

Surah al-Insan Chapter 76

(Human)

Number of Verses: 31

(The Arabic meaning of 'Insan' is 'Human'. In the English language the words 'mankind' and 'man' are also used for 'Human' and we have used 'man' in the text.)

Contents of the Surah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

In spite of its brevity, this Surah presents a deep, varied and comprehensive theme which can be divided into five sections:

1. Man's creation from a drop of mingled sperm; his guidance and his free-will.
2. The reward offered to the Righteous /abrar/. (This part has a special occasion for its revelation in relation to the household of the Prophet (S), ie. Ahlul Bayt; which will be discussed at a later point.)
3. The merits which cause one to deserve the rewards.
4. The importance of The Qur'an, the manner of conducting its principles and the demanding road of self-perfection.
5. The dominance of Allah's Will (even though man has limited free-will).

There are different titles for this Surah; the most famous are "MAN" (Insan), "TIME" (Dahr) and

"HAS THERE COME" (Hal_ata)

each of which is taken from one of the words at the beginning of the Surah; however, in the traditions we will discuss, here, about the virtue of the Surah, only Hal_ata is mentioned.

Was the Surah Revealed In Medina?

The consensus of scholars and commentators is that all or at least part of the beginning verses, which explain the position or dignity of the Righteous and their good deeds, were revealed in Medina. The occasion of revelation about them, that is, the story of Ali, Fatima, Hassan, Hosain (as) and Fezza (their house-helper); and their vows, will be explained in detail at the appropriate time.

From among the famous scholars, we can mention Qartabi the well-known commentator who points out:

*"The consensus of scholars believe that the Surah has been revealed in Medina."*¹

In addition to this, we can also mention the following:

1. Hakim Ab_al_Qasim Haskani has, in detail, quoted from Ibn_Abbas the number of verses, which were separately revealed in Mecca and Medina. He has considered it as a Medinan Surah which has been revealed after Surah Al_Rahman and before Surah Al_Talaq.² Prof. Ahmad Zahid, the writer of 'Idah', has also quoted the same from Ibn_Abbas.³

2. Abu 'Abdullah Zanjani, in his book Tarikh_i_Qur'an⁴ that a group of scholars have considered this Surah among the Medinan ones.⁵

3. From the same source⁶, is quoted from Ibn_Abbas that this Surah is considered the eleventh Medinan Surah.⁷

4. Suyuti, in his book 'Itqan' has quoted from Dalayl_al_Nabowwa by Beyhaqi, who has in turn quoted from 'Akrama that:

*"Surah al-Insan was revealed in Medina".*⁸

5. In Durr al_manthur, the same comment from Ibn_Abbas is quoted in different forms.⁹

6. Tafsir-i Kashshaf, a commentary, is where Zamakhshari has pointed out that the occasion of revelation, in the beginning verses, was about the vows taken by Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Hosain (as).¹⁰

7. There are still many other scholars, besides the aforementioned ones, who say that the beginning verses are about Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Hosain (as).¹¹

This verifies that the Surah has been revealed in Medina (since we know that Hassan and Hosain (as)

were born in Medina). Among these scholars' books we can mention the master Vahidi's 'Asbab al-Noz-ul', Baqavi's 'Ma'alim-at-Tanzil', Sebt Ibn-Jouzi's "Tathkirah", Ganji Shafi'i's 'Kifayat-at-Talib' and so on. This verification is so reputable and well known that Muhammad Ibn-Idris Shafii has referred to it in his poem:

"How long, how long. up until when,

Will you reproach me my love

For this. gentle man?

Was not Fatima married but only to him?

And was not Hal-ata revealed

About only but him?"

There are many other evidences supporting these views some of which, will be pointed out later, when the occasion of revelation of the verses is discussed.

In spite of these facts, some enthusiasts still insist on counting the Surah among Meccan ones and reject all the narration's about the revelation of the Surah being revealed in Medina as well as the revelation of this Surah being about Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Hosain (as).

The Virtue in Studying Surah al-Insan (man)

There is a tradition from the Prophet (S) that says:

*"One who studies Surah Hal-ata will be rewarded Heaven and clothes of silk (in Heaven) by Allah."*¹²

There is also a narration from Imam Baqir (as) which says:

*"One of the rewards for a person who studies Surah Hal-ata every Thursday morning is that he will be with the Prophet (S) on the Day of Judgement."*¹³

Surah al-Insan, Verses 1-4

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُنْ شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا

إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا

إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ سَلَاسِلَ وَأَغْلَالًا وَسَعِيرًا

- 1. Has there not been over man a long period of Time when he was a thing not worth mentioning?**
- 2. Surely We created man from a drop of mingled semen, in order to try him: so We gave him hearing and sight.**
- 3. Surely We showed him the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (is up to him).**
- 4. We have prepared Chains, Yokes and a Blazing Fire for the Rejectors.**

We transformed the lowly mixture of sperm (and egg) into man, then We made all the faculties of guidance available to him.

Though most of the details in this Surah are about Resurrection and the Blessings of Heaven, there is, at the beginning of the Surah, some discussion on the creation of man. It becomes understood that if one takes note of the creation then one may be able to act cautiously in anticipation of the Resurrection.

The question is asked,

“Has there not been over man a long period of Time when he was a thing not worth mentioning?”

The answer, undoubtedly, is in the affirmative.

For a long time the tiny essential particles of his being were scattered in different places. They could have been in the soil, among the tiny droplets of water in the seas, or in the atmosphere. In fact, each of these three environments was so vast that the particles were lost within them and were so small as not to be worthy of mention.

Does the term

'man',

in the first verse, refer to all the members of mankind or does it only refer to Adam?

The next verse continues:

“Surely we created man from a drop of mingled semen...”

so, we can say this is a clear indication that it is referring to all of mankind; (since it is a known fact that this is definitely how man reproduces, and not by any other means. It is not a condition of coming into existence only for Adam).

However, some commentators believe that the term

'man',

in the first verse, refers to 'Adam' and that 'man', in the second verse, indicates 'mankind' as a whole. However, this seems to be a contradiction in thought and does not appear to be probable.

In the following sentence,

“...he was considered a thing not worth mentioning?”,

there are various ideas put forth on this issue and one of them is that when man was but mingled sperm (and egg), he was not worthy of mention, however, later when the entity possessed the higher stage of development it became a worthy being.

[It has been narrated from Imam Baqir (as), the fifth Imam, that man's existence was known to Allah even though he was not mentioned as being a worthy entity until Allah created him in the physical form.]¹⁴

Other interpretations indicate that the term 'man', in this verse, means learned people who were not recognized at first, but subsequently became so, after having obtained their knowledge. They were, then, mentioned everywhere, among all people, while they were alive and even after their death.

Now, we come to the process of the second stage which is the creation of man and his becoming worthy of mention.

The verse says,

“Surely' We created man from a drop of mingled semen, in order to try him: so We gave him hearing and sight.”

The term /amshaj/ is the plural form of /mashaj/ or /mashij/ which means 'mingled' or 'mixed'. The creating of man from 'mingled semen' probably refers to the mixture of sperm and egg and their

unification, or

It could refer to the various talents possessed by man through heritage; which exists in the genes, DNA, and Chromosomes that are in every sperm and egg. Or, perhaps it refers to a combination of all of the aforementioned cases. If so, the last idea is the most complete and suitable.

It may be possible that the term

'mingled'

refers to the process of development, upon unification of sperm and egg; which leads the mixture to develop into a fetus and then into man.

With the term

Inabtalih, "We try him..."

we can understand that man deserves the honor of duty, undertaking, responsibility, examination and trial, which is one of the greatest divine blessings Allah has gifted to man.

