancer has been a dreadful person, but that he has simply been acting, inadvertently, in ignorance. The Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, often prayed for the people who treated him badly and asked that they not be punished, since they acted in ignorance.

Katibin comes from the verb *kataba*, which means “to write, inscribe, compose, destine.” There is an implication of “gathering” in this word. *Kitab*, therefore, not only means “book,” but also “what is done.” If a man is in a state of awareness, he can “read” what is done. This is what the Qur’an means. The angels, or forces, are noble in that they are at the limits of their prescribed capabilities in their respective domains. It is written that they are to write, and they do so.

The cosmos is under total control, but not in the sense of a tyrannical, centralized power imposing itself from the outside. The control is already intrinsic to the system. Allah contains all systems and is the Beginner and Sustainer of all systems. Since the system is complete within Itself, it will break down if the boundaries are transgressed. Every system breaks down once the boundaries are transgressed. To take one example, the secret of Gandhi was that he brought about the breakdown of an established system. The system he found intolerable was held together by the use of the most detested action imaginable to an Indian: imprisonment. In the East imprisonment is the final act of degradation. What Gandhi did was to reverse that system by making imprisonment desirable and this change in attitude destroyed the system. Soon everyone wanted to go to prison; the system could not cope with it and ultimately caved in.

12. They know what you do.

Those entities or powers to which we are connected and bound by the One Reality know what we do. Obviously this is so, although the intensity of the knowledge is different. Everything we do will affect everything else in this total ecology. The forces which govern the subtle cosmic fiber know. That is why we say, “The Knower is Allah,” and “Allah has knowledge.” Saying “Allah knows” could imply separation, indicating that “I am here” and “Allah is there.” The men of Allah consider this to be a state of *shirk* (association of other-than-Allah with Allah.) It is a form of arrogance to say, “Allah knows,” because it is as if the Truth needed our confirmation.

Allah is *al-`Alim* (the Knower of all). If we increase in *`ilm* (knowledge, wisdom), then we will be closer to *al-`Alim*, and therefore ignorance will be reduced. As the cup becomes fuller, the empty space in it decreases and a time comes when what is in the cup and the cup itself are understood as being one system, because for there to be contents there must be a container. This is the meaning of the line in the Diwan of Shaykh Muhammad ibn al Habib, in which he says: “Unite the drink with the cup and be annihilated by it.”

Although the two systems appear to be different, the one fluid and the other solid, man is the link, the *barzakh* (interspace), so he must connect the inside with the outside. From the point of view of the *`arif bi'llah* (knower of Allah), there is no such thing as outside and inside. There is only Allah, One Reality, manifesting itself in various forms of creation.

13. Most surely the righteous are in bliss.

This surah began by describing the big impact at the end of the world, the description of which includes our own end, and then gives us good news of bliss. The root of *abrar* (liberal, just, kind) is *barra*. *Barr* is “an expanse of land,” but it means more than just a desert. It implies space, openness, and clear vision. *Barr* is the opposite of *bahr* (the sea). On the *barr* everything is evident, but in the *bahr* everything is hidden below the surface. The sea has connotations of something that is deep, whereas a plain, on the other hand, implies something that is very shallow. Usually when the *bahr* is next to the *barr*, hardly anything can be seen on the *barr* except endless flatness reaching out in all directions, while in the *bahr* the most amazing life can be found. In fact, the most amazing seas in the world are those which lie next to barren places, such as the Red Sea, which has unparalleled delights for the deep sea diver. The beauty of the underwater world is unimaginable, but when one comes out onto the shore there is nothing but empty, endless desert.

Na`im (happiness, peaceful, tranquil) is from *na`ama* “to live in comfort and ease, to be happy, soft.” *Na`am* means “yes,” The *ni`mah* of Allah, is His “blessing or bounty.” It is in man’s nature to say “Yes!” to the bounty of Allah. Those who are *abrar* are in *ni`mah* (comfort), that which physically sustains one.

14. And most surely the wicked are in burning fire –

When a person goes against his nature or reality, he is wicked, in that he is committing a crime against himself. A *fajir* is someone who sends himself into transgression, someone who has deviated, who has gone beyond the bounds of the *din*, beyond the limits of his higher nature. From this point of view, those *fujjar* are in hell. The experience of hell means turmoil, constant agitation, the death of stability, and these states can be tasted not only after death but also in this life.

