

A Brief Study of the Qur'an

The Qur'an can provide us all the truth about man – whether in the “what there is” domain or in the “what there should be” – if we attempt to understand it with a pure soul and all of our powers. It is necessary that we study as much as possible about each subject beforehand, in addition to then begin to think on the verse in the Qur'an concerning the subject.

Generally, four conditions are to be met if the immense glory of the Qur'an's verses is to be fully comprehended:

- Truly original thoughts and realistic conclusions.
- Avoiding such thoughts mixing with the concepts and perceptions of sedimentary cultures.
- Extensive study on the subject. The significance of this condition lies in the fact that once we have studied others' thoughts and opinions on a subject, our point of view about it changes.
- Studying what the Imams have said about the subject we are studying, for the Imam's knowledge and mysticism is based upon what the Prophet Muhammad knew and the verses revealed upon him – their knowledge of the Qur'an, therefore, is the highest.

However, some the above conditions may in some cases be more important than the others, e.g. studying the ideas and thoughts of scholars when they have given the subject particular homage, like the issue of the factors that make history. We believe that there are two distinct groups of verses in the Qur'an in regard to the truth about the factor that brings about history. The verses of the Qur'an interpret each other, and the reasons for this are:

1– The verses of the Qur'an have been sent by God. Whatever issue they might concern, not only do they not conflict with the other verses, they even supplement and enrich them, for they depict a part of the truth about God and the universe related to “man as he is” and “man as he should be.” If there were any contradiction among the verses of the Qur'an, its unity of meaning would fall apart and the miraculous effect would be lost.

2– The Qur’an has been studied by critics and experts on speech and philosophy ever since it was sent by God. If they had found even the least disagreement or contradiction in it, they would have definitely made it public, especially at the time Islam had recently arisen and the idolatrous were doing their best to destroy it, for they were losing all their belief, wealth, history and culture due to Islam. Still, they failed to come up with any contradiction in the Qur’an; if they had, it would have provided them with an easy victory, and no war would have needed to take place.

3– The unity and systematic structure of the Qur’an in presenting a great deal of facts concerning theology, natural sciences, man and the universe, decrees and orders, moral ethics and tales, leaves no doubt that its verses must be able to interpret each other.

What is the Qur’an?

We believe that the Qur’an is light, guidance, the cure, a blessing, a letter from the Creator of the universe to his servants. The Qur’an is a book that can help us become real human beings and rise to divinity. It tells us all the truths about a meaningful man and a meaningful universe. It is a tongue that will never become silent, for man’s serious questions on life will never end. This is not a book made up by limited human brains that may only account for one aspect and fail to consider the others over time. A book that says:

و العصر ان الانسان لفي خسر الا الذين امنوا و عملوا الصالحات و تواصلوا بالحق و تواصلوا بالصبر

“By the time! Surely man is in the way of loss, save those who believe, and do righteous deeds, and counsel each other unto the truth, and counsel each other to be steadfast.” (103)

and will never fall into decline or silence. Never!

Any complete research on the humanities must begin with a study of the existing scientific and philosophical ideas; then, one can proceed to the concerned Qur’anic verse, and see how clearly the Qur’an has clarified the issue. “Profound feeling” and “logical reasoning,” both vessels of recognition and cognition, will be saturated and satisfied.

Unfortunately, some readers of the Qur’an merely open the book and start reading a *surah* from beginning to end and even proceed to the next one without taking the concept inside each verse into careful consideration.

This kind of reading is unacceptable as a study of the Qur’an. In other words, Qur’an is not something whose words you merely see and utter. Each verse of the Qur’an is the ultimate sentence that cannot be fully understood unless you master everything about it previously.

The Qur’an is where God’s signs can truly be seen; though people could not possibly see God when the

holy Prophet was sent to them, God's words in the Qur'an made it possible for them to intuitively discover God through their innate God-seeking potentials. God's words in the Qur'an interpret so clearly how societies fall and decline that any wise person can see the order and harmony of the universe in them, and feel totally certain that this turning machine must have an operator. This holy book creates two books – one outside man's body, the other inside his existence – that are impeccable. It shows man and the universe “as they are” and “as they should be,” and pictures the universe “as it can be used.

The truth the Qur'an reveals on “man as he should be” are the highest, utmost possible. Subsequently, the Qur'an presents the facts about “man as he is” and “the universe as it is” with absolutely perfect precision.

The Qur'an, the most fundamental reference in Islam, provides all the Islamic rules and decrees on moral ethics, ideology, law, individual and social duties that have also been pointed out in many of the Holy Prophet and the Imams' *hadith*.

“Islam” in the Qur'an means two things:

1– A general, divine religion, revealed to all prophets to guide mankind, presented to people by Abraham after Noah. Such a general context cannot be ignored or omitted, and it was not limited to a specific society or era, either. In several cases, the Qur'an refers to the Holy Prophet Muhammad as a follower of this religion.

2– Islam as a specific religion, the context of Abraham's religion plus some decrees and responsibilities which have not been deviated during time; in other religions, deviations and changes have taken place.

We will now discuss “The Three Religions as Seen in the Qur'an.” From the three holy books – the Qur'an, the Bible and the Torah – we can prove that Abraham presented the general context of a divine religion which all followers of the three religions mentioned are to follow.

Since Muslims believe that the Qur'an, which is free from any manipulation or modification, presents that general divine religion, scholars and researchers on all three religions can extract the points they have in common – which forms, in fact, Abraham's religion – and follow them. Also, those Christian and Jewish researchers and scholars who regard Muhammad as an honest human being, have to agree with Islamic scholars on this issue and find the general basics of Abraham's religion from the Qur'an.

Likewise, Mr. Hans Kung, the respectable German scholar, said while attending the seminar on “Prosperity and Happiness as Seen by Muslim and German Thinkers” held in Tehran:

“Muhammad was a prophet, and God granted him revelations. Ultimately, however, meanings and concepts were revealed to him, so he was free to choose the words to express them by. The words themselves were not revealed to him.”

It is apparent that Mr. Kung does admit that the Holy Prophet of Islam was honest and pure, for

otherwise he would never have been chosen as a Prophet, and would never have received revelations. Hence, Mr. Kung and those who agree with him can regard the Qur'an as the context of Abraham's religion, and extract a general religion from the Qur'an, for the Qur'an – as we have mentioned previously – introduces Islam as Abraham's religion.

Thus, though it seems that we can extract the general context of Abraham's religion out of the Qur'an – as Mr. Kung agrees – Christians and Jews may object. That is why Mr. Kung posed this question at the seminar, “Well, not that Abraham's religion is the context of the general religion, how and where do we get it and apply it to the three great religions?”

Thus, the respectable scientist, though believing that the Prophet Muhammad has been sent by God, does not intend to acknowledge him as being honest!

In response, I answered, “Let us open all three books – the Qur'an, the Bible and the Torah – and accept anything that common sense and pure conscience can regard as religion pertaining to God as Abraham's religion.”

Everyone agreed excitedly, especially Mr. Kung. I hope efforts on the issue soon start, and scholars of the three religions reach the desired results – even if on the long run.

Mr. Kung's views on revelation called for fundamental reconsideration are approvable. At the seminar Mr. Kung had said, “The Prophet received revelations, but what he received was in the form of meanings and concepts; it was the Prophet who chose how to word them.” Mr. Kung also discussed the differences between *surahs* revealed in Mecca and Medina, which we will deal with later on in this chapter.

Some of those attending the seminar agreed with Mr. Kung. I replied, “If you mean this theory is a great development in which a Christian scholar presents based on concrete reasons, that is correct. But if you mean that the theory is entirely correct, that is not so; how could just meanings and concepts have been revealed to the Prophet rather than the exact wording? If the Holy Prophet has done the wording perfectly, such a theory would not lead to any specific results, for there would be no room for displacing any words with the same meaning. In the following verse, for example:

و من احسن دينا ممن اسلم وجهه لله و هو محسن و اتبع ملة ابراهيم حنيفا

“And who is there that has a fairer religion than he who submits his will to God being a good-doer, and who follows the creed of Abraham, a man of true faith?” (4:125)

There is a concept in which the Prophet has been told to obey Abraham's religion, which has also been presented to the Jews and the Christians, but the Holy Prophet of Islam worded it generally! No one would ever suppose that the Holy Prophet would word it like that.