Since duty and examination are not possible unless there is awareness; hence, hearing and sight are given to man. This fact is mentioned at the end of the verse; making it clear for us that the former cannot exist without the latter.

Some commentators have also suggested that the intention for the examination is the process of developing the sperm to fetus and, then, to a complete man.

However, upon careful examination of the phrase

"We try him..."

and

"man",

the first interpretation seems more suitable.

By accepting this definition, we can understand that the origin in all of the conception of 'man' is in his sensational understanding. In other words, sensational understanding is the basis of all rationality's. Most Islamic philosophers support this idea and Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher, approved of the idea, as well.

Since, in the duty and examination of man, two more factors are required, that is, 'guidance' and 'free-will' are added to understanding; the next verse insists, then, that

“Surely We guided him to the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (is up to him).”

Guidance, it can be said, has a broad meaning containing the following three branches: divine guidance, natural guidance and religious guidance. This verse, of course, mostly intends to convey the third branch, i.e. 'religious guidance'.

Explanation

Since Allah has created man with a special goal in mind: 'examination and development', He has prepared the necessary faculties for these fulfillment's in his being. This can be considered 'divine guidance'.

Thereupon, He has made man naturally eager to follow the Way and with the help of his natural inclinations, has shown him its direction. This can be considered 'natural guidance'.

Further, He has given a mission to some heavenly leaders and great prophets in order for them to train man, show him the right direction and teach him the clear religious laws; so that he may perform his duty correctly. This can be considered 'religious guidance'. These three kinds of guidance, of course, are for all members of mankind; without any exception.

On the whole, this verse indicates three points which are important for the destiny in the life of man: 'duty', 'guidance' and 'free-will' all of which are both interdependent and complementary to each other.

By the way, there will be no room for the case of fatalism to exist when it says:

“Surely We guided him to the Way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (is up to him).”

The terms

/shakiran/ 'grateful'

and

/kafuran/ 'ungrateful'

are the most fitting, here, because those who obey Allah and assume to follow His guidance are thankful, but those who disobey and do not follow the direction are sinners gone astray.

No one can be completely thankful for Allah's blessings, but those who repay this favor with ingratitude are the worst. They have neither appreciation for Allah's guidance nor the many ways that He has provided this guidance; which are always available.

(In Arabic, there is only one term used for those who are 'ungrateful' and for the 'unbelievers': /kafur/. The same is noted in Mufradat by Raqib).

In the next verse, there is a short, but meaningful point that relates to the fate of those who are ungrateful; it says:

“We have prepared Chains, Yokes and a Blazing Fire for the Rejecters”.

The sense derived from the term

la'tadna, “We have prepared...”

is, an emphasis on the existence of punishment; which is unavoidable for the rejecters. We know that preparation is for common people who are limited in their abilities and must make prior arrangements for their supplies, so that when they are in need they are sure that they will have everything ready.

This is not true when speaking of Allah because whenever He Wills something to

“Be”,

it will be done at once and preparation is meaningless. However, to show the certainty of the existence of punishment for the rejecters, He insists that there is a means for the punishment; it is ready-made and there is no doubt about it.

Further along in the sentence, we see that /salasil/ 'chains' is the plural form of /silsilah/ which, here, means:

- 1) A flexible series of jointed links or rings usually of some kind of metal.
- 2) That which binds, as a prisoner held in chains.

The term

laqlal/ 'yokes'

is the plural form of /qul/ 'yoke' which means: a wooden frame or bar with loops or bows at either end, used for harnessing together a pair of oxen, etc. Here, 'yoke', is a heavy iron ring held on the neck or hands and is fastened with a chain.

On the whole, chains, yokes and blazing fire, which are mentioned in this verse, indicate a great harmful punishment for the rejecters. This sense is also pointed out in several other verses of the Qur'an. They denote both captivity and torture as punishment.

man's using his free-will for following after his lusts during his lifetime, in this world, will be the reason for that pain in the next life. In fact, that 'blazing fire' that man will encounter later, is the incarnation of the fire he, himself, has made by his evil deeds in this world.

Explanation: The Fetus and its Development

We know that the human zygote is an entity formed by the unification of the male sperm and the female egg.

The sperm, itself, its combination with the egg and the different steps of fetal development into man is a great marvel in human existence. Some of the mysteries have been uncovered in the study of embryology, but there are some further areas yet to be discovered. A few of the above mentioned wonders are as follows:

1. Sperm: Floating in the semen of men is a very microscopic creature that has a head, neck and moving tail. (And what a miracle it is!: The tail propels it through the inhospitable environment, inside the vagina, on its journey to fertilize the egg.

The environment of the vagina is very acidic and there are only a certain number of days in a month in which the platens are vertical, in the female secretions, so that the spermatozoa can travel the distance without hindrance. At other times the platens are in a hodgepodge array and this makes it virtually impossible for the sperm to move in a straight line. Also, some of the spermatozoa may be deformed and unable, themselves, to make the journey.)

Every time a man has an ejaculation, he discharges, in the seminal fluid, an average of 70 million sperm per milliliter or 100 million spermatozoa or more—this is equal to the population of several countries, but only one of them, most usually, succeeds in entering the ovum so that fertilization can take place.¹⁵ This number is very large because, as mentioned above, many of the spermatozoa will be destroyed on their long and arduous journey.

2. Egg: The wonderful characteristic of the egg is that it allows one sperm to enter it. (However, on rare occasions more than one sperm enters resulting in 'identical' twins or more than one egg is released from the ovum sac resulting in 'fraternal' twins). Also, within the egg the miraculous cell division process takes place.

3. Uterus: The uterus is a muscular organ and serves as a place for reception, retention, and nutrition of the concepts, which it expels during labor. It resembles a flattened pear in shape and the size varies depending on the age of the female. The remarkable ability of the cervix to dilate results from dissociation of collagen. The blood supply of the uterus is derived principally from the uterine and ovarian arteries.

4. Amnionic Fluid: The fetus is in a thick, essentially colorless, fluid in a sac called the 'placenta'. This fluid protects the fetus against the mother's various quick, sharp movements or any other violent disturbances. Moreover, it regulates the fetal temperature, so that the changes in the outside temperature cannot easily effect it. The most interesting point is that, most generally, the fluid keeps the fetus in a weightless state, which is very efficient and prevents limb stress.

5. Placenta and Cord: The fetus receives nourishment through the placenta and umbilical cord. The mother's blood is accompanied by food materials and oxygen that arrives at the placenta and after a refining process goes to the fetus heart through the umbilical cord and then moves through its body.

6. Conception: After fertilization, the mature ovum becomes a zygote, which then undergoes segmentation. Some biological scientists believe that the ovum carries positive electric charges and the sperm has negative electric charges, then they attract each other. However, when the sperms enter the ovum, the charge is changed to a negative charge.

In so doing, the other sperms in the surrounding area will be repelled. Other scientists maintain that when the sperm enters the egg, some chemicals will be released causing the remaining spermatozoa to move away. Whichever the case may be, in a couple of days the zygote attaches itself to the wall of the uterine cavity. From there, if there are no complications in the growth and development process, a new being will enter this world.