15. They will enter it on the Day of Judgment.

The *fujjar* will reach the Fire on the Day of Judgment, the day on which debts must be paid. Every instant is one in which we could be paying our debts. If we are willing to do this at every moment, we will be in balance. If we try to hide them instead, the *Yawmu-d-din* (Day of Judgment) becomes the day of our death, or the Day of Reckoning. This is a lesser Day of Judgment. The greater Day of Judgment will come when there is nothing left to be hidden. *Yawm* (day) means not only a twenty-four hour period, but also a state of mind. As human beings, our *yawm* is twenty-four hours, but Allah's *yawm* is different; it can be 50,000 years, as the Qur'an says.

16. And they will not be absent from it!

Gha'ib means "absent or hidden." At the moment of truth no one will be able to absent himself. At the moment of truth, whether it be now or later, everything will be taken into account, and there will be no escape. We will see that whatever we planted out of good intention will directly bear fruit. Each person will be the true witnesser, and this is the true meaning of *shahadah* (direct witnessing). If we do not constantly face our intentions here and now, we will have to deal with them later all at one time. The way to this understanding lies in recognizing what our intentions are and what they have been. Those who want to succeed in this world always want to know what their bank balance is. They do not want to be told five days later that the balance was several decimal points out. They want to know right away so correct action may be taken.

Even for the ordinary businessman, the key to success is Allah. If a person loves Allah then he has no option but to succeed in this world. He will account for every instant as it passes and not postpone it. Only mad people do not want to review their bank accounts for two or three years because they suspect that they have been abusing them. But if they knew that the balance of it was in their favor, then they would want to see it all the time. In the same way, if a person has been generous to people, he always wants to be among them, because they will treat him similarly. If we account for ourselves every instant, then we are clear.

Imam al-Hasan, *`alayhi-s-salam*, taking from the Prophet Muhammad, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, his grandfather, says, "He who is afraid of Allah will never be afraid of the

slaves of Allah, while he who is afraid of the slaves of Allah is not afraid of Allah.” This is because the slaves of Allah, meaning all human beings, are reflections of one’s own self. And if he fears Allah, then as Imam al-Hasan also says, “He who wants to please Allah will find that the creation is pleased with him, and he who wants to please the creation will find that Allah is not pleased with him.”

If we were willing to openly account for everything to Allah, as though we were rising out of the grave, as though our intentions were exposed in our chests, then we would be free from entanglements and would find ourselves more efficient. Our *`aql* would become sharper, because it is a faculty that has to be developed. If we act as if we know the Imam Mahdi, *`alayhi-s-salam*, is there in the *ghayb* (absence, the unseen), then it is like acting in his presence. He is there and we should always be ready to hand over the whole of our existence for him to review.

We delay and put off confronting ourselves mostly because we do not want to disturb our familiar illusions, but every action has its equal and opposite reaction. Everything in life has its courtesy, and the more we know it, the more efficient we become in that situation. This knowledge, in fact, resides in our hearts. Courtesy has everything to do with how willing we are to face our balance sheets.

17. And what will make you realize what the Day of Judgment is?

What do we know about the Day of Reckoning? Why can it not be right now? It is for this reason that when a Muslim is unsuccessful, we know that he is not in *islam*. If a man is not successful, something is wrong. It is not a judgment upon him, for that is between him and Allah, but the path is one of pure science. The real man of Allah does not waste time. If he is unsuccessful, it means that he acted wrongly; he did not have the right discrimination, did not judge correctly, did not take counsel correctly; he was attached to something, or was unsuccessful for any number of other reasons.

Abandonment does not mean inertia. Every one of our Imams had a different flavor; one of them spent most of his time in *sajdah* (devotional prostration), because there was nothing else he could do at that time. Imam as-Sadiq, *`alayhi-s-salam*, did nothing but give discourses, and it is said that as many as 4,000 people passed on knowledge they had received from him, while Imam al-

Kazim, *`alayhi-s-salam*, from whom poured gems of wisdom, was constantly in and out of prison. Each one had a different nature but the truth they vibrated was the same.

If we are willing to face everything within us at any moment, we will find that when we see and recognize all the dreadful things we have hidden, like snakes or scorpions, we will know how to deal with them so they do not sting or bite us. We thus enter into awareness. That is why we say that people who have come to the inner circles of the men of Allah are transformed forever. Through having had one split-second of awakening, they know their true nature, their true reality. That is why the man of Allah who is a master says, “If anyone has seen me, I have done my work.” When a man really knows the state of his heart, when he is genuinely, absolutely, totally aware, then he has reached his goal.