If we say that anywhere we do not like the meaning of the Qur'an, we can state that God provided the Holy Prophet with the correct concept but he wrongly worded it, such a statement would definitely be wrong, both by reason and the Qur'an itself. God is so wise that He flows revelations in a way that nothing is changed, not even by mistake.

Having briefly discussed reasoning, we must say that if the Prophet was free to choose which words to use in the verses, it would be possible to have conflicts between the meaning the verse is supposed to have and what the wording suggests, and we would feel no certainty to believe that the Prophet's words are truly God's, too. Furthermore, the Qur'an's miraculous nature is based on two things:

1- meanings and concepts

2- wording

We do not regard the Holy Prophet's words as miraculous, even though they are perfectly eloquent. But the fact that the words in the Qur'an are miraculous arises from their coming from God.

Then I brought up the issue of Jesus being God's son, an issue Christians staunchly believe in. "This does not mean 'son' as we normally refer to," Mr. Kung replied, "rather, it shows how close and valuable Jesus Christ was to God."

I replied, "Such an interpretation may be appropriate for the concept you are presenting, but why doesn't this theory regard other prophets, like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Muhammad as children of God? They were also very close to God. Islam even in one case sees all of mankind as God's family:

الخلق كلهم عيال الله و احبهم اليه انفعهم لهم

"All people are God's family; the people closest to God are those who present God's family with the most benefit and advantage." (The Holy Prophet Muhammad)

On the issue of what kind of book the Holy Qur'an is, let us first take the following verse into consideration:

و السماء بنيناها بأيد و انا لموسعون

"And heaven – We built it with might, and We extend it wide." (51:47)

Interpreters of the Qur'an in the past have provided three different meanings for "extend" in the above verse:

1- Vastness, the literal meaning; God has created a very vast heavens.

2- God has created the heavens with his immense divine power.

3- Daily bread; God has created a huge universe and has reinforced and strengthened it by means of proper nurturing.

In 1920, Alexander Friedman, a Russian mathematician, presented his theory on the expansion of the galaxies. As George Gamov says in his book, *Matter, the Earth and the Sky*:

“He found that the light coming toward us from galaxies very far away shows a shift in spectrum lines toward the red extreme, and the more farther the galaxy, the stronger the shift. Since shift toward red light is due to retreat speeds of light sources – there is no other reason for that at present – [our universe is steadily expanding] and the speeds at which two galaxies move farther away from each other is proportionate to the distance between them.

The efforts made by Friedman, Hubble and his colleague Milton Homason led to the foundation of the theory of the expanding universe, which was later supported by the Belgian astronomer, George Lemaitre. “

We may conclude that any knowledge of the contents of the Qur’an is a step toward guidance, a step toward less ignorance and blindness.

Provided that man be aware of all the potentials hidden in him and that he tries to use them, and provided that he accept the need for evolutionary change with his sensitive conscience and sound common sense, any conscious human being can elevate his sight and development with these words of God's, and cure himself of ignorance. Now we know why so many people not only fail to use the Qur’an correctly, but even cause harm by doing it.

The scientific aspect of the Qur’an is also quite amazing. The Qur’an is, in fact, “ultra-scientific,” for the truths the Qur’an includes are far superior to what we see in everyday life.

There are several important reasons why the Qur’an does not present the truths about the four relationships (Man–Man, Man–God, Man–The Universe and Man–Other Human Beings) systematically and scientifically. Throughout history, scientific issues have continually been subject to change. What was a scientific law yesterday is discarded due to new discoveries today. Let us consider, as a few examples, these excerpts from Pierre Roseau's *The History of Science*:

- Sciences become fashionable
- Sciences overuse Descartes' method
- Newton's followers go against Descartes' followers
- Roseau and Kant swim against the current

- A whiplash on analysis
- Auguste Comte creates certainty philosophy, but later on, its weaknesses were revealed
- Arithmetic is basically destroyed
- Analysis crumbles
- Science announces bankruptcy
- Evolution faces many problems
- All scientific breakthroughs and achievements are questioned today

If we were to account for all scientific developments – both in general and in detail – we would definitely have to write a few volumes; the Qur’an, however, provides the concrete, definite truth about the four relationships without the least conflict or change-prone quality, regardless of the currently popular scientific order and harmony.

Though the verses in the Qur’an are not, for the two reasons mentioned above, based on the usual scientific or philosophical methods, they have been referred to and quoted by great scholars and philosophers throughout history. Mollasadra, the great Iranian philosopher, for instance, quotes verses of the Qur’an to give his final reasons why objects have substance movement.

The Qur’an is the greatest piece of advice God has provided man with, for the Qur’an is like a rope man can cling to and rise up to the highest levels of greatness and perfection.

We generally see the Qur’an as a book that gives life; it includes orders that make man start living, and tells him what can inhibit his intelligible life. As we read at the beginning of the second *surah* in the Qur’an, *The Cow*, it is **“a guidance for the Godfearing.”** (2:2)

In other words, this divine book can guide the human character and help it flourish, provided that man himself realizes what he is and knows that he should guide it toward his true destiny on the pathway to eternity, and safeguard it from impurities as best as he can.

[The Qur’an: A Miracle](#)

You may have read the Qur’an many times, but if you consider carefully the kind of atmosphere and land the Holy Prophet was chosen to preach people in, you will indeed admit how miraculous the Qur’an is, even by glancing at one of the smaller *surahs*.

Another miraculous aspect of the Qur’an which, unfortunately, has been neglected, is the verses that show the mathematical nature of the universe.

Having the mathematical nature of the universe explained by a man with no education of any kind, in a country so overwhelmed with dark ignorance that even calculated thought was non-existent, must be a miracle.

Two conditions have to be met before we can understand this miracle:

- 1- Enough information must be gained on the conditions of the Arab peninsula and also the life of the Holy Prophet before he was appointed as prophet by God.
- 2- Fairness, conscientiousness and avoiding clichés while studying history.

A few examples of the verses in the Qur'an that show us the mathematical face of the universe are:

و ان من شي الا عندنا خزائنه و ما ننزله الا بقدر معلوم

“Naught is there, but its treasures are with Us, and We sent it not down but in a known measure.”
(15:21)

لقد احصاهم و عداهم عدا

“[God] has indeed counted them, and He has numbered them exactly.” (19:94)

Verse 53 of the *surah* Distinguished is one of the most comprehensive verses proving the “sign” aspect of the universe and that fact that from that very aspect one can find “God:”

سنريهم اياتنا في الافاق و في انفسهم حتي يتبين لهم انه الحق اولم يكف بربك انه علي كل شي شهيد

“We shall show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the truth. Suffices it not as to thy Lord, that He is witness over everything?”(41:53)

The above verse states that having considered and correctly understood God's signs in both internal and external worlds, man can realize that God is indeed the truth and just. We should never confine ourselves to just sit there under the huge tree of nature and be satisfied with merely watching, for we are “human beings,” and we have a duty. Such a feeling arises out of careful attention toward the universe, not superficial, childish toying with it. Furthermore, if we study our own existence curiously and consciously, we will indeed conclude that:

“Though we may possibly restrain from being impressed by neither good actions nor bad, we always feel there is something like an organ inside us, an organ always ready to start playing, pouring music into our soul, crying out against aimlessness, rebelling against oblivion.”

If we were to also complement the above statements with a scientific, philosophical touch, we would say, “The sound of this internal organ, loud and clear, rebels against oblivion, and states, 'O man! You cannot say that you do not exist, and such a confession will lead you to a second one – now that you cannot claim that you do not exist, you cannot be aimless or farce either, so you must have a duty.’” As the renowned Iranian poet, Hafiz, says:

در اندرون من خسته دل ندانم چیست؟ که من خموشم و او در فغان و در غوغاست

(I don't know what there is in my weary heart, but although I say nothing, it is crying out with all its might.)

This is not just a poetic context; as we realize by studying the outstanding figures of science, philosophy and mysticism, such sentences arise out of elevated feelings rather than crude ones. These great men could never have achieved such supreme feelings without abandoning their previous raw, crude ones.