From the beginning of the fourth month, the fetus is capable of respiratory movement sufficiently intense to move amniotic fluid in and out of the respiratory tract. 16 Air-breathing is initiated by the rapid replacement of bronchial and alveolar fluid by air. 17

Surah al-Insan, Verses 5 – 11

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ يَشْرَبُونَ مِنْ كَأْسٍ كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا كَافُورًا

عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا عِبَادُ اللَّهِ يُفَجِّرُونَهَا تَفْجِيرًا

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيرًا

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا

إِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوسًا قَمْطَرِيرًا

فَوَقَاهُمُ اللَّهُ شَرَّ ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمِ وَلَقَّاهُمْ نَضْرَةً وَسُرُورًا

5. ***“Verily, the Righteous drink of a cup; the mixture of which is (like) camphor.”***
6. ***“A fountain, where the servants of Allah drink, flows in abundance (wherever they wish).”***
7. ***“They fu(fill (their) vows and fear a Day, the chastisement of which is widespread.”***
8. ***“And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive***
9. ***(Saying): “We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.”***
10. ***“We only fear from our Lord a Day, frowningly severe.”***
11. ***Therefore, Allah will guard them against the evil of that Day, and will grant over them a Light of Realty and a (blissful) joy.***

The Occasion of Revelation

A great evidence for the superiority and excellence of Ahlul Bayt; the household of the Prophet (S).

Ibn-Abbas says that Hassan and Hosain (as) were sick. The Prophet (S) and a group of followers came to visit them. They suggested to Hazrat Ali to take a vow for their recovery. So, Ali, Fatima and Fezza (their house-helper) took a vow that if Hassan and Hosain recovered, they would fast for three days. (According to the same narration, Hassan and Hosain (as) made the same vow.)

After a short while both of them recovered. Therefore, the family fasted for the first day, but, as they were in dire need for food stuffs, Hazrat Ali borrowed some barley and Hazrat Fatima ground one-third of it into flour and baked some bread.

With the onset of evening, when they were preparing to break their fasts, an indigent person came to their door and said,

“Peace be upon you, the Household of Muhammad. I am a needy Muslim, so please give me some food. May Allah bestow upon you, in kind, from divine sustenance.”

All of them gave priority to him and gave him their shares. That night, they broke their fast with only water.

The following day they fasted again, but, like the previous day, an orphan came to the door. Once more, they forfeited their bread and ate nothing but water.

The next day, they fasted for the third time. This day a captive came to their house and they repeated their charity.

On the fourth day, Ali took Hassan and Hosain with himself to see the Prophet.

When the Prophet observed their condition; they were trembling with hunger, he said,

“It grieves me to see you in this condition”.

Then, he stood up and walked with them. When he arrived at their home, he found Fatima praying. Her stomach was sunk in to her backbone and her eyes had become sunken, too.

The Prophet was greatly affected.

At this moment Gabriel descended and said,

“O, Muhammad receive this Surah. Allah congratulates you for having such a family...”

And then Gabriel recited, to him, Surah Hal-ata. 18

The Great Reward for the Righteous

In the aforementioned verses (1-4) human beings were divided into two groups; the grateful and the ungrateful and reference was made to the 'punishment and penalty' for the ungrateful. But, in these verses there is a recount of the 'Rewards' offered to the Righteous.

First, it says,

“Verily, the Righteous drink of a cup; the mixture of which is (like) camphor.”

The term /abrar/ is the plural form of /barr/, which originally means 'broadness and expansiveness'. For this reason, dry land and vast deserts, as opposed to large bodies of water, are called /barr/. Thus, this term is applied to the Righteous (people who do good), because their good deeds have extensive effects on the society.

The word /birr/ means 'to be pious', 'Just', or 'to act justly'. It is said that making the distinction between /khayr/ and /birr/ is for the reason that the former has a general meaning of goodness while the latter has the specific meaning of 'goodness accompanied by intention'.

The term /kafur/ has various meanings; one of which is 'good smelling'. Another meaning is 'fragrant plant' or a plant which has a sweet fragrance. Also, it has the common meaning of 'a sharp odor' that has medical applications, e.g. for sterilizing or disinfecting. The Other meaning has its importance as an extraordinarily white and cool substance, and it is famous, because of its coolness and whiteness.

Furthermore, this verse indicates that this purifying drink is so fragrant that it is enjoyed both through the

senses of taste and smell. On the whole, /kafur/ has been considered as having the same value as musk and ambergris the famous sweet fragrances.

Then, it refers to the fountainhead from which this cup of divine drink is tilled; and says,

"A fountain, where from the servants of Allah drink, flows in abundance (wherever they wish)".

This purified fountain is under their control in such a way that it flows wherever they wish.

It is worthy of mention that in a tradition from Imam Baqir (as) it is quoted that in a description of the fountain he said that this fountain is placed in the house of the Prophet and from there it flows to the houses of the previous prophets (as) and believers.

It is true that, as in this world, the fountains of knowledge and mercy flow from the Prophet's house toward the servants of Allah and the righteous, and in the next world (which is a great illustration of this condition) the fountain of the divine pure drink will originate from his house and therefore, to the houses of other believers.

The term /yufajjirun/ is based on the word /tafjir/ which, itself, is derived from the root /fajara/ which means 'to cause water to flow' or 'to break' on a large scale, whether breaking the earth or anything else. When, as it seems, the light of the morning breaks the dark curtain of the night; this light is called /fajr/. Also, they call an evildoer /fajir/ (wicked), because he breaks open the curtain of modesty and piety. However, in this verse it means 'the opening of the ground'.

It is remarkable that among the many blessings of Heaven, referred to in this Surah, the first to be mentioned is this 'special pure fragrant drink'. Perhaps, because after passing their account on the Day of Judgment and on their arrival into Heaven, by drinking this drink, they clear their hearts from any grief, discomfort and impurity. Then, they can benefit from the other divine blessings, while they are basking in the love of Allah.

In the following verses, the deeds and qualifications of the 'Righteous' and 'servants of Allah' are described. Their eligibility for such unparalleled blessings is reasoned through having five characteristics.

It says:

"They fulfill (their) vows and fear a Day; the chastisement of which is wide spread".

The terms

'they fulfill (their) vows'

and

'fear Allah'

(including some later sentences, which are all said in the present tense) indicate that this is their ever-existing, routine practice.

As was explained, earlier, regarding the occasion of revelation, the true essence of these verses is targeted at Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Hosain (as), for they fulfilled their vows of fasting for three consecutive days, and did not break their fast, at the end of each day, but by only drinking water and their hearts were filled with the fear of Allah and the Day of Judgment.

The term /mustatir/ means 'vast', or 'scattered', which refers to the great and various punishments on that Great Day.

When they fulfilled their own vow, they definitely respected and fulfilled what Allah has made obligatory. Their fear of the chastisement of the Great Day was due to their deep belief in the Resurrection, and to their intensive responsibility in regard to Allah's command.

They truly believed in the Resurrection and the penalties which are waiting for the wrong-doers. This belief is made manifest by their own sincere actions.

Then, referring to the third worthy deed of the Righteous, it says:

"And they feed, for the love of Allah, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive."

Donating food at the time of severe self-need requires great generosity. It was not simply feeding someone, since their action demanded sacrifices at a time when they, themselves, were in the greatest need.

On the other hand, this has a broad implication which includes: the indigent, orphans and captives; and hence, their generosity covers a large variety of 'needy'. The embedded meaning in the Arabic text *ʾala hubbihi/* refers to 'the food' and denotes the fact that they donated the food which they craved for.

This conforms with the sense of Surah Al-i-Imran, No. 3, verse 92 which says:

"By no means shall you attain righteousness unless you give freely (benevolently) of that which you love..."

The meaning of

/miskin/ 'indigent',

/yatim /'orphan'

and

/asir /'captive'

are clear, but, among the commentators, there is no agreement as to the exact meaning and the kind of

lasir /captive',

which is mentioned in the verse; but on the whole, the word

'captive'

refers to one who was taken captive in the wars with atheists or polytheists.