Yawmu-d-din is only a day, an instant, a split-second, and it is a condition. Are we reckoning with ourselves now? It is impertinent to pose questions about the Hour. The Companions asked the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, about the *ruh* (the spirit), but they did not ask about their *nafs* (selves), because they did not want to see the falseness inside them. They asked instead, “When is the Final Hour coming?” We do not see the moment because we are excited about tomorrow. This anticipation results from the desire to escape from the amazing unending depth of the moment which we are frittering away. We must learn to see the beauty of the apparent evil, the amazing depth of the present and its meaning, as well as to see how it came about and what path was taken to make it come about in this particular way. We must learn to see perfection and to see without judging.

18. Again, what will make you realize what the Day of Judgment is?

The ayah is repeated here in order to drive the point home. What more signs do we need? The path is an absolute science; it is the path of *safa*’ (purity, clarity), the path of clarity.

19. The day when no self controls anything for (another) self, and the command that day is Allah’s.

If a person accepts that condition of having no control over anything or anyone else right now and relinquishes power and ownership, then *Yawmu-d-din* is *Yawmu amri-llah* (the Day of

Allah's order or action for him). Now we are in *shirk*; we associate partners with Allah in that we say, "It is between Allah and me." This *yawm*, this day, is divided between Allah and us, because we are confused as to which is the decree and which is just our own whim. We do not know what is *wahm* (illusion) and *hawa* (desire), or what Allah has written. Allah has written things to be followed according to definite laws. If we transgress them, we will be destroyed, inwardly and outwardly.

Yawmu-d-din is defined as the "Day on which no self will control anything for (another) self." In other words, each person must be completely and utterly responsible for himself right now, without making the excuse of having responsibilities for others prior to taking responsibility for himself, for ultimately there is only one self. Each person is responsible for everything; no one is separate, but first we must know who we are. If we have done that, then we can greet the Day of Reckoning with light hearts.

AL-KHATIMAH – THE SEAL

This most glorious *juz'*, or section, the seal of the Qur'an, is of considerable significance for several reasons. It contains most of the short surahs which are often recited in prayers, supplications, and on many other occasions by all Muslims. Historically, in the early days of Islam, these surahs were of great significance because of the time and the way they were revealed in Mecca. They were the surahs that the early Muslims used in their prayers as well as in spreading the message. Containing thirty-seven surahs out of a total of one hundred fourteen, almost all of them were revealed in Mecca during the earlier part of the prophethood. The few that were not were early or mid-Medinan.

When we speak about the seal of the Qur'an we are referring to the arrangement indicated by the Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, this final *juz'* "sealing" or completing the full exposition. However, as the Qur'an is the Book of books, containing source knowledge, it can also be viewed without the limitation of time and place, having no beginning or end, a complete unit in itself. So, it is in a manner of speaking that we refer to the "seal" of the Qur'an. Actually, the entire Qur'an itself is the seal, the final elucidation of Reality, each ayah sealing the other ayahs. The Qur'an came down upon the Prophet, all at once, in its totality, but was revealed and unwound through the prophetic light over a period of time, the twenty-three years of prophethood.

Every surah in this section has its particular merits and benefits in specific situations. We therefore mention some of the occasions and benefits of reciting selected surahs from this *juz'*.

The Prophet, *salla-llahu `alayhi wa alihi wa salam*, has said: "He who reads Surat `Amma (i.e., Surat an-Naba'), will have his thirst quenched by Allah on the Day of Reckoning." It is also related that Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq, *`alayhi-s-salam*, said: "He who reads Surat an-Naba' daily, a year will not pass before he will be invited by Allah to go to Mecca."

It is also related that Imam Ja`far as-Sadiq, *`alayhi-s-salam*, said: "He who reads Surat at-Tin, Allah will collect for him all the goodness of the *dunya* (this world) and the *akhirah* (the Hereafter)." Regarding Surat an-Nazi`at, he said: "He who reads it will not enter the garden except as one who is completely fulfilled, and will not have any *shaqa'* (suffering or misery) in

this *dunya*,” He also said: “He who has read Surat al-Buruj over water and then drinks that water over any poison he has taken will be cured of that poison. He who reads Surat al-Qadr in every obligatory prayer, a caller will call, ‘Oh slave of Allah, all your past actions have been forgiven, now carry on with your good actions.’ He who reads Surat al-Humazah in his obligatory prayers will not see poverty and will not die in a bad state.” And, “He who reads Surat al-Kafirun and Surat al-Ikhlās in his obligatory prayers, Allah will forgive him, his parents, and his offspring, and Allah will cause him to die as a *shahid*, bringing him back joyfully in the next life.”