A brief study of the Arab culture and knowledge at that time proves that the verses in the Qur'an that show the mathematical aspect of the universe cannot possibly be conceived in the mind of a normal human being, however a genius he may be. Did Arabs in those days use arithmetic or mathematics even in their daily life? Could they even step beyond their “stomach and below the stomach only” style of life and look at the sky, let alone think about the mathematical sky? Can there be any miracle better than having a man in those dark times gain such immense knowledge of the universe that he can speak of the mathematical context of the universe? That is how miraculous the Qur'an is.

There are many proofs for the mathematical aspect of nature. Here, we intend to focus on just one important one: the universe is lawful, so the fact that we do not know so many things in the vast universe is not because the universe is baseless and non-organized. As Einstein says:

“The universe and discovering the universe are two very different things; what we may see as disharmonious and without law and order is due to our own viewpoint and attitude.”

God also emphasizes the necessity of careful observation and thought on nature, which shows that nature can be discovered by means of meticulous calculation and thought. However, the other issue is that, being mathematical, the universe is not closed and unoccupiable for God, either. As Jalal-addin Muhammad Molawi (Rumi) says,

عالم چو آب جوست، بسته نماید، ولیک میرود و میرسد نو نو، این از کجاست؟

(The universe is like the water in a stream; it looks like a closed system, but new, fresh water keeps coming, how can it be?)

If we carefully study the history of culture and knowledge in the Arab world of that era, how the people felt about mankind and the universe, their viewpoints on their history and their future, their values and morals, it would be quite stubborn or ignorant to have doubt in the fact that the Qur'an is a miracle or to claim that Arab people themselves wrote the Qur'an. The immense beauty of these exquisite sentences that intrigue the deepest of human feelings, and the incredibly strong logic alongside the power of the speaker creates a miracle of both style and expression.

How God's Divine Beauty Can Be Recognized

We can start from spiritual and mental ideals and use them as the starting point to reach divine beauty. The first one is glory, greatness and immense beauty, which the Qur'an refers to as *malakoot*; such a feeling cannot be put into words, as the absolute dominance of order and harmony in the universe reaches our brain via a kind of physical wave that cannot be worded.

This is a "feeling," not an "imagination;" it is "received," not "reflected."

ز تو با تو راز گویم به زبان بی زبانی به تو از تو راه جویم به نشان بی نشانی

چه شوی ز دیده پنهان که چو روز مینماید رخ همچو آفتابت ز نقاب آسمانی

تو چه معنی لطیفی که مجرد از دلیلی تو چه آیت شریفی که منزّه از بیانی

ز تو دیده چون بدوزم، که تویی چراغ دیده ز تو کی کنار گیرم، که تو در میان جانی

(How could you disappear from our eyes? Your shining face shines through the mask of the heavens. You are so delicate that you are free above any reasoning; you are such an elegant sign that you are too superior to be described. How can I stop looking at you? You are the light of my eyes. How can I ever move away from you? You are right here in my soul.)

Khajou ye Kermani

If we get such a feeling when we watch the delicate movement of a leaf on a branch in a breeze, and our soul rises to the skies, like the feeling we get when we realize the mathematical movement of the universe on a mountain top in the moonlight; would we not get a far higher feeling flowing in us like waves if we actually realize in ourselves the creator of all this beauty?

هو الله الخالق البارئ المصور له الاسماء الحسني

“He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. To Him belong the Names Most Beautiful.” (59:24)

When you are anxious to meet the painter of the most beautiful painting possible, is it equal to the quivering anxiety you feel when you saw the painting? Never. Anxiety to meet the painter is far greater than that of seeing the painting itself, for through meeting the painter, you can see the beauty of the painting in his mind, in his mental levels; such a vision cannot be tarnished by sunlight, rain, insects, a madman or children.

Your quivering climax and intuition is not over once realizing the mental beauty in the painter's mind; you go on to see that the immense artistic activity that has led to such a beautiful painting is totally incomparable to the other various potentials and talents existent in the artist.

Now add the highest of moral virtues, capacities, justice and sacrifice for righteousness to such an artist's character, and you will see that the beautiful painting will seem like nothing more than a few meager brainwaves of the artist! You will then be fascinated by the artist himself and his mental beauty rather than his beautiful painting. No natural scenery has succeeded in making human beings so fascinated that they will be ready to include it as even a superficial part of their soul; true love, on the other hand, engulfs all of man's mental and spiritual horizons, becoming such a powerful desire that man wants to make his beloved a part of him.

As Kant says:

“I can't get enough of watching two things: a sky full of stars – a statue of infinity – and the human conscience, the wonders of which truly cannot be described.”

Victor Hugo also adds:

“There is a great gallery in the world – the sea. Greater galleries also exist – the sky. But greater than both to watch is the human conscience.”

In the two quotations mentioned above, a philosopher and an anthropologist have referred to two galleries; indeed, they have discovered great secrets about man. Surely, they do not mean merely seeing something; their point is a kind of profound vision together with thought, in which the thought affects the vision, like water affects leaves, though not conspicuously.

Therefore, the way mentally developed men watch the skies neither like the way some “froglike” men watch the reflection of the stars in the water they swim in, for the latter only plan to throw the reflections out of their pond, nor like observers merely aiming to discover astronomical laws and call themselves astronomers. Thus, even greater than the gallery these two thinkers refer to is observing the skies and the immensely exquisite order and harmony we see in it; yet, it still resembles a beautiful painting.

“Your eyes will return to you, wearied, feeling the need to come back to you.” (67:4)

Another verse that intrigues man to realize and appreciate the glory and beauty of the universe is:

اولم ينظروا في ملكوت السماوات و الارض

“Have they not considered the dominion of the heaven and of the earth?” (7:185)

Here, using a negative question, God scolds people for not observing the skies and the earth. Do they not possess senses, reason and thought? Why do they not look down to the earth they live on?

I am amazed how some great thinkers fail to realize the immense glory of the universe! It seems that if a conscious, aware thinker looks up and observes some great human beings' moral values and their mental and spiritual greatness – for such human beings cannot possibly have an immense spiritual state and the highest of moral values without having realized and appreciated the glory and beauty of the universe – their eyes will also open up to the great beauty they have within themselves too; even the mere walking of people on earth is a sign of the glory and the beauty of the universe.

Beauty –whether in nature or in man's mind– is approved by Islam, for it believes that all forms of beauty pertain to God.

Many verses in the Qur'an attribute beauties to God, and even condemn people's depriving others of these beauties. For example:

قل من حرم زينة الله التي اخرج لعباده

“Say, 'Who has forbidden the ornament of God which He has brought forth [from nature] for His servants?’”(7:32)

We will now classify beauties as seen as desirable in the Qur'an:

1– The Beauty of the Sky and its Stars: Several verses in the Qur'an refer to the beautiful sky and its stars; God directly attributes such a beautiful structure to Himself, its Creator.

2– The Beauty of Man's Creation and His Face: This form of beauty has been referred to in various ways in the Qur'an:

لقد خلقنا الانسان في احسن تقويم

“We indeed created Man in the fairest stature.”(95:4)

و صوّركم فأحسن صوركم

“And He shaped you, and shaped you well.” (40:64, 64:3)

In the former verse, “the greatest stature” refers to all aspects of beauty, whether in appearance or anatomy; in fact, it depicts the incredible order and harmony all researchers have witnessed in the human body.

3- The Beauty of Living Creatures: God also refers to the beauty in the creation of other living beings:

و لكم فيها جمال حين تريحون و حين تسرحون

“And there is beauty in them for you, when you bring them home to rest [in the evening] and when you drive them forth abroad to pasture [in the morning].” (16:6)

4- The Beauty of the Scenery on Earth: Many verses in the Qur’an concern the beautiful scenery on earth God has asked man to watch, like flowers, trees, plains and other plants. These extreme forms of beauty have been provided for man by God so that man can relieve himself from the monotony of life, and refresh his soul. Thus, God is attributing beauty to Himself in these verses, and it is proved that it has been God's will to create them; man has not induced them into his own mind.