According to the occasion of revelation, a captive had come to the door of Ali's house, when usually a captive would have been put in prison.

As we understand from history, the explanation is that at the time of Muhammad (S), there were no prisons at all.

The Prophet (S) distributed the captives among the Muslims to guard, however, he told them to be kind to the captives and to take good care of them. At times when those Muslims had problems in providing for their captives, they asked for help from other fellow Muslims. The 'guards' went with the captive or they sent him alone to seek their help.

It is known that at that period in history, Muslims had very difficult times. Later, as the Muslims' territory and rule spread and when the number of criminal captives increased, with the spread of government, jails were built and the expenses were paid from the Muslims' treasury.

In any event, we understand from the above verse that one of the best acts is feeding the poor and the needy; not only those of Muslims, but also the poor and the needy from other territories and even pagans are included as a matter of Islamic routine. It is so important that feeding them is considered one of the prominent good deeds of 'the righteous'.

It has been narrated that the Prophet (S) told the believers that they should treat the captives well and fair. When the Muslims heard this; giving priority to captives, they even, at times, donated their own food to them.¹⁹

The fourth prominent characteristic of the Righteous is considered to be 'purity and sincerity'; it says:

“(Saying): ‘We feed you for the sake of Allah alone: no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.’”

They behave, thus, not only in the case of feeding the needy, but what they do is also sincere and for the sake of Allah. They desire no reward nor thanks from anyone.

Basically, in Islam, the value of an action is in its sincerity and pure immaculate intention, and hence, activities which have worldly motivations, whether they be hypocritical or for people's approval and

appreciation or for lusts or for venal rewards, have no Islamic or moral value.

A famous tradition from the Prophet (S), which attests to this fact, says:

"No deed is accepted unless (it is done) with the pure intention for Allah."

The term /wajh/ means literally 'face, countenance' then, the meaning of /wajh_i-llah/ is 'The face of Allah', but we know that Allah does not have a bodily face.

'Face' is the symbol of personality or self, then the meaning is 'the essence of Allah' as we read in Surah Baqarah, No. 2, verse 272:

"...when you spend not except in search of Allah's countenance..."

And also from Surah Kahf, No. 18, verse 28, it says:

"And restrain yourself along with those who call on their Lord morning and evening desiring His countenance..."

On the last characteristic of 'The Righteous' it says:

"We only fear from our Lord a day, frowningly severe"

This statement can be made by their own tongue or by their mute mannerisms.

The term

'frowning'

is usually used to describe the persons who are distraught, hence it is used for the Day of Judgment, since the Day and its events are so stern and distressful that not only people are frowning, but the Day, itself, is also frowning. The term /qamtarir/ has often been used in the sense of 'being stern and calamitous'.

Here, a question arises: The Righteous act only for the sake of Allah then why are they afraid of His punishment? Does their divine motive match with the motive of fear of the punishments on the Day of Judgment? Paying attention to one point makes the answer to the question clear.

The Righteous do everything, in any case, for the sake of Allah. If they are afraid of the punishments on the Day of Judgment, it is because they are His punishments and if they love for the Blessings of Heaven, it is because they are His blessings.

This is the same fact that is discussed in Islamic jurisprudence about the intention of a devotional act which says: devotional acts, for gaining Allah's affinity, do not contradict the desire of reward and the fear of punishment or even asking Allah for worldly gifts, such as the prayer of asking for rain, because

all of them relate to Allah; though the high stage of a devotional act is that it is done totally only for the love of Allah, not for the desire of the Blessings in Heaven or for the fear of punishment in Hell.

The verse:

"We only fear from our Lord a Day, frowningly severe"

attests to the fact that this fear is also like having the fear of Allah.

It is noteworthy that the second and the fifth characteristics are both on the subject of fear, but with a difference, in that, the former only mentions the fear of the Day of Judgment, while in the latter it refers to the fear of Allah on that Day.

At one point,

'Day'

is described by 'the chastisement of which is widespread' and another time it is characterized as 'frowning and calamitous'. In fact, one shows its vastness and the other refers to its spiritual quality.

Verse No. 11 points to a part of the result of the good deeds and pure intentions of the Righteous.

It says:

"Therefore, Allah will guard them against the evil of that Day and will grant over them a Light of Beauty and a (blissful) joy."

The term /nadrāh/ means 'a special refreshment and happiness resulting from the abundance of blessing and comfort'. Truly, their appearance shows their inner calmness and happiness on that Day. Therefore, if they feared the Day, because of their responsibility in this world, on that Day Allah would make them happy in return.

The term /laqāhum/ 'they meet', used in this verse, is very interesting and meaningful. It shows that Allah receives them with His Grace, and places them in the Light of His Mercy and because of this, they are full of joy and happiness.

Feeding the Starved is of the Greatest Good Deeds

Feeding the needy is one of the prominent good deeds of 'the Righteous' and 'the servants of Allah'. This is mentioned not only in the above verses, but it is also emphasized in many other verses of the Qur'an. Hence, it is understood that this good deed is particularly appreciated by Allah.

Nowadays, according to the news broadcasts, every year millions of people die from starvation in some parts of the world, while in some other parts, so much extra food is discarded as garbage. If we pay

attention to this, two points will become very clear. First, the absence of morals in today's world, and second, the need for Islamic instruction.

There are many Islamic narrations that seriously refer to this subject, some of which are as follows:

1. A tradition from the Prophet (S) says:

*"One who feeds three Muslims, will be fed, by Allah, from three lush gardens in the dominion of the heavens."*²⁰

2. A narration from Imam Sadiq (as) says:

*"One who feeds a Muslim believer to his fill, will be rewarded on the Day of Judgment so much so that neither a man nor an angel nor a Prophet knows the amount except Allah, who is Lord for all."*²¹

Another narration from the same Imam says:

*"I prefer to feed a needy believer than only to visit him and I prefer to visit him than to free ten slaves."*²²

Notice that the narrations do not emphasize on feeding only the needy and the starved, but some of them denote that feeding the believers is as important as freeing a slave even though the believer is not in need of the food. This shows that the main goal, besides feeding someone, is gaining the hearts and strengthening friendly relations. However, the opposite case is seen among many people today.

Sometimes two close friends or two relatives go to a hotel and each of them pays his own share, as if paying the expenses of the other is something unheard of, especially if the number of the guests is large.

Some narrations stipulate that feeding the starved, in general, (irrespective of believers or unbelievers) is of the best deeds.

For example, a tradition from the Prophet (S) says:

*"One of the greatest deeds, in the sight of Allah, is to soothe the heartache and to feed the starved. By Him in Whose hand is Muhammad's soul; the Muslim who, being satisfied with food, sleeps at night while his Muslim brother or neighbor is hungry, has not really believed in me (my prophecy)!"*²³

Although the last part of the aforementioned tradition is about feeding the Muslims, the first part covers all the starved and the vastness of the meaning may cover even the animals.

