

## Surah al-Ahqaf, Chapter 46, Verses 1 – 21

(The Curved Sand-Hills)

Section (juz'): 26

Number of Verses: 35

### General Contents of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*

Placed at the beginning of the twenty sixth section of the Qur'an and revealed in Mecca, the Chapter consists of thirty five Verses. The word ahqaf is used in the sense of curved sand hills piled up due to the action of the wind. The land of the people of 'Ad was covered by sand hills, hence the designation of Ahqaf.

The word appears in Verse 21 wherein the story of prophet Hud (Hod) and the people of 'Ad are being mentioned. The Chapter is the last one among the seven Chapters beginning with detached or abbreviated letters HM followed by the revelation and significance of the Qur'an.

### Merits of the Chapter

According to a narration narrated by Imam Sadiq (as):

*“One who recites Surah al-Ahqaf every night or every week is vouchsafed against the fears of this world and the world to come.”*

## Surah al-Ahqaf – Verses 1-3

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

ح

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ

مَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا  
عَمَّا أَنْذَرُوا مُعْرِضُونَ

**1. HM.**

**2. The revelation of [this] Book is from Allah, the Omnipotent, the All-Wise.**

**3. We created neither the heavens nor the earth nor all that is between them except with truth and for an appointed term. But those who disbelieve turn away from that whereof they are warned.**

Seven Chapters, namely Ghafir1, Fussilat2, Shura3, Zukhruf4