5- The Beauty of Mental and Intellectual Ideals: The verses in the Qur’an emphasize the beauty of moral ethics and moral values and all proper human virtues:

و ان الساعة لآتية فاصفح الصفح الجميل

“Surely the Hour is coming; so pardon thou, with a gracious pardoning.” (15:85)

فاصبر صبرا جميلا

“So be thou patient with a sweet patience.” (70:5)

Now let us discuss the contents of the Qur’an. We may categorize the contents of the Qur’an into the following eight groups:

1- The allowed (halal) and the prohibited (haram): *Halal* refers to legal freedom regarding an issue or an action, like the freedom to marry someone, eat certain things or wear certain clothes that are allowed. The opposite, *haram*, refers to issues or actions one is prohibited from, like producing harmful material.

2- Mandatory duties (*fara'ez*) and the meritable (*faza'el*): *Fara'ez* are the mandatory actions one must do, such as daily prayers, fasting, the *Haj* pilgrimage, defending one's life, etc. *Faza'el* are approved, merited actions not as necessary as the former, like having good intentions, following moral ethics, etc.

3- The Omitted and the Substitutes: Though various definitions have been given for the *nasikh* (the substitute) and the *mansookh* (the omitted), it is generally agreed that the former happens when the decree cited in a verse of the Qur'an is omitted, though the verse itself remains in the Qur'an. However, some scholars have denied the existence of such verses in the Qur'an. These four verses have been pointed out as instances of *nasikh* and *mansookh* in the Qur'an:

ما ننسخ من آية أو ننسها نأت بخير منها أو مثلها

“And for whatever verse we abrogate or cast into oblivion, We bring a better or the like of it.”
(2: 106)

و اذا بدلنا آية مكان آية و الله أعلم بما ينزل

“And when We exchange a verse in the place of another verse – and God knows very well what He is sending down.” (16: 101)

يمحو الله ما يشاء و يثبت و عنده ام الكتاب

“God blots out, and He establishes whatsoever He will; and with Him is the Essence of the Book.” (13:39)

فبظلم من الذين هادوا حرمنا عليهم طيبات احلت لهم

“And for the evildoing of those Jewry, We have forbidden them certain good things that were permitted to them...” (4: 160)

Thus, it is possible to have such a phenomenon in the Qur'an; many stories about the life of the Holy Prophet of Islam and the Imams, cited by both Shiites and Sunnites, also refer to some cases of *nasikh* and *mansookh*.

4- Emergency allowances and the main mandatory duties: In some cases, allowances have been made for emergencies or situations made by force.

فمن اضطر غير باغ و لا عاد فلا اثم عليه

“Yet whoso is constrained to eat dead flesh or other forbidden things, not desiring nor transgressing. No sin shall be on him.”(2:173)

5- The General and the Specific: Some laws and decrees cover all people and all jobs, for example trade is allowed, unless details are added. Some other laws and decrees focus on specific people or things.

6- Tales, Anecdotes and Examples with Useful Points: The Qur’an includes many stories of past peoples and nations that God has provided to add to man's knowledge of how to live properly and learn the lessons from them, like the stories of the Pharaoh, the Ad people, and many prophets and great figures.

7- The Unlimited and the Limited: Some issues are not confined; others qualitatively and quantitatively limited, like personal issues.

8- The Firmly Clear and the Like: Some verses are so clear that we can firmly know what they mean:

الحمد لله رب العالمين

“Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being.”(1:1)

In some others, the meaning is not so clear in the words used:

و جاء ربك و الملك صفا صفا

“And [on Judgment Day] thy Lord comes, and the angels rank on rank...” (89:22)

It is definite that “God comes” cannot refer physical movement. There are two important points about such verses:

1- Sometimes the meaning of the verse is the opposite of what it seems to be:

و جاء ربك و الملك صفا صفا

“And thy Lord comes, and the angels rank on rank...” (89:22)

2- Sometimes there is an unclear word in the verse that calls for explanation and interpretation, like “time” or “hour” which sometimes means Judgment Day, or:

“The Messenger’s heart did not deny what he saw...”(53:11)

and other words at the beginning of the *surahs*.

Both of the above–mentioned forms exist in *surahs* revealed in Mecca and also in those revealed in Medina, so they should be interpreted with care. This does not mean, however, that people cannot use the Qur’an; the more knowledge they have, the better they can use it, as is the case with some man–made books, like poems by Hafiz or Jalal–addin Muhammad Molawi (Rumi), which despite being literary works, mean different things to different people.

Another issue about the Qur’an is the *surahs* revealed in Mecca (the *Makki* ones) and those revealed in Medina (the *Madani* ones). Differences have been pointed out in these verses, which we will now analyze:

1– It has been said that the *surahs* revealed in Mecca have fewer verses than the ones revealed in Medina. This is not so, for in both types, there are long *surahs*, medium ones and short ones. The short ones do, however, exist more frequently among the *surahs* revealed in Mecca.

Makki surahs include about 77 verses concerning laws and decrees, some containing more than one law or decree. If there are about 500 verses in the Qur’an including laws and decrees, about one sixth or one seventh of them must have been revealed in Mecca. Of course, most verses showing laws and decrees have been revealed in Medina; most short *surahs* have also been *Makki*. Thus, it is inaccurate to say that all short *surahs* have been *Makki* and all *surahs* concerning Islamic laws and decrees have been revealed in Medina. It is natural, however, that most laws and decrees be sent once the fundamentals of Islam were well–established, and that happened in Medina.

2– It has been said that *Madani surahs* contain laws and decrees, but *Makki* ones do not. This is also incorrect. Here is just a short list of the many verses revealed in Mecca that do include laws and decrees:

Hood, 113 and 114.

Abraham, 31.

Jinn, 18.

The Believers, 2 through 9.

3– It has been said that *Makki surahs* are more threatening and scolding, whereas the *Madani* ones are milder. This is again incorrect; Joseph, revealed in Mecca, contains – in the story of the prophet Joseph’s life – many gentle, delicate issues concerning the most beautiful points on mankind. Such

verses seem to have been revealed in a beautiful place with fascinating scenery; it has, in fact, they were revealed in Mecca, where the Holy Prophet of Islam was continually in conflict with people, and had to scold and threaten them.

4– It has also been said that the *Makki* ones have shorter verses than the *Madani* ones. First, we must say that many *surahs* revealed in Mecca have a lot of short verses. All of the verses of *surahs* like *The Clear Sign*, *The Earthquake*, and *Charity* are short, and so are the last four verses of *surahs* like *Help*, *Daybreak* and *Men. Muhammad*, a *surah* revealed in Medina, has many short verses; all of the verses in the *surah Man* are short.

Secondly, many *Makki surahs* have very long verses, like *The Spoils*, *The Battlements*, *Jonas*, *Hood*, *Joseph*, *The Camel*, *The Cave*, *The Fairways*, *Mary*, *Ta Ha*, *The Prophets*, *The Spider*, *Al-Hijr*. We see that almost one third of the verses of all *Makki surahs* are long, and many also have medium-long verses like *Abraham*, *The Spider*, *Lokman*, *The Greeks*, etc.

5– It has been said that *Makki* verses are vague and unclear, whereas *Madani* verses are elaborate and understandable. Whoever said this either knew nothing about the Qur'an or wanted to be cruelly stubborn. If he was referring to the verses that may have several meanings, he could have said it in a more suitable way, too.

The Divinity of the Qur'an

There has been no book written by man about the truth about man and the universe that does not suffer from numerous limitations and shortcomings. There are several issues, on the other hand, that prove the Qur'an is a divine book:

1. The Sense of Absolute Dominance and Control

Found in no other man-made book, this is one of the Qur'an's most incredible qualities. Consider these verses:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

“Thy Lord has decreed you shall not serve any but Him...” (19:23)

The context addresses the whole universe; it controls and dominates all of mankind.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ

“O Man! Thou art laboring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him.” (84:6)

The contents and unusual wording included in the above verse determines with total dominance and control the nature of man, his final goal and the path he should go through. Such a statement could not possible have been said by a human being, a part of mankind drowning in nature, ideals and desires.

Such a sentence would have been impossible without absolute dominance over man's ideas, ideals, thoughts, and corruptions.

فاين تذهبون

Then where are you going?" (81:26)

The question "Where are you going" is posed from a position that has absolute dominance and control over where man has come from, where he goes from here and why he has come here. The law that dominates man's good and bad desires is a background prepared for the laws of the universe to flow – the place where God's will is displayed.