Surah al-Insan, Verses 12 – 22

وَجَزَاهُمْ بِمَا صَبَرُوا جَنَّةً وَحَرِيرًا

مُتَّكِنِينَ فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ ۚ لَا يَرَوْنَ فِيهَا شَمْسًا وَلَا زَمْهَرِيرًا

وَدَانِيَةً عَلَيْهِمْ ظِلَالُهَا وَذُلِّلَتْ قُطُوفُهَا تَذْلِيلًا

وَيُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِآنِيَةٍ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَأَكْوَابٍ كَانَتْ قَوَارِيرًا

قَوَارِيرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ قَدَّرُوهَا تَقْدِيرًا

وَيُسْقَوْنَ فِيهَا كَأْسًا كَانَ مِزَاجُهَا زَنْجَبِيلًا

عَيْنًا فِيهَا تُسَمَّى سَلْسَبِيلًا

وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُخَلَّدُونَ إِذَا رَأَيْتَهُمْ حَسِبْتَهُمْ لُؤْلُؤًا مَنثورًا

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ ثَمَّ رَأَيْتَ نَعِيمًا وَمُلَكًا كَبِيرًا

عَالِيَهُمْ ثِيَابٌ سُنْدُسٌ خُضْرٌ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٌ ۚ وَحُلُّوا أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ فِضَّةٍ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ
شَرَابًا طَهُورًا

إِنَّ هَذَا كَانَ لَكُمْ جَزَاءً وَكَانَ سَعْيُكُمْ مَشْكُورًا

12. ***“And Allah will reward them for their patience, with a garden and clothes of silk (in Heaven).”***
13. ***“Reclining therein upon raised thrones, they will see (find) there neither the severe (heat of) the sun nor the bitter cold (of the moon).”***
14. ***“And the shades of the (Garden) will come low over them, and the bunches (of fruit), there, will hang low in humility (being easy to pick).”***
15. ***“And amongst them will be passed vessels of silver and goblets of crystal.”***
16. ***“(Bright as) crystal, made of silver; they will determine the appropriate measure.”***
17. ***“And they will be given to drink, there, a cup (of pure drink) mixed with Zanjabeel (ginger).”***
18. ***“(From) a spring, there, named Salsabeel.”***
19. ***“And round them will (serve) youths of perpetual (freshness): if you saw them, you would think them scattered pearls.”***
20. ***“And when you look, you will see a Bliss and a Realm Magnificent.”***
21. ***“Upon them will be Green Garments of fine silk and heavy brocade, and they will be adorned with Bracelets of silver and their Lord will give to them to drink of a Drink Pure and Holy.”***
22. ***“Verily this is a reward for you, and your endeavour is accepted and appreciated.”***

Great Rewards in Heaven

The aforementioned verses have a slight hint of the good and the Righteous and show that they are delivered from the evils and painful chastisements on Doomsday and are covered by Allah’s light of beauty and blissful joy. Now, the following verses refer to at least fifteen blessings in Heaven.

First, some Heavenly clothes and the settlement of the blessed ones, in Heaven, are spoken about.

It says:

“And Allah will reward them, for their patience, with a garden and clothes of silk (in Heaven).”

Yes, Allah sets them in special gardens of Heaven and dresses them in the best clothes due to their constancy and their altruism, such as their loyalty to their vow, fasting and donating their food to the indigent, the orphan and the captive, at the time when they were in need of it and were preparing to break their fast.

Not only in this verse, but also in many other verses throughout the Holy Qur’an, this fact is stipulated: all rewards, in the Hereafter, are (paid) in full for man’s patience and constancy, i.e. patience for obedience, patience for avoiding sins, and patience for standing firm against difficulties and hardships.

Surah Rad, No. 13, verse 24 denotes that angels will receive the blessed ones, in Heaven, in the following manner:

"Peace unto you for that you persevered in patience..."

And in Surah Mo'minun, No. 23, verse 111, it says:

"I have rewarded them, this day, for their patience and constancy. They are indeed the ones that have achieved bliss."

It goes on to say:

"Reclining therein upon raised thrones, they will see (find) there neither the severe (heat of) the sun nor the bitter cold (of the moon)."

Usually when people want to have a test they sit somewhere and recline and that is why the verse says:

"Reclining therein upon raised thrones..."

Then, to portray the complete comfort in the moderate weather, of Heaven, the end of the verse says: there is

"...neither the severe (heat of) the sun nor the bitter cold (of the moon)".

It does not definitely denote that the 'sun and moon' will not exist there, but, regarding the shade of the trees in the gardens of Heaven, the excessive heat of the sun will not exist.

The term /zamharir/ is based on /zamhar/ which has the following meanings:

1. 'excessive cold'
2. 'excessive anger'
3. 'redness of eyes due to anger'; the first meaning, however, is understood here and there is a narration that says there is a place in Hell where the limbs shatter due to the excessive cold.²⁴

The term /ara'ik/ 'thrones' is the plural form of /arikah/ 'throne' and originally means: 'a couch for the bride in the bride-chamber', but, here it means 'a seat covered with a canopy and highly decorated'.

Enumerating the blessings of Heaven, the next verse says:

"And the shade of the (Garden) will come low over them, and the bunches (of fruit), there, will hang low in humility (being easy to pick)".

In the Garden, there will be no hindrance, not a thorn to pierce the fingers, nor a need to lift a finger to pick the fruit.

It is necessary to note, again, that the life in that world is very different from the life in this world. The

blessings mentioned in these verses, as well as other verses in the Holy Qur'an, are only some slight, albeit meaningful, hints to the great benefits in Heaven; and according to some narrations, there are blessings there that no eyes have ever seen, no ears have ever heard, and no minds have ever considered.

Ibn-Abbas says that

"The blessings the Lord has mentioned, in the Holy Qur'an, are those which their names we are only acquainted with".

For instance, He mentions a

'pure drink mixed with Zanjabil (ginger)'

and 'ginger' is an aromatic root which Arabs like for its smell.²⁵

The next verse refers to the feast in Heaven, the Furnishings and those who will entertain in those surroundings.

It says:

"And amongst them will be passed vessels of silver and goblets of crystal."

The vessels are

"(Bright as) crystal, made of silver; they will determine the appropriate measure".

The mentioned vessels will be full of various Heavenly foods and the crystal goblets will be full of pleasant aromatic drinks. The quantity will be as much as they wish and according to their taste and desires and will be served by Heavenly youths.

The term /aniyah/ is the plural form of /ana/, which means 'dishes of any kind', and the term /akwab/ is the plural form of /kub/ which means 'a water container without a handle', which is sometimes called 'goblet'. The term /qawarir/ is the plural form of /qarurah/ which means 'containers made of crystal or glass'.

It seems strange that the vessels should be (bright as) Crystal, but they are made of silver. In this world no one can find such a thing. Here, in this world, the crystal vessels are made of quartz. The stone is melted and then made into a crystal-type container. The Creator, Who makes it possible for us to change hard, dark stone into a clear, transparent glass, is capable of achieving the same results, for the next world, with a metal such as silver.

So, from this description we understand that the vessels, and the containers in Heaven, are both as bright as crystal and as beautiful and splendid as silver, so much so that the liquids contained therein

can be clearly seen.

There is a tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) which says:

*"Man, in Heaven, can see through silver just as he can see through glass and crystal in this world."*²⁶

We also know that, today, scientists have found special rays (such as X-ray) which pass through solid matter and show the inner properties, similar to the way we can see through glass or crystal.

Continuing, it says:

"And they will be given to drink there, a cup (of pure drink) mixed with Zanjabeel ginger)"

many commentators have said that Arabs were pleased with drinking wine mixed with ginger, because it made the wine tastier.

Now, the Holy Qur'an speaks about 'a cup (of pure drink)' which is mixed with Zanjabeel (ginger), but it is obvious that this mixed drink is completely different from that of wine. In other words, the difference between these two kinds of drink is as far as the distance between this world and the next world.

It seems that Arabs, of the past, used to drink two kinds of wine in two forms: One of them was warm and stimulating, which was mixed with ginger; and the other one was cool and narcotic, which was mixed with camphor.

Since the other world's facts cannot be stated in worldly language, we are compelled to use our limited human vocabulary for explaining and trying to understand the sublime meanings to the wonderful facts found in the Holy Qur'an.