Imam Rida, *‘alayhi-s-salam*, said: “If one among you has a severe headache or some similar pain, he should spread his hands out and read Surat al-Fatihah, Surat al-Ikhlās, and the last two surahs of the Qur’an, and should then wipe his hands on his forehead seeking relief from the headache.”

Imam as-Sadiq, *‘alayhi-s-salam*, said that if one reads Surat an-Nasr in any of the obligatory or *nawafil* (supererogatory) prayers, Allah will enable him to overcome all his enemies. He also said that whoever goes to his bed and reads Surat al-Ikhlās eleven times, his dwelling will be safe and all those areas surrounding him will also be kept safe. Also, one who reads Surat al-A’la in an obligatory or *nawafil* prayer will be asked on the Day of Reckoning through which gate of the garden he wishes to enter.

Imam as-Sadiq also said that whoever reads Surat al-Zilzal four times, it is as though he has read the entire Qur’an. There is a prophetic *riwayah* (narration or tradition) that Surat al-Ikhlās is a third of the Qur’an. It is also related that Surat al-Kafirun is considered a quarter of the Qur’an. Imam as-Sadiq further related that whoever reads the two last surahs, al-Falaq and an-Nas, upon leaving his house, no evil eye can be cast on him. And one who has any condition of fear in his house should, before he sleeps, read these two surahs and ayat al-Kurs.

There are many prophetic hadith regarding the value of regular reading of the Qur’an, Specifically, we are advised to read a hundred ayats a day if possible, and these short surahs make it easier to do so.

Upon completing a reading of the Qur’an, the correct courtesy is to “seal” it with a supplication, a *khatimah*. In Arabic, *khatama* means to encompass, to engulf, to wrap up. To read and

comprehend the entire Qur'an is of great virtue, because as we have discovered, much of the Qur'an can only be explained by the rest of it. Many of the areas which seem a bit doubtful or uncertain can be explained by other parts. Traditionally, Muslims read through the Qur'an constantly throughout the year, especially during the month of Ramadan. It is not unusual for the entire Qur'an to be read once a day during Ramadan. More commonly, it is prescribed to read a *juz'* per day so that by the end of Ramadan the whole Qur'an will have been completed, there being thirty *juz'*, or sections.

However, it is much more important to read the Qur'an with full understanding than to read page after page merely for the sake of completing it. When the Qur'an is fully taken in, absorbed, and lived by, the benefits become quite obvious. A transformation takes place in a person's life so that he heeds and takes guidance from all the injunctions and all the absolute boundaries and broader descriptions of the Qur'an. Such a person is on the path of responsibility.

Upon completion of the Qur'an, as a sign of gratitude to the Beneficent Creator, we follow the traditions of Imam `Ali Zayn al-Abidin, *`alayhi-s-salam*, whose well-known supplication is read throughout the Muslim world. The following translation includes brief extractions from the supplication, and is followed by the original Arabic in its entirety.

“In the name of Allah the Beneficent, the Merciful. Oh Allah, You have given me aid to complete Your Book which You revealed as a light and a protection above all other books You have revealed. You have preferred it over every saying, relating it, distinguishing between what You have made permissible and what you have prohibited. It is a Qur'an by which you have made clear the laws concerning Your decrees. It is a Book You have preferred for Your servants, a detailed exposition, an inspiration revealed to Your Prophet Muhammad, may Your blessings be upon him and his family. You have made it a light guiding away from the wrong-doing of error and ignorance by following it; a healing for whoever listens by the perceptive faculty of faith...

“Oh Allah, You have given us aid in its recitation and You have made easy the movement of our tongues by the excellence of its expressions, so place us amongst those who guard it with proper consideration and yield to You by the firm belief of submission . . . Oh Allah, surely You have sent it (the Qur'an) down upon our Prophet Muhammad, may Your blessings be upon him and

his family, and You have perfectly inspired the cognizance of its miraculous nature. You have bequeathed its knowledge to us clearly and You have preferred us over those who are ignorant of its knowledge. You have strengthened us with its knowledge and elevated us above those who cannot bear its weight...