2. The Void of Contradiction in Qur'anic Verses

The fact that conflict and contradiction does not at all exist between the verses of the Qur'an can be of quite help in order to know the Qur'an better. Though the verses of the Qur'an have been revealed to the Holy Prophet during hectic moments of his life which were full of ups and downs – such as the beginning of his mission, the end of his mission, periods when Muslims where in painful dire straits, when Islam had conquered the whole Arab land, times of triumph and defeat, joy and sorrow – there is no sign of contradiction or conflict between the verses.

Let us now discuss some other characteristics of the Qur'an:

- a) Incredible influence and penetration into all of man's mental aspects: The words and expressions used in the Qur'an are at such an immensely exquisite level of eloquence and beauty that they lead to a mental fascination that no poetry can reach.
- b) The profound depth in meaning and concept: The Qur'an provides all of the ultimate truths about man and the universe in the form of extremely simply-worded verses.
- c) Continuous eternity of content: As Imam Ali says in the *Nahj-ul-balaghah*, "There is no end to the wonders and unique meanings in the Qur'an; without turning to the Qur'an for help, the darkness can never be eliminated."

The continuity of the contents of the Qur'an – a reason itself why the Qur'an is in fact a miracle – shows that the Qur'an is in fact far superior to the developments and changes that occur in human societies. The Qur'an puts much emphasis upon thought and reasoning.

Contrary to what some so-called “thinkers” – totally unaware of the fundamentals of Islam, however – baselessly claim, the necessity of making use of one's senses has been regarded as extremely important in the Qur'an. As we see in the verses below:

و الله اخرجكم من بطون امهاتكم لا تعلمون شيئاً و جعل لكم السمع و الابصار و الافئدة لعلكم تشكرون

“And it is God who brought you forth from your mothers' wombs, and He appointed for you hearing, and sight, and hearts, that haply so you will be thankful.” (16:78)

و هو الذي انشأ لكم السمع و الابصار و الافئدة قليلا ما تشكرون

“It is He who produced for you hearing, and eyes, and hearts; but little thanks you show.” (23:78)

قل هل يستوي الاعمي و البصير ام هل تستوي الظلمات و النور

“Say: 'Are the blind and the seeing man equal, or are the shadows and the light equal?’”(13: 16)

There are about 24 verses in the Qur'an condemning people who deprive themselves of using the powers of sensing and observing they have.

In general, a great many verses in the Qur'an concern intriguing man to think intelligently and activate their intellectual reason. We may say that no human philosophy or ideology has given so much consideration to intelligent, intellectual cognition.

Many verses of the Qur'an emphasize the necessity of mental activities and reasoning:

- 1- Strengthening reason and following it: 40 verses
- 2- Precise comprehension: 15 verses
- 3- Thought: 17 verses
- 4- Careful decision-making: 4 verses
- 5- The importance of being with the wise: 15 verses
- 6- Gaining common sense, awareness and knowledge: 21 verses
- 7- Gaining knowledge, following it and avoiding ignorance: 100 verses
- 8- The necessity of learning philosophy, which is one of the reasons why prophets have been sent

9- Observing the universe to understand it: 20 verses

10- Following religion and obeying correct facts: 18 verses

11- Internal perception and intuition: 35 verses

Now that we see so many cases in which man has been commanded and encouraged to make contact with facts by means of his various tools of observation and understanding, no room for doubt is left that Islamic laws and decrees in any way oppose reason, intelligence and conscience.

Thought and Reasoning in the Qur'an

This has been pointed out in many verses; the word *tafakkor* (reflection) comes in 18 verses:

قل هل يستوي الاعمى و البصير افلا تتفكرون

"Say: 'Are the blind and the seeing man equal? Will you not reflect?' (6:50)

Thus, Islamic references greatly emphasize that man should know the rules of objective intellect and reasoning – the basics that manage man's intelligible life – and depict them and how man is to use them. By studying the verses above, we see how intellect and reason should be reinforced and what is necessary to make man move on the path of an intelligible life.

We will now present a definition and classifications for reasoning and proof, which involves presenting facts and justifying them for human beings via comparison, exemplification, induction or referring to personal perceptions. There are seven kinds of reasoning:

1- Mathematical

2- Inductive

3- Comparison

4- Exemplification

5- Philosophical

6- Personal perceptions

7- Intuitive

We should say about the first kind of reasoning that the Holy Prophet has been ordered in the Qur'an to use three fundamental methods for guiding people toward meaningful facts and truths: philosophy,

positive preaching and discussion via the best of methods. The *Nahj-ul-balaghah* also shows this clearly. The Qur'an includes three forms of reasoning:

- a) Experimental
- b) Mystic
- c) Experimental–mystic

The third kind involves recognizing the supreme order and harmony of the universe with scenic clarity in a way that it shows its hidden meaning. The Qur'an refers to this form of reasoning – which uses both the innately external and innately internal poles – as heavenly observation (reasoning).

In this reasoning, the internal pole includes the mind's abstract activity in the immensely orderly, harmonious universe – which is continually changing, because the creatures in the universe, too, are in continuous move and change.

The external pole, on the other hand, involves understanding the visible, observable aspect of the beings via reflection; in this case, the mind is like a mirror reflecting inside itself what it sees in the world outside. Such a situation of understanding and reflection is purely a tool; it seems that man receives the understanding of the universe directly via his own presence there. In other words, he sees a face in a mirror, and the fades into the face so much that it seems as if there was no mirror at all.

How the Qur'an Sees the Universe: Carefully Calculated

The logic in the Qur'an states in a variety of ways that there is nothing uncalculated in the world; everything is based upon logical calculation. Ultimately, we human beings, merely a tiny part of the universe, can only realize and gain knowledge about some of the events in nature; all great thinkers know too well, however, that the immense machine of nature is far greater than the small part we see.

They also know by geometry and final calculations concerned that the universe is much vaster and more profound than what we may imagine.

By studying the verses of the Qur'an we realize that even the smallest event – whether in nature, inside man, individual or social – is quite calculated and orderly. Thus, we can state that the formation and demise of communities and societies, like other natural and human phenomena, are based upon order and logic; nothing happens by chance or coincidence. Some other verses explain how this law also applies to societies.

In some other verses, the prohibition of “corrupting the earth” has been mentioned in a variety of ways: one verse, “...those who corrupt the earth...” (5:33), regards them as “those who fight God and His Prophet.” Another verse involves God damning “corruptors” and confirmation of their eventual doom

(13:25).

Many verses in the Qur'an directly or indirectly mention this form of "fixating reforms."

و اصلح و لا تتبع سبيل المفسدين

"... and put things right, and do not follow the way of the workers of corruption."(7:142)

فاتقوا الله و اصلحوا ذات بينكم

"... so fear you God, and set things right between you..." (8:1)

The Stories in the Qur'an

The Qur'an is definitely not a history book that serves just to report events. God has included these stories to show man's various aspects and dimensions and make people realize fixed, stable laws such as actions and reactions, the cause and effect and orderly calculations in life.

Thus, people can use these stories to gain experience and insight to establish their intelligible life. In the Qur'an, some stories have been repeated, like the stories of prophets like Noah and Moses and their conflicts with tyrants. The philosophy behind this repetition is the same as that of the Qur'an's emphasized education and justification of the facts and truths of life, so that people may understand that human life is no joke, and involves orderly calculation.

If people observe carefully what goes on in the world, what happened to other people and why some fall and deteriorate, their ability to realize and reason facts will improve – this is, in fact, "experimental reason," which leads to new knowledge and increases man's insight.

There are many verses in the Qur'an that are quite useful for learning experiences and lessons which build up to an intelligible life, especially these verses: *The House of Imran* 3:137, *Women* 4:26, *The Spoils* 6:11, *The Battlements* 7:74, *Joseph* 12:109, *The Bee* 16:36, *Haj* 22:46, *The Ant* 27:69, *The Greeks* 30:9 and 42, *The Angels* 35:44, *The Believers* 40:21 and 82, *Muhammad* 47:10.