Commentators have given many different definitions for 'Zanjabeel' (ginger), but most of them have said that it means: a tropical plant grown for its aromatic root used for flavoring food and drink.

These Heavenly cups of drink are filled

"(From) a spring, there, named Salsabeel"

and according to Arabic terminology, Salsabeel is a very enjoyable drink which flows easily into the mouth and down the throat; being quite refreshing.

To describe the happy feast, held in Heaven, the next verse speaks about those who entertain, there, and it says:

"And round about them will (serve) youths of perpetual (freshness); if you saw them you would think them scattered pearls"

The youths, themselves, their youthfulness, freshness, vigor, mirth and beauty are immortal, and,

therefore, their entertainment would be eternal as well.

This idea is understood from the terms

/muxalladun/ 'of perpetual'

and

/yatuf-u-'alayhim/ 'round about them will serve'.

The term

'scattered pearls'

shows both the attractive beauty and brightness of the youths, as well as their presence, everywhere, at the Divine feast. It, also, implies that the blessings in the New World cannot be explained exactly.

Then, the next verse is expressed very meaningfully:

"And when you look you will see a Bliss and a Realm Magnificent".

There are many commentaries on the word

/na'im/ 'Bliss'

and the terms

/mul-kan kabiral 'Realm Magnificent'.

Among them are the following:

1. A narration from Imam Sadiq (as) cites:

*"The verse means that it is an Estate (or Realm) that neither fades nor vanishes."*²⁷

2. The blessings in Heaven are so plentiful and various that no one can explain them.

3. A

'Realm Magnificent'

is a place in Heaven where the angels enter by the permission of the Blessed, and greet them upon their arrival.

4. Whatever the Blessed wish for, there, they obtain.

5. The lowest Blessed (from the point of rank), in Heaven, has so large a domain that when he (she)

looks he (she) can see a thousand years' distance.

6. A permanent immortal

'Realm'

where the wishes are completely fulfilled.

The word

Ina'im/ 'Bliss'

and the terms

Imul-kan kabi-ral 'Realm Magnificent',

referring to the vast gardens in Heaven, have such vast meanings that they can cover all the above commentaries.

To this end, some Heavenly blessings were pointed out such as: provinces, thrones, shades, fruits, drinks, vessels and those who entertain the Blessed, in Heaven.

Then, attention is paid to some Heavenly ornaments of those who had just passed the great Event of Judgment and says:

"Upon them will be Green Garments of fine silk and heavy brocade..."

The term

/sundus/ 'garment'

means 'a thin silk cloth' while

/listabraq/ 'brocade'

means 'a thick silk cloth'. Some commentators say the latter is derived from the Persian term /setabr/ 'thick', but some others believe it is derived from the Arabic term /barq/ 'shining'.

The verse continues:

"...and they will be adorned with bracelets of silver..."

The silver, there, is so bright that it glitters like crystal and it is more beautiful than rubies and pearls.

The term /asawir/ is the plural form of /aswarah/ 'bracelet' and is originally derived from /dastvar/ 'a bracelet', a Persian word, with some phonetical changes in Arabic of course.

'Green' is the color of the Garments mentioned in the verse, because this color is the most refreshing to the eye; like the leaves on the trees, and fits in well with the 'Garden'. There are several kinds of green color, of course, each of which has its own elegance.

In some other verses of the Holy Qur'an, we see that the Blessed are decorated with golden bracelets, as for instance; in Surah Kahf, No. 18, verse 31, it says:

"...they will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold..."

This does not contrast with the current verse in this Surah, because people may decorate themselves with a variety of ornaments.

The question may arise, "Aren't silver and gold bracelets used by women as ornaments, then, why are they both mentioned for all the Blessed, i.e. men and women?"

The answer is that among many groups of people, it is common for both men and women to use gold and silver for ornamentation, but the kind of bracelet is different (though in Islam using gold as an ornament, by men, is forbidden in this world).

In Surah Zukhruf, No. 43, verse 53 it says:

"Then why are not gold bracelets bestowed on him?..."

and it is understood that golden bracelets, used by men, had been a sign of dignity among ancient Egyptian people.

Moreover, as we have frequently said, the facts of the other world cannot be described, exactly, with our very insufficient, limited human vocabulary.

And, finally, at the end of the verse, as to the best and greatest Heavenly Blessing of these kinds, it remarks:

"...and their lord will give to them to drink of a Drink Pure and Holy".²⁸

In the preceding verses, among the blessings mentioned were Drinks and Cups; which were filled from the fountain of 'Salsabeel' and quenched the thirst of the Blessed. But, there is a considerable difference between those drinks and what is expressed in this verse.

On the one hand, the

'ones who serve'

are

"youths of perpetual (freshness)";

while, here, the

'one who serves'

is Allah, Himself (and what a wonderful expression!)

The word

'Lord'

is especially stressed. The Lord Who has constantly cherished man and Who is his owner and trainer; Who has helped him to advance in the course of development until he has reached the last stage. And now, it is time to show the culmination of His Lordship and make the Righteous quenched and cheerful with the cup of Pure Drink, by His own mighty hand.

On the other hand, the word /tahir/ means something which is both pure and purifying. Thus, the Drink purifies both man's body and soul from any taint and impurity.

It gives him such spirituality, brightness, and merriment that it is indescribable with our limited human vocabulary.

It is quoted from Imam Sadiq (as) that,

"(This drink) purifies man's heart and soul from everything except Allah."

It removes any ignorance, unveils any curtain over the truth and makes man worthy of an eternal presence in close proximity to Allah. The pleasure of this pure Drink exceeds any other blessing and is superior to any other gift.

While the filthy wine of this world obliterates man's reason and takes him far away from Allah the pure Drink, which is given by the hand of

'the ones who serve',

alienates him from everything, but Allah and makes him immersed in His Beauty and Glory.

In short, the favor which is included in this verse and in this blessing, is above anything else.

It is concluded from one of the traditions quoted from the Prophet (S) that the fountain of Pure Drink is at the threshold of Paradise; then, with a sip of this Pure Drink, Allah purifies their hearts from envy (and any other vices).

Thus, the verse states:

"...and their Lord will give to them to drink of a Drink Pure and Holy."

It is worth considering that the word

Itahur/ 'pure'

has been mentioned for only two items in the Holy Qur'an.

The first is about the

'rain'²⁹

which purifies and revives everything. And, the second is in the current verse about the special Divine Drink, which is also purifying and reviving.

In the last verse, of this part, the last point on this subject is presented. It states that these great blessings and unique gifts are a recompense for your deeds; and your efforts, struggles and diligence are accepted and thanked.

("Verily this is a reward for you, and your endeavor is accepted and appreciated.")

Never should one think that these gifts and great rewards are unduly given. Indeed, all these are a recompense for man's endeavors and deeds; and they are a reward for man's diligence, self-perfection and abandonment of pleasure in sin.

Thus point also mentions a particular pleasure that Allah, Himself, or His angels address to man and tell him:

"Verily this is a reward for you, and your endeavor is accepted and appreciated."

And perhaps according to some commentators, this blessing, where Allah thanks man, is superior to all other blessings.

The verb

Ikana/ 'was'

which is in the past tense, perhaps refers to this point: that these blessings have been prepared for you (the Righteous) in advance. As when one pays careful attention to detail and prepares everything, in advance, for his guest.