“Oh Allah, as You have endowed our hearts with the ability to sustain it (the Qur’an) and have caused us to recognize its nobility and bounty by Your mercy, so bless Muhammad and his family. Place us among those who hold fast to its rope and take refuge from obscurities in the sanctuary of its fortress, residing in the shade of its protection, guided by the light of its dawn...

“So bless Muhammad and his family and make the Qur’an a means of elevation for us to the most honorable station of nobility, that we may ascend by it to the place of well-being and safety, (And make the Qur’an) a means by which we are rewarded deliverance on the Day of Resurrection.”

وكان من دعائه عليه السلام عند ختم القرآن

اللهم أنت أعزبتني على ختم كتابك الذي
أنزلته نورا وجعله مهينا على كل كتاب
أنزلته وفضلته على كل حديث قصته
وفرأنا نأفقت به بين حلالك وحرامك وقرأنا
أعزبت به عن شرائع أجمالك وكتابا
فضلته لعبادك تفضيلا ووحيًا أنزلته على
نبيك محمد صلى الله عليه وآله تنزيلًا وجعلنا
نور الهدى من ظلم الضلالة والجهالة بإتياعه

وَشِفَاءٍ لِّمَنْ أَضَلَّ بِقَهْمِ الصِّدِّيقِ إِلَى اسْتِمَاعِهِ
وَمِيزَانٍ قَسِطٍ لَا يَجْفُفُ عَنِ الْحَوْلِ لِسَانُهُ وَنُورٍ هُدًى
لَّا تَطْفَأُ غُرَّةُ الشَّاهِدِينَ بِرُهَاْنِهِ وَعِلْمٌ نَجَاةٍ لَا يَضِلُّ
مَنْ أَمَّ قِصْدَ سُنَّتِهِ وَلَا نَالَ أَيْدِي الْهَلَكَةِ
مَنْ تَعَلَّقَ بِعُزَّةِ عِصْمَتِهِ اللَّهُمَّ فَإِذَا أَفْذَنَّا
الْمَعُونَةَ عَلَى الْإِلَاحِ وَنَهَلْنَا جَرَائِي السِّنِّ
بِحُسْنِ عِبَارَتِهِ فَاجْعَلْنَا مِمَّنْ يُزَعَّاهُ جَوْزُ عَائِشَةَ
وَيَذِيرُ لَكَ بِإِعْتِقَادِ التَّسْلِيمِ لِحُكْمِ آيَاتِهِ وَ
يَفْزَعُ إِلَى الْأَقْرَارِ بِمُتَشَابِهِهِ وَمَوْجِحاتِ بَيِّنَاتِهِ

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّكَ أَنْزَلْتَهُ عَلَى نَبِيِّكَ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ بِجَمَلٍ وَالْهَمْنَةِ عِلْمَ عَجَائِبِهِ مُكَمَّلًا
وَوَزَّنْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مُفَسِّرًا وَفَضَّلْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ جَهْلٍ
عِلْمَهُ وَقَوَّيْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ لِنَرْفَعَنَا فَوْقَ مَنْ لَمْ يُطِيقْ
حَمْلَهُ اللَّهُمَّ فَكَمَا جَعَلْتَ قُلُوبَنَا لَهُ حِمْلَةً وَ
عَزَّيْتَنَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ شَرَفَهُ وَفَضَّلَهُ فَصِلْ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ
الْخَطِيبِ بِهِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ الْخَزَّانِ لَهُ وَاجْعَلْنَا مِنْ
بِعْتَرَفٍ بِأَنَّهُ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ حَتَّى لَا يُعَارِضَنَا الشَّكُ
فِي صِدْقِهِ وَلَا يَخْلِفَنَا الزُّبْعُ عَنْ صِدْقِهِ

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَاجْعَلْنَا مِنْ عِصَمِهِ
يَحْيَاهُ وَيُؤَيِّرُ الْمُتَشَابِهَاتِ إِلَى خِرَازِ مَعْقِلِهِ
وَتَشْكُنُ فِي ظِلِّ جَنَاحِهِ وَيَهْدِي بَصْرَهُ صَبَاحَهُ
وَيَهْدِي بَسْمُحَ إِسْفَارِهِ وَتَتَصَبَّحُ بِمُصْبَاحِهِ
وَلَا يَلْمِزُ الْهَدْيُ فِي غَيْرِهِ اللَّهُمَّ وَكَمَا
نَصَبْتَ بِهِ مُحَمَّدًا عَلِمًا لِلدَّلَالَةِ عَلَيْكَ وَأَنْفَجْتَ
بِآلِهِ سُبُلَ الرِّضَا إِلَيْكَ فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَ
اجْعَلِ الْقُرْآنَ وَسِيلَةً لَنَا إِلَى أَشْرَفِ مَنَازِلِ
الْكَرَامَةِ وَسَلَامًا نَعْرُجُ فِيهِ إِلَى مَحَلِّ السَّلَامَةِ
وَنَسْبًا نَحْزِي بِهِ الْحَقَّاهُ فِي عَرْصَةِ الْفِيَامَةِ وَ