There are also other verses about the lives of people in the past, with useful advice on what experience should be learned from them. If one is aware of how valuable life is in this world, what goes on in the universe will undoubtedly be a line of a great book to him. Thus, every event – past or present, large or small, sad or joyous, about friends or enemies – can be a lesson and provide us with experience and advice.

The Qur'an includes knowledge of what is to come in the future and what has occurred in the past.

Some future events, such as the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, have been stated.

The events mentioned in the Qur'an can be divided into two groups:

1- Although some verses do not seem to include certain events, scholars have been able to extract them.

2- The Qur'an contains some basic principles that can be regarded as divine ways and methods. These principles can apply both to the history of man and also to the future. Ultimately, comparing them with past and future events – and experience – requires internal enlightening, a taste of divinity.

The Qur'an states that human life has a goal which is extremely supreme and important. The verses in the Qur'an show this in a variety of ways:

1- Some verses strongly emphasize that man has not been created aimlessly:

افحسبتم انما خلقناكم عبثا و انكم الينا لا ترجعون

“What, did you think that We created you only for sport, and that you would not be returned to Us?” (23:115)

الذي خلق الموت و الحياة ليبلوكم ايكم احسن عملا

“The God who created life and death, that He might try you which of you is the best in actions...”(67:2)

2- Many verses greatly emphasize that everything in the universe has been created “justly and righteously.”

Many verses in the Qur'an call the creatures in the universe “signs.” We can categorize these verses as:

a) Some verses directly call the facts in the universe factors leading to faith, monotheism, piety, avoiding blasphemy, belief in the afterlife and fear of God.

b) Some verses order us to observe carefully the signs in the universe and emphasize that thought and reasoning are necessary. As some of these verses say, “Those who observe and realize these signs and the order and harmony are those who have sound common senses and strong intelligence.” Many verses in the Qur'an emphasize this.

c) Some other verses clearly justify the righteous creation of the universe. The word *haq* has several meanings, but when referring to the creation of the earth and the heavens, it depicts the properness and

righteousness of their creation.

The point is that God-given laws preached by the Prophet of Islam account for both the adjustment of man's social life and spreading positive moral and mystic qualities; it is an Islamic principle that all domains like law, economy, moral ethics and culture be in harmony and united – man-made laws, however, have not gone beyond providing man's social life, for they are the result of man's information and desires alone.

Every action arising from original mysticism and knowledge and purity, together with its positive results which show in mystical changes, serve as a brighter light shining the way to the higher level.

All the verses in the Qur'an which regard the Qur'an and religion as the factor providing light with illumination definitely mean that the light is the result of obeying them, for the abstract words uttered by the Holy Prophet and other religious leaders, and the written aspect of the Qur'an are but physical phenomena. The shining light arising from them, therefore, can be considered from two aspects:

1- Arising from God.

2- Obeying them is what creates light in man's mind and soul.

The Qur'an categorizes life in this world into two groups:

a) Worldly life: A purely natural, physical life which includes nothing but desires and pleasures.

b) Life based on reason (intelligible life): Such pessimistic nihilists are lower than even the starting point of the path toward positive mystic development and becoming a perfect human being, for they have not yet gained the awareness that may prove to them that the universe and their existence is serious and objective.

Such a starting point is not a fixed part of man's life that man passes and moves on; the start of awareness and awakening should always be with man and light up his path during his whole life. The awareness and awakening should increase both qualitatively and quantitatively as he ages.

The Qur'an and *sunnat* is also a very considerable issue. The Qur'an and the *itrat* (the Holy Prophet's family) are always connected; in fact, their association (as the bigger weight and the smaller weight) forms one of the most important *hadith* both Shiites and Sunnites believe in:

اني تارك فيكم الثقلين كتاب الله و عترتي ما ان تمسكتم بهما لن تضلوا ابدا

"I leave you two great things: the Book of God and my progeny. Follow them, and you will never fall astray from the right path."

Here, the word *saqal* has been interpreted differently, based on how “the book of God and progeny” is interpreted. The most suitable meaning of the word seems to be “weight,” for the book of God and the Prophet's progeny are what Islam and Muslims depend upon.

What we mean by *sunnat* is the way of the Holy Prophet of Islam, which was presenting the good and evil about man in two dimensions – physical and mental. As we know, *sunnat* is Islam's second most important reference, and obeying it is every Muslim's duty. There are three forms of *sunnat*: the words, the actions and the writings of an infallible holy person. Since the knowledge our Imams had was based upon the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet of Islam, *sunnat* generally means what the Imams said, did and wrote.

On the other hand, *sunnat* interprets the Qur'an; it is impossible to make full use of the Qur'an without it. Those who believe that the Qur'an already includes all the beliefs, laws and duties man needs to know are either too stubborn or too ignorant, for as we know, the Qur'an does not include *all* beliefs, laws, duties and basics, and the minds of the public are naturally unable to find or realize them, too. Omit *sunnat* from Islamic references and all that remains is a series of basic, general beliefs, duties, decrees and moral ethics plus interesting stories in the Qur'an and some general mental issues that cannot explain or interpret all Islamic laws or duties alone.

It is *itrat*, the Prophet's progeny, who can interpret *sunnat* and the Qur'an, and indeed, if the Qur'an and the *itrat* were not enough, the *hadith* mentioned above would be useless. Furthermore, if the Qur'an alone were enough and everyone were able to use it in all circumstances, the history of the Shiites and the Sunnites would not be so full of jurisprudential research. Even those who do not refer to the above *hadith*, admit the necessity of obeying the Holy Prophet's way of life, and have in fact done so.

All experts on Islamic studies agree that Imam Ali was a statue of the Qur'an; he had complete knowledge of the Qur'an and absolute faith in its content, which showed in his words. Indeed, he must have believed that he was close to God according to these verses:

و نحن اقرب اليه من حبل الوريد

“... and We are nearer to him [man] than his jugular.” (50:16)

و هو معكم أينما كنتم

“... and He is with you, wherever you are.” (57:4)

and had found out about it through intuition. He has also mentioned his direct contact with God in several parts of the Nahj-ul-balaghah.

Sunnat has been mentioned many times meaning 'way, law or principle' in the Qur'an and the Nahj-ul-balaghah, which shows how important it is to learn from the ways of life man has had throughout history; otherwise, not only would our study of the history of man and the laws of history prove incomplete, but also we must say that our knowledge of man's identity, his stable qualities – good or bad – would be helplessly inconsiderable.

However, contrary to what some ignorant people claim about Islam's lack of attention to the history of mankind, the Qur'an includes many stories that show how man has been in the domains of “man as he is” and “man as he should be,” and provided special emphasis upon traditions that have been followed or should have been followed, which shows how wrong such unaware or stubborn people are.

Traditions and ways of life sometimes arise in the form of the law of causality and the law of actions and reactions:

قل للذين كفروا ان ينتهوا يغفر لهم ما قد سلف و ان يعودوا فقد مضت سنة الاولين

“Say to the unbelievers, if they give over He will forgive them what is past; but if they return, the wont of the ancient is already gone!”(8:38)

Actions and reactions dominate all aspects of man's life, whether individual or social; there is a sign of the law of causality in every corner of both mankind and the universe. In the philosophy of history as Islam sees it, there must be a law of action and reaction based on a fixed order and harmony in the domain of man's life, for without accepting such a basic principle, historical analysis would be impossible.

The Rise and Fall of Cultures and Civilizations

First, let us see what civilization is: Civilization means creating order and harmony in human relations in a society so that destructive conflicts are replaced with competition toward perfection and greatness; people's social lives and communities cause the people's constructive potentials to be activated.

Here, “man-oriented” does not mean the ridiculous concept of “considering man as high as a god;” what we mean is that all efforts and values concerning civilization should be at man's service rather than man being sacrificed for deceiving phenomena called civilization.

The most fundamental fact is that civilization and culture, with all their unique advantages, have been regarded in Islam as servants of man's intelligible life; man's intelligible life should not be at the service of a civilization or culture so as to activate his positive human potentials and supreme feelings.

If man sometimes sacrifices himself in order to safeguard culture or civilization, it should serve to eradicate dangers to intelligible life, not a culture or civilization that does not care about his intelligible life.

A human society affected by the factors that can destroy a civilization or culture is like a human being who has risen due to certain factors, but then suddenly falls.