Surah al-Insan, Verses 23 – 26

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ تَنْزِيلًا

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ آثِمًا أَوْ كَفُورًا

وَاذْكُرْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَاسْجُدْ لَهُ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا

23. ***“Surely We, Ourselves, have revealed the Holy Qur’an to you, revealing (it) in stages.”***

24. ***“Therefore be patient and constant to the command of your Lord, and obey not from among them a guilty or an ungrateful one.”***

25. ***“And remember the name of your Lord morning and evening,”***

26. ***“And during the night prostrate thyself to Him; and glorify Him (a) long (part of the) night.”***

Five Great Instructions for the Fulfillment of Allah’s Command

The aforementioned verses of the Surah are about the creation of man and then about his rebirth at the time of Resurrection. Now, the verses are referring to the Prophet (S), directly, with some emphatical instructions about the guidance of man and his patience and constancy.

In fact, these verses show the way of how to approach the incomparable immense blessings. This task is not possible except through taking hold of the Qur’an, following the Prophet’s leadership and being inspired by his instructions.

At first it says:

“Surely We, Ourselves, have revealed the Qur’an to you, revealing (it) in stages.”

Some commentators have said that the term

‘tanzil’ ‘revealing in stages’,

which has appeared as a direct object in this verse, denotes the gradual descent of the Holy Qur’an, whose effect on man’s training is clear.

Some others believe that it refers to the high position of this Heavenly book and emphasizes the fact that this book was sent down by Allah, in spite of those who accused the Prophet (S) of being a necromancer, sorcerer, magician and calumniator of Allah.

Then, there are five important instructions given to the Prophet (S).

The first is for patience and constancy, and says:

"Therefore be patient and constant to the command of your Lord..."

Don't be afraid of the difficulties and the problems that occur in your way, the great number of your enemies or their obstinacy. Continue on your way and go forward.

It is noteworthy that, with regard to /f/ in the Arabic term /fasbir/ 'therefore be patient and constant', the instruction for patience is secondary to the revelation of the Qur'an by Allah.

That is: since Allah is your supporter then do stay firmly on the way. The term /rabb/ 'Lord, Cherisher' points to the same idea.

And in the second instruction the Prophet (S) is warned not to listen to or obey the unjust. It says:

"...and obey not from among them a guilty or an ungrateful one."

In fact, the second instruction is an emphasis on the first instruction, because numerous enemies tried, in different ways, to make the Prophet (S) adapt to their way of thinking.

It is said that 'Atabat_ibn_i_Rabi'ah' and 'Walid_ibn_i_Muqayyarah' told the Prophet (S) to leave his prophecy and they would give him as much wealth and the most beautiful ladies to marry as would satisfy him and other suggestions like this, but the Prophet (S) as a true, great leader, was instructed to be patient and constant against the evil temptations or the threats, which were made against him. He should not yield to either the allurements or the threats.

It is true that the Prophet (S) never yielded, and this is a sign for the greatness of his faith; an eternal model for other leaders of the Way.

Although some commentators have said that the term

'sinner'

refers to 'Atabat_ibn_i_Rabiah', and the term

'ungrateful'

refers to 'Walid_ibn_i_Muqayyarah' or 'Abu Jahl'; each of whom were among the pagan Arabs, it is clear that the terms have a vast meaning, which encompasses any sinner and unbeliever; but these three were the most vivid evidences of the words.

It is also noteworthy that 'sinner' has a general meaning which includes the ungrateful, too, then 'ungrateful' is a subdivision of 'sinner'.

However, since being patient and constant with many great difficulties is not easy to do and going on such a road needs two certain provisions, so, it says in the next verse:

"And remember the name of your Lord morning and evening."

"And during the night prostrate thyself to Him and glorify Him (a) long (part of the) night".

Under the light of

'remembering the Name of your Lord',

and with

'prostration and glorification'

you can build the necessary spiritual strength and sufficient support for overcoming the difficulties along the way.

The term

'bukrah/ 'beginning of the day'

is opposite to the term /asil/ 'evening, sunset', which is followed by praying at night and are mentioned in these two verses to show the necessity of continuous remembrance of Allah both day and night.

Some commentators have applied them to the five daily prayers; morning (Fajr), noon (Zohr), afternoon ('Asr), sunset (Maqrib) and evening ('Isha) prayers, or in addition to the optional prayers after midnight. At any rate, it seems that these prayers are examples for this continuous remembrance of the Lord and glorification and prostration to Him.

The last two terms in the verse, /laylan tawila/, refer to the glorification of Allah for a long part of the night.

It has been narrated that Imam Ali ibn-Musa-ar-Reza (as) was asked what

'glorify'

meant and he answered that it meant 'optional night prayer'.³⁰

It is probable that the above commentary is one of the clear evidences of 'glorification' because the optional night prayer is very effective in strengthening ones faith and self-will for obeying Allah, and refining spirits.

It is worthy to note, here, that though the five instructions are addressed to the Prophet (S), they are, in fact, models for all those who have a role in spiritual and humane guidance of societies.

They should know that, after being sure of their strong belief in their goal and prophetic mission, it is necessary for them to be patient and constant and not to be afraid of mass difficulties in their way; since, guiding populations has always been with great difficulties especially when faced with some unyielding ignorant enemies. And no prophetic mission of theirs will survive unless the leaders are patient.

In the next stage, they must strongly stand against evil temptations of the sinners and the ungrateful; those who try to lead astray leaders with all kinds of deceit and hypocrisy in order to make their prophetic mission fruitless. They should neither be deceived by allurements nor be afraid of threats.

In any case, every morning and evening, they should prostrate themselves before Him to obtain spiritual power, strong will and firm decision, especially when they get help in their supplications and night prayers; victory will surely be their own.

And, if it happens that they have a failure or misfortune at some point, along the way, it is possible to compensate for this under the light of these principles. The Prophet's life and his prophetic mission, throughout his career of inviting people to Islam, are good examples for those who wish to follow the straight path.

Surah al-Insan, Verses 27 - 31

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ يُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ وَيَذُرُونَ وَرَاءَهُمْ يَوْمًا ثَقِيلًا

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاهُمْ وَشَدَدْنَا أَسْرَهُمْ ۚ وَإِذَا شِئْنَا بَدَّلْنَا أَمْثَالَهُم تَبْدِيلًا

إِنَّ هَذِهِ تَذْكِرَةٌ ۚ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ ۚ وَالظَّالِمِينَ أَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا

27. "They love the fleeting life and put away behind them a Day (that will be) hard and grievous."

28. "It is We Who created them and strengthened their joints and when We will We can substitute the like of them (in their place) by a complete change."

29. "Surely this is an admonishment, that whosoever will, (taking this straight way) may take a path unto his Lord."

30. "Yet you will not, unless Allah Wills; surely Allah is All-knowing, All-wise."

31. "He will admit to His Mercy whom He will, but (as for the) evildoers, He has prepared a painful penalty."

This Is An Admonition; But It Is You Who Choose the Way

In the aforementioned verses, the Prophet was admonished and told that he should never be affected by offenders and pagans.

Historical evidences exist which confirm that there were some people who wanted to have an effect on the Prophet's thoughts by alluring him to change his decision. They made offers of wealth, high social rank and beautiful women.

The following verse indicates the above and says:

"They love the fleeting life and put away behind them a Day (that will be) hard and grievous".

The scope of their thought is open only to eating, sleeping and sensuality. These bodily enjoyments are their ideal. They weigh the Prophet's great soul with the same criterion. They are some blind-hearted people who are not aware of their future hard day.

And what a hard day it will be! Hard from the point of punishment; hard from the point of reckoning, and hard from the point of the length of time of being dishonored and bearing the responsibility of spreading scandals for their vices.