ذَرِيعَةً نَفَّذَ مِنْهَا عَلَى نَعِيمٍ إِذَا الْمَقَامَةُ اللَّهُمَّ
صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَاجْطُطِبِ الْقُرْآنَ عَنَّا نَقْلُ
الْأُورَازِ وَهَبْ لَنَا حُسْنَ شَمَائِلِ الْأَبْرَارِ وَافُقْ
بَيْنَا أَتَانَا الَّذِي فَا مَوَالِكَ بِهِ أَنَا اللَّيْلُ وَالْطَّرَافُ
الْتَهَارِجِي نُطْقَةً بِأَمْرِ كُلِّ دَفْنٍ يُطْمِنُهُ
وَنَقْفُونَا أَتَانَا الَّذِي سَنَصَاؤُ ابْنُ زِيَادٍ وَلَمْ يَلْهُمِ
الْأَمَلُ عَنِ الْعَمَلِ فَقَطِّعْهُمْ بِمُجْدَعِ غُرُوبِهِ اللَّهُمَّ
صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَاجْعَلِ الْقُرْآنَ لَنَا فِي
ظِلِّ اللَّيْلِ مُوَيْسًا وَمِنْ زَعَاكِ الشَّيْطَانِ
وَحَطَرَاتِ الْوَسَاوِينِ حَارِسًا وَلَا تَدِ ابْنَانِ عَيْنِ

نَقْلَهَا إِلَى الْمَعَاضِي جَانِبًا وَلَا لِنَسْنَانٍ غَيْرِ الْحَوَزِ
فِي الْبَاطِلِ مِنْ غَيْرِ مَا أَفِيءَ مَخْرَجًا وَجَوَانِحًا عَنْ
افْتِرَافِ الْأَنْيَامِ زَاخِرًا وَمَا طَوَّبَتِ الْغَفْلَةُ عَمَّا
مِنْ تَصَفُّحِ الْأَعْيُنِ زَانِشَرًا حَتَّى تُوصِلَ إِلَى فُلُوبِنَا
فَهُمْ عَجَائِبُهُ وَزَوَاخِرُ امْثَالِهِ الَّتِي ضَعُفَتِ الْجِبَالُ
الرَّوَانِي عَلَى صَلَابَتِهَا عَنْ إِحْسَامِهِ اللَّهُمَّ
صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَادِّمْ بِالْقُرْآنِ صَلَاحَ
ظَاهِرِنَا وَاجْبُبْ بِخَطَرَاتِ الْوَسَاوِسِ غُرْبَتَهُ
صَمَائِرِنَا وَاغْسِلْ بِهِ دُرْنَ فُلُوبِنَا وَعِلَاقَتِنَا
أَوْزَانَنَا وَاجْمَعْ بِهِ مُنْتَشَرُ مُوزِنَا وَأَرْوِيهِ فِي

مَوْفِقِ الْعَرْضِ عَلَيْكَ ظَمًا هَوَا جَزَا وَاكْسُنَا
بِهِ جُلَلِ الْأَمَانِ يَوْمَ الْفَرَجِ الْأَكْبَرِ فِي نُشُورِنَا
اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَاجْزِ الْفُرَانَ خَلَّتْنَا
بِرِّعَلِ الْأَمَلِاقِ وَسُوقِ النَّيَابِ رَغَدًا لِعَيْشِ وَجْهِ
سَعَةِ الْأَرْزَاقِ وَجَنِّدْنَا بِهِ الْقَرَائِبَ الْمَدْمُومَةَ
وَمَدَانِي الْأَخْلَاقِ وَأَعِصْمَانَا بِهِ مِنْ هَوَى الْكُفْرِ وَ
دَوَاعِي التَّفَاقُحِ حَتَّى يَكُونَ لَنَا فِي الْفِيَامَةِ إِلَى
رِضْوَانِكَ وَجَنَانِكَ فَايِدًا وَلَنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا غَرْسُ حَقِّكَ
وَتَعَدِّي جُدُودِكَ ذَايِدًا وَلِمَا عِنْدَكَ يُجْلِلُ
حَلَالِهِ وَتَحْزِمُ جَرَامِهِ شَاهِدًا اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى

مُحَمَّدٍ وَإِلَهُ وَهَوْنٌ بِالْفُرَّانِ عِنْدَ الْمَوْتِ عَلَى أَنْفُسِنَا
كَرْبَ السَّيَافِ وَجَهْدَ الْأَنْبِرِ وَزَادَ الْحَشَارِجِ
إِذَا بَلَغَتِ النَّفُوسُ التَّرَاقِي وَقِيلَ مَنْ زَاوٍ وَتَحَلَّى
مَلِكُ الْمَوْتِ لِفَضِّهَا مِنْ حُجُبِ الْغُيُوبِ وَزَمَاهَا
عَنْ قَوْمِ الْمَنَآ يَا بَاسْتِهِمْ وَجْهَةَ الْفِرَاقِ وَدَنَا مِنَّا
إِلَى الْأَحْرِقِ زَجِيلٌ وَأَنْطَلَاوُوصَازِنَا الْأَعْمَالُ
فَلَا يَدُ فِي الْأَعْمَالِ وَكَانَتْ الْقُبُورُ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى
إِلَى مَقَاتِلِ يَوْمِ النَّالِ اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَإِلِهِ
وَبَارِكْ لَنَا فِي حُلُولِ دَاوِ الْبَلَى وَطُولِ الْمَقَامَةِ
بَيْنَ أَطْسَافِ الثَّرَى وَاجْعَلِ الْقُبُورَ بَعْدَ فِرَاقِ الدُّنْيَا

خَيْرَ مَنَازِلِنَا وَافْتَحْ لَنَا رَحْمَتَكَ فِي صَبْرِ مَلَاحِدِنَا
وَلَا تَقْصَحْنَا فِي حَاضِرِ الْقِيَامَةِ بِمُوقَاتِ آمِنَا
وَارْحَمْ بِالْقُرْآنِ فِي مَوْقِفِ الْعَرْضِ عَلَيْكَ ذَلَّ
مَقَامِنَا وَثَبَّتْ بِهِ عِنْدَ اضْطِرَابِ جَنَرِ جَهَنَّمَ
يَوْمَ الْخَازِعِ عَلَيْهَا زَلَّ آمِنَا وَنَجَّاهُ مِنْ كُلِّ
كَرْبٍ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَشَدَّائِدِ أَهْوَالِ يَوْمِ الطَّامَةِ
وَبَيَضُ وَجُوهَنَا يَوْمَ تَسْوَدُ وَجُوهُ الظَّالِمَةِ فِي يَوْمِ
الْخَسَرَةِ وَالنَّدَامَةِ وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا فِي صُدُورِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَدَّ أَوْلَا بِجَعْلِ الْحَيَوَاتِ عَلَيْنَا نَكْدًا اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ
عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ عَبْدِكَ وَرَسُولِكَ كَمَا بَلَغَ رِسَالَتُكَ وَصَدِّعْ

بِأَمْرِكَ وَصَحِّحْ لِعِبَادِكَ اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ نَبِيَّنَا صَلَوَاتُكَ
عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى آلِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَقْرَبَ النَّبِيِّينَ
مِنْكَ مَجْلِسًا وَأَمْكَنَهُمْ مِنْكَ شَفَاعَةً وَأَجْلَهُمْ
عِنْدَكَ فَدَّرَا أَوْجَهُهُمْ عِنْدَكَ جَاهًا اللَّهُمَّ
صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَشَرِّفْ بُنْيَانَهُ وَعَظِّمْ
بُرْهَانَهُ وَثَقِّلْ مِيزَانَهُ وَتَقَبَّلْ شَفَاعَتَهُ وَقَرِّبْ
وَسِيلَتَهُ وَسَيِّرْ وَجْهَهُ وَأَتِمِّمْ نُورَهُ وَارْفَعْ دَرَجَتَهُ
وَاجْعَلْنَا عَلَى نُسْنَيْنِهِ وَتَوَفَّنَا عَلَى مِلَّتِهِ وَخُذْنَا
مِنْهَا جَهْدًا وَاسْتَلِكْ بِنَا سَبِيلَهُ وَاجْعَلْنَا مِنْ أَهْلِ
طَاعَتِهِ وَاجْعَلْنَا فِي زُمْرَتِهِ وَأَوْزِدْنَا حَوْضَهُ