It is understood from the Qur'an and the *Nahj-ul-Balaghah* that man is the start and the end of all cultures and civilizations.

و لو ان اهل القرى امنوا و اتقوا لفتحنا عليكم بركات من السماء و الارض و لكن كذبوا فاخذناهم بما كانوا يكسبون

“Had the peoples of the cities believed and been god-fearing, We would have opened upon them blessings from heaven and earth; but they cried lies and so We seized them for what they earned.” (7:96)

The Qur'an has cited factors like lack of gratitude toward God for His blessings (what brought about the fall of the Saba people) corruption, selfishness, tyranny, atrocity, and deviation from righteousness as what makes a civilization or culture fade away, so the opposites of these factors must be those which create and elevate them. Thus, giving thanks for God's blessings, good intentions, justice, acting on the path of the truth, and righteousness are factors that enrich cultures and civilizations. Many verses in the Qur'an amazingly state that cruelty and atrocity bring cultures and civilizations to their doom.

و لقد اهلكنا القرون من قبلكم لما ظلموا

“We destroyed the generations before you when they did evil.” (10:13)

و تلك القرى اهلكناهم لما ظلموا و جعلنا لمهلكهم موعدا

“And those cities, We destroyed them when they did evil, and appointed for their destruction a tryst.” (18:59)

The issue of providing a good living for people in order to create a great Islamic society is a highly important and delicate one, for reaching man's mental and spiritual comfort requires man's physical needs – which, depending on man's various needs can make quite a vast range – to be fulfilled.

Basic Islamic references – the Qur'an and *hadith* – have dealt with it with great emphasis. Let us consider an example:

يا ايها الذين امنوا استجبوا لله و للرسول اذا دعاكم لما يحييكم

“O believers, respond to God and the Messenger when He calls you unto that which will give you life...”(8:24)

There is no doubt that “giving life” in the above verses does not refer to “being alive and breathing,” for animals can also explore, discover and struggle without even needing prophets; it refers to finding *intelligible life*. And intelligible life is indeed impossible without the readiness for a clean life, free from all the evil, greedy opportunism seen in all lifestyles like industry, agriculture and so forth.

Fear of God as Seen in the Qur’an

The Qur’an warns those who have no fear of God that they will meet a terrible punishment, and those who fear God have been promised physical and mental rewards.

Fearing God does not mean that God is a terrifying being able to cruelly hurt His subjects. We must first see what “fear of God” means. As the Qur’an puts it:

انما يخشي الله من عباده العلماء

“Even so only those of His servants fear God who have knowledge...” (35:28)

Here, fearing God refers to the fact that if man ignores God – the greatest truth of all – he will definitely feel depressively incompetent and impotent, and once he does realize how badly he needs God, he will feel terrified for not having submitted himself to God, for having fought against it.

There is no doubt that man needs to gain, consciously and voluntarily, the three common principles (a) belief in the one God, b) regarding God as only One and truthfully worshipping Him, and c) freedom for all people from slavery) so that he can elevate his own soul and, having reached an objective, targeted state regarding these principles, see himself as united with other similar human beings. The Qur’an includes some verses regarding such supreme unity:

واعتصموا بحبل الله جميعا ولا تفرقوا و اذكروا نعمة الله عليكم اذ كنتم اعداء فالف بين قلوبكم فاصبحتم بنعمته اخوانا و كنتم علي شفا حفرة من النار فانقذكم منها كذلك يبين الله لكم آياته لعلكم تهتدون

“And hold you fast to God’s bond, together, and do not scatter; remember God’s blessing upon you when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together, so that by His blessing you became brothers. You were upon the brink of pit of Fire, and He delivered you from it; even so God makes clear to you His signs; so haply you will be guided.”(3: 103)

There are several aspects that cast light on the immense divine unity the above verse presents.

من اجل ذلك كتبنا علي بني اسرائيل انه من قتل نفسا بغير نفس او فساد في الارض فكانما قتل الناس جميعا و من احيها فكانما احيا الناس جميعا

“Therefore We prescribed for the Children of Isreal that whoso slays a soul not to retaliate for a slain soul, nor for corruption done in the land, shall be as if he had slain mankind altogether; and whoso gives life to a soul, shall be as if he had given life to mankind altogether.” (5:32)

That the context of this verse is a very simple formula – “One equals all and all equals one” – that actually contains the greatest of truths:

اين ما و من نتیجه بيگانگی بود صد دل به يكديگر چو شود آشنا يكيست

(All this 'me and us' was the result of alienation; if a hundred hearts unite, they will see that they are in fact only one.)

Sa'eb Tabrizi

The reason for such unity and equality does not lie in man's physical aspect, but in his mental and physical being, which despite being related to natural levels on one hand, is on the other hand heading for the supernatural, the source of perfection, divine beauty and glory. The part of man that faces the supernatural receives God's light from its original source, then spreads it across the world in rays of various magnitudes. Hence, unity, harmony, brotherhood and equality – and above all relationships, the connection of unity – pertains to the divine sun. As Imam Ja'far Sadiq says:

المؤمن اخو المؤمن كالجسد الواحد ان اشتكي شيئا منه وجد الم ذلك في سائر جسده و ارواحهما من روح واحدة و ان روح المؤمن لاشد اتصالا بروح الله من اتصال شعاع الشمس بها

“Faithful believers are brothers, as close as the parts of one body. If one part moans in pain, the other parts will also feel the pain; the souls of the faithful believers are one, and such a soul is closer to God than sunrays are to the sun.”

Clearly, as soon as the faithful man's soul begins its conscious, voluntary competition against others in doing good, his soul will also start getting closer to reaching God. Such a feeling of unity is, as we have previously emphasized, due to faith in what common sense and pure conscience decree internally and what the prophets of God tell us externally.

The background needed for such a unity to be reached among human beings is the common principles and perceptions from the two abundant domains – man and the universe. As I stated during the talks I had with some great scholars from the East:

“We human beings have enough common principles and perceptions about man and the universe – both in the domain of **what there is** and in the domain of **what there should be** to be able to abandon our destructive conflicts and turn instead to positive, competitive forms of perfection.”

I brought up the same issue again when I met German scientists at the Society of Philosophy in 1984.

“We have all agreed that Abraham is the father of the three great religions,” I told them, “and that everything pertaining to him is correct, and our criterion for distinguishing right from wrong is our wisdom and reason. By agreeing on Abraham's nation, we will see that all the means and ways for unity among the believers of these three great religions are in our control, for they are all proper, approved qualities.”

One issue which is common between religions is Judgment Day, and many of the verses in the Qur'an concern it. The Qur'an considers Judgment Day as “The Day of Gathering.”

On several occasions, the Qur'an refers to gathering:

ذلك يوم مجموع له الناس

“... a day on which all mankind will be gathered (to be judged)...” (11:103)

قل ان الاولين و الاخرين لمجموعون الي ميقات يوم معلوم

“Say: 'The ancients, and the later folk shall be gathered to the appointed time of a known day.’”(56:49–50)

Forget Judgment Day, and There Will Be No Good or Bad

This is one of the most serious viewpoints regarding moral ethics and religion nowadays.

Today, instead of making use of their powers to provide their people – and people of other nations who burn in the flames of poverty and ignorance – with material and spiritual prosperity, powerful countries are busy killing each other and human beings who work hard to extract their daily needs from nature and make contact with their God. This is what naturally happens when Judgment Day is denied and/or forgotten.

Even more amazing is the fact that the selfish Machiavellians pretend to be staunch supporters of goodwill, human virtues, obeying conscience and the necessity of avoiding the immoral and downgrading consciences, but in fact, having deceived the simple-minded, prepare the scene to sacrifice the truth to enhance their selfish goals! Let them make mankind cry as much as they want; the day will also come when they will cry, too.

The Universe on Judgment Day

Science today does provide some predictions on the future changes in the universe, though it cannot present any definite details. Many verses of the Qur'an point out the coming changes in the universe:

إذا وقعت الواقعة ليس لوقعتها كاذبة خافضة رافعة إذا رجت الأرض رجا و بسست الجبال بسا فكانت هباء منبثا

“When the terror descends (and none denies its descending), abasing, exalting, when the earth shall be rocked and the mountains crumbled and become a dust scattered, and you shall be three bands...” (56: 1-6)

There is debate whether Judgment Day is the day when some go up and some go down. Ibn Abbas believes that, “Some people rise on Judgment Day; others are sent down.” Hassan and Jabbaee have written that, “Judgment Day sends some people down into the fire, and takes some others up to heaven.”