In fact, they will have the day in front of them but, here, using the term

/wara'ahum/ 'behind them'

instead of in 'front of them' is to denote carelessness, as if they put away the day behind them. But, some interpreters have said that the Arabic word /wara'/ has the meaning of 'behind' in some texts and of 'forward' in some others.³¹

In the next verse they are warned not to be proud of their strength, because it is Allah who gave it, and other faculties, to them so whenever He Wills He can take these back at once.

Look again at the sentiments of the verse:

"It is We Who created them and strengthened their joints and when We Will, We can substitute the like of them (in their place) by a complete change".

The term /asr/, in Arabic etymology, means: 'to fasten with a chain' and that is why 'captives' are called 'asir' in Arabic. In the old days, captives were fastened with chains. But, here in this verse, 'asr' means 'to firm the joints' of man which strengthens him to move about and enables him to carry out his activities, efficiently.

Certainly, the Qur'an has touched on a most fascinating point: 'firming the different joints of man', which consists of small and large nerves; connecting tissues that bind muscles to each other; rope-like ligaments and the various muscles themselves.

Small and large pieces of bone, clothed in flesh, comprise the body and are so uniquely tied together that it totally forms a complete unit (man), which is able to do almost anything. On the whole, the statement is about man's strength.

This verse also makes it clear that Allah is self-sufficient (free from want) and is not in need of their faith and their obedience but, it is only to make them understand. If the verse insists on their faith, it is a grace from Allah's favor to them.

There is a similar sense in Surah An'am No. 6, verse 133, which says:

"And thy Lord is self-sufficient, full of Mercy. If it were His will He could destroy you and in your place appoint whom He will as your successors..."

The next verse covers the general idea which the Surah conveys and, on the whole, it is a complete program for the happiness of man:

"Surely this is an admonishment, that whosoever will, (taking this straight way) may take a path unto his Lord"

It is for Us to show you the Way. There is no compulsion on you to choose it. It is you, using your wisdom, that must distinguish between right and wrong and of your own free-will decide which way to follow.

In fact, this is an emphasis on what was stated at the beginning of the Surah:

"Surely We guided..."

ie.

'We showed him the Way; whether he be grateful (and assumes it) or ungrateful'

Since some feeble-minded persons may think of the verse as meaning absolute free-will for the

servants, the next verse negates their claim by adding:

"Yet you will not unless Allah Wills; surely Allah is All-knowing, All-wise".

This is the confirmation of the principle of the medium status between, fatalism and the idea of chaotic free-will.

On the one hand, it remarks that

'Allah shows the way, and choosing it is up to you'.

On the other hand, there is another fact added to it that

"Yet you will not unless Allah Wills";

that is, you are not completely independent, but your power and your free-will depends on Allah's Will. It is He who has given them to you and whenever He Wills, He can take them back.

Thus, there is neither an absolute free-will nor an absolute compulsion, but it is a fine, subtle line between them. In other words there is a kind of freedom which depends on Allah's Will; that at any moment He can take it back, if He Wills. In such a way, the servants are able to fulfill their responsibility, which is the secret of their improvement, while at the same time, they do not feel any independence or self-sufficiency.

In brief, the reason for this idea is so that the servants will not feel independent divine providence, but are in need of His guidance and support. When they-are making a decision to do something, they call on his support.

Some of the commentators who believe in fatalism have taken this verse as an evidence of their doctrine.

Among them is Fakhr-i-Razi; who said:

"Take note that this verse is one of the versa in which the waves of fatalism surge".³²

Yes, if we separate this verse from the former ones, this statement can be right, but paying attention to the fact that in one verse the possibility of the influence of man's 'free-will' is pointed out, and in another one the recognition of Allah's Will is mentioned, the same 'variety of conditions clearly approves these conditions, (a place between them; a place between two extreme ends).

It is ironic that those who believe in 'free-will' have seriously taken to heart this verse, to denote absolute free-will, and those who believe in fatalism have taken stock in the next verse, which addresses only fatalism.

Each of these two groups tries to explain away its own idea with that single verse that it has chosen, but, when a correct understanding of a statement in Qur'an (as in any other text) is read, it is meant to be read in relationship to the other statements around it, without any prejudice.

The sentence:

"Surely Allah is All-knowing, All-wise"

at the end of the verse, may be a point with the same understanding.

Allah's knowledge and wisdom is necessary for the servants' freedom on their way to success, otherwise there must be a compulsory success which cannot be a lasting one. Furthermore, His knowledge and wisdom does not compel some individuals to do only good deeds and some others to do evil, so that He would reward the former group and punish the latter one.

Finally, in the last verse, of this Surah, a short and meaningful statement refers to the happy end of the righteous and dreadful destiny of the evildoers.

It says:

"He will admit to His Mercy whom He will, but as for the evildoers He has prepared, for them, a painful Penalty".

It is worth noting that at the beginning of the verse it is said:

"He will admit to His Mercy whom He will",

but at the end of the verse it concentrates on the painful penalty for the evildoers. This shows that His Will for distributing pain, follows the individual's Will for seeking to commit sin and also the contrary is true: His Will for bestowing blessings, follows the individual's Will for perfecting their faith in Allah and in doing good deeds. This is the very thing that is expected from Allah.

Though these clear evidences are available, there are some persons, such as Fakhr_i_Razi, who have taken the first part of the verse as an evidence for fatalism, and in so doing they have neglected the last part of the verse, which addresses free-will and the deeds of the evildoers.

Supplication

O Lord! Admit as to your mercy, and keep us away from the painful penalty prepared for the evildoers.

O Lord! You showed us the way and we will follow Please help us to stay firm and constant along Your way.

O Lord! We may not be of the righteous, but we love them. Please count us among them.

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1. Tafsir-i-Qartabi vol. 10, p. 6909
 2. Majma-al-Bayan vol. 10, p. 405.
 3. Ibid.
 4. The history of the Quran has quoted from 'Nazm-ad-Dorar wa Tanasiq-al-Ayat-I wal-Sowar
 5. Tarikh-i-Quran p. 55.
 6. Tarikh-i-Qur'an, quoting from Fihrist-i- Ibn Nadim
 7. Ibid
 8. Al-Mizan vol. 20, p. 221.
 9. Ibid.
 10. Kashshaf, vol. 4, p 670.
 11. Ihqaq-al-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 157-170.
 12. Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 402.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Majma al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 406
 15. Williams Obstetrics, 15th Edition, p. 87.
 16. Williams Obstetrics, 15th Edition, p. 158.
 17. Williams Obstetrics' 15th Edition, p. 385
 18. Al-Qadir vol. 3, p. 107-111, Ihqaq-al-Haqq vol. 3, p. 157-171.
 19. Kamil-i-Ibn-i-Athir, vol. 2, p 131
 20. Usul-i-Kafi, vol. 2, Chapter 'Feeding', Traditions 3 and 6
 21. Usul-i-Kafi, vol. 2, Chapter 'Feeding', Traditions 3 and 6.
 22. Usul-i-Kafi, vol. 2, Chapter 'Feeding', Tradition 18.
 23. Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 74, p. 369.
 24. Durr-al-manthur, vol. 6, p. 300.
 25. Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 411
 26. Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10. p. 410.
 27. Majma-al-Bayan vol. 10, p. 411
 28. Nur-uth Thaqaalayn, vol. 5, p. 485 tradition 6.
 29. Surah Furqan, No. 48 verse 25
 30. Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 413.
 31. If the term /wara' is added to the subject it means 'behind', and if it is added to the object it means if forward, front':
Ruh-al-Bayan vol 8, p 439.
 32. Tafsir-Fakhr-i-Razi, vol. 30. p. 262.

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