وَاسْقِنَا بِكَاسِهِ وَصَلِّ اللَّهُمَّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ
صَلَوَةً تُبْلِغُهُ بِهَا أَفْضَلَ مَا يَأْمُرُ بِخَيْرِكَ وَ
فَضْلِكَ وَكَرَامَتِكَ إِنَّكَ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَانِعْمَةٍ وَ
فَضْلٍ كَثِيرٍ اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ بِمَا بَلَغَ مِنْ نِسَالِنَا لَكَ وَ
أَدَى مِنْ آيَاتِكَ وَنَصَحَ لِعِبَادِكَ وَجَاهِدَ فِي سَبِيلِكَ
أَفْضَلَ مَا جَزَيْتَ إِحْدًا مِنْ مَلَائِكَتِكَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ
وَإِنِّيَا لَكَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ الْمُصْطَفَيْنَ وَالنَّالِمَ عَلَيْهِ وَ
عَلَى آلِهِ الطَّيِّبِينَ الطَّاهِرِينَ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

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This is a specialized book on spiritual journeying, offering the sincere seeker keys to inner transformation.

The Sayings & Wisdom of Imam `Ali

Compiled By: Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Translated By: Asadullah ad-Dhaakir Yate

Carefully translated into modern English, a selection of this great man's sayings gathered together from authentic and reliable sources.

Transformative Worship in Islam: Experiencing Perfection

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri with Muna H. Bilgrami

This book uniquely bridges the traditional practices and beliefs, culture and language of Islam with the transformative spiritual states described by the Sufis and Gnostics.

Talks, Interviews & Courses

Ask Course ONE: The Sufi Map of the Self

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

This workbook explores the entire cosmology of the self through time, and maps the evolution of the self from before birth through life, death and beyond.

Ask Course TWO: The Prophetic Way of Life

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

This workbook explores how the code of ethics that govern religious practice and the Prophetic ways are in fact transformational tools to enlightened awakening.

Friday Discourses: Volume 1

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

The Shaykh addresses many topics that influence Muslims at the core of what it means to be a Muslim in today's global village.

Songs of Iman on the Roads of Pakistan

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

A series of talks given on the divergence between 'faith' and 'unbelief ' during a tour of the country in 1982 which becomes a reflection of the condition occurring in the rest of the world today.

The Connection Between the Absolute and the Relative

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

This is a 1990 conversation with Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri, in which he talks about wide-ranging topics on Islam and presents it as the archetypal, universal, Adamic path that began when humanity rose in consciousness to recognize duality and began its journey from the relative back to Absolute Unity.

The Spiritual Path: A Conversation with Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri On His Life, Thought and Work

Professor Ali A. Allawi

In this wide-ranging conversation with Professor Ali Allawi, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri talks about his life story and the spiritual journey that he embarked on and the path he has been on ever since.

Poetry, Aphorisms & Inspirational

101 Helpful Illusions

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Everything in creation has a purpose relevant to ultimate spiritual Truth. This book highlights natural veils to be transcended by disciplined courage, wisdom and insight.

Beyond Windows

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Offering moving and profound insights of compassion and spirituality through these anthologies of connections between slave self and Eternal Lord.

Bursts of Silence

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Inspired aphorisms provide keys to doors of inner knowledge, as well as antidotes to distraction and confusion.

Pointers to Presence

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

A collection of aphorisms providing insights into consciousness and are pointers to spiritual awakening.

Ripples of Light

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Inspired aphorisms which become remedies for hearts that seek the truth.

Sound Waves

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

A collection of aphorisms that help us reflect and discover the intricate connection between self and soul.

Sublime Gems: Selected Teachings of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani

Spiritual nourishment extracted from Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani's existing works.

Autobiography

Son of Karbala

Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

The atmosphere of an Iraq in transition is brought to life and used as a backdrop for the Shaykh's own personal quest for self-discovery and spiritual truth.

Health Sciences and Islamic History

Health Sciences in Early Islam – Volumes 1 & 2

Collected Papers By: Sami K. Hamarneh

Edited By: Munawar A. Anees

Foreword By: Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri

Health Sciences in Early Islam is a pioneering study of Islamic medicine that opens up new chapters of knowledge in the history of the healing sciences. This two volume work covers the development of Islamic medicine between the 6th and 12th centuries A.D.