Tabarsi believes that, “Both theories can be summarized as: Those who get inflated in this world become tiny on Judgment Day, and vice versa.”

According to the verses in the Qur'an, these events will happen just before Judgment Day and on Judgment Day itself:

a) Intense earthquakes; several verses have stated this point.

Mountains will become hollow like cotton wool, and then crumble down.

The sky will split apart, and become unsteady and twisted.

The moonlight and the sunshine will disappear.

The stars will fade out and scatter.

The skies will open up, making doorways through which angels can pass.

Two great shrieks will be heard; hearing the first will terrify all people, and the second will bring them to normal again.

Immense horror and distress will engulf people so intensively that they will abandon their dearest, their children, their family; pregnant women will bear their babies and people will be intoxicated, even drunk, with bewilderment.

The earth will throw out everything inside it, like dead bodies, etc.

Waters of the oceans and seas boil and catch fire, and all waters will mix with each other.

Such immense changes and developments do not occur simultaneously; as we have mentioned before, some may take place before others.

The Qur'an describes Judgment Day as an extremely severe one. Is that because of the galactic developments concerned? Or is it due to the pressure exerted on man's physical faculties and aspects as he prepares to see and express the truth about himself? Indeed, both intelligence and reason and also some evidence arising from quotations prove that people enter Judgment Day differently, for they have accumulated various amounts of savings during their prosperous or atrocious life.

Now we will discuss some other interesting aspects of the Qur'an.

The Necessity of Knowing the Qur'an

We must know the Qur'an as best as we can and use its light to cure our mental and spiritual problems. Thus, we can create everlasting freshness and vigor in our hearts by means of this knowledge.

Learning about and knowing the Qur'an involves man's learning about and knowing his own perfection-loving soul in the domain of "what there is" and "what there should be." The Qur'an is not a scientific book that presents man from a limited point of view, or from a viewpoint that is itself subject to change. Such forms of knowledge are either a product of man's natural senses plus the relative meddling he makes when gaining knowledge, or the product of man's specifically aimed combination of his own coordinates with the fact he is studying.

The Qur'an and Creation

God has emphasized in 10 verses of the Qur'an that there is a reason for creating the universe and nature; this is a great warning to man, who should know that he lives in a world based on truth and reason. Thus, his existence, superior to all the universe in dignity and greatness, cannot in any way be farce and aimless. As we read:

وما خلقنا السماء و الارض و ما بينهما لاعبين

"We created not the heaven and the earth and whatsoever in between them is for playing." (21:16)

In verse 38 of *The Smoke*, the Qur'an states the same thing, though it refers to "the heavens" instead of "the heaven." Moreover, other verses in the Qur'an also state that man's existence in the universe has an aim. Some even reveal the highest aim and goal of life:

و ما خلقت الجن و الانس الا ليعبدون

“I have not created jinn and mankind except to serve Me.” (, 51:56)

Clearly, worship means nothing but being placed in the domain of God's divine attraction field. Furthermore, God has no need for our worship – a fact too obvious and simple to ask for any reasoning.

All these verses order man, in a variety of ways, to understand where they stand in this objective world, and having reached such an understanding, obey their reason, internal conscience and the prophets sent by God – his “external” reason and conscience, in fact. All the laws and decrees concerning this human aspect are regarded as fixed and basic.

The Qur'an and the Consequences of Obeying It

When man moves on the path to evolution, obeying the Qur'an lights his eyes up, for truly accepting and obeying the book of God creates such a light inside man that it even shines through his eyes. Thus, he will see the truth as it really is; no vagueness or dark points will remain. The eyes and the ears of faithful human beings are accustomed with interpreting divine words:

گوش و دل مؤمن است سامع صوت خدای گرچه به ظاهر همی ملک پر از های و هوست

(The eyes and the ears of the faithful listen to the voice of God, despite all the noise the world seems to be filled with.)

Foad Kermani, Iranian poet

The Book of Justice and Fairness

The Qur'an clearly states that Abraham's religion, which the Holy Prophet Muhammad regards himself as a follower of, opposes atrocity, oppression, ignorance, tyranny and mental stagnation; the Qur'an leaves no question that prophets have been sent by God in order to enforce justice and equality between people. This is by no means in accordance with some attitudes and behaviors seen in some – both Islamic and non-Islamic, including Christian – religious leaders throughout history.

The Book of No Contradictions

Some writers, in an attempt to prove that religion is not an ideology, have said, “The founder of Islam has not presented religion as an ideology, and religious books – even holy religious books (including the Qur'an) – have no compiled, systematic form.”

Their reasoning is clearly false.

The Qur'an, the Book that Confirms and Verifies Prophets

Many verses in the Qur'an verify and confirm the Prophet of Islam and his faith in the previous Prophets of God and their original Books. The Qur'an also states that Islam arises from Abraham's religion:

قولوا امنا بالله و ما انزل اليينا و ما انزل الي ابراهيم

“Say you: ‘We believe in God, and in that which has been sent down on Abraham...’ (2: 136)

The Qur'an, the Panacea for Mankind's Pains

The Qur'an has the remedy for all the mental and/or spiritual suffering mankind has today. So far, man has produced over 5 billion books, and hundreds of millions of them must concern the humanities. Let us suppose ten million of those books are about the humanities, and let us also suppose one million of that number concerns theological issues, moral ethics and the aches and pains man's soul has today (what there is and what there should be).

If we suppose that each of these books have 300 pages, we may conclude that 300 million pages have been written on man's pains and their cures. Let us put aside 299,000,000 pages of them, supposing they contain examples, anecdotes and supplementary material. Thus, we have 1 million pages directly talking about man's suffering, diagnosing and curing them. Moreover, there are the holy books, which tell us the truth about man's suffering the most clearly of all.

Yet, what pain remains that prevents man from curing himself now that he has so many diagnoses and prescriptions?

If only there was a book that could tell us how to find that single pain that prevents all the others from being diagnosed and cured, people say. We respond that the answer has undoubtedly been included in the holy books and the pure-minded scholars and thinkers' interpretations of them. Namely, the pain is unmoderated selfishness which is constantly strengthened by ignorance. Such a pain has only one cure: will power. Unless will power is awakened and activated inside man, it is impossible to cure the pain.

The Qur'an, The Book for Mankind

Though the Qur'an does not recognize an individual broken off from the society, – and that lies in the delicate fact that such a person is not useful – we can say that nature and the characteristics the Qur'an presents in description of man reveal both territories. If we pay close attention to the “natural” and “mental” aspects of man given in the Qur'an, and if we gain enough knowledge about what the Qur'an

regards as “proper and suitable” for man, we can state that the relationship between man and the Qur’an is: *The Qur’an is the book for man, and man needs the Qur’an.*

Without a doubt, no human mind or book has been able to describe man as the Qur’an has – and this is perfectly natural, for even the most realistic thinkers have been able to consider mankind from one or at most two aspects; such a limited scope would definitely not lead to the real picture arising from the combination of all aspects. Furthermore, there is great difference between a rigid solid effort to discover itself and a living being that dominates it trying to do so; likewise, there is a great difference between an animal's knowledge of itself and man's knowledge of the animal.

Thus, there is great difference between man's presenting himself to himself, and his creator providing the identification.

All scholars and experts of the humanities admit that so far, anthropology has produced nothing more than a bunch of scattered, superficial material. There is no need for us to elaborate on this; let us, instead, consider the mind-boggling question that has been posed in most human societies and saddened the compassionate thinkers and intellectual leaders around the world: Instead of telling us something about the “philosophy of life,” why are you just stuffing poetry in our minds, deceptive views in our eyes and balanced music in our ears, all of which lead to even more questions?!

We may conclude from the situation human societies are in today that not much has been revealed about human beings and humanity – apart from the limited faces made to create mutual coexistence and dealing with inconveniences. Let us study “mankind” again, this time from the Qur’an's point of view; perhaps we can escape half of the damage, which will be quite a gain in itself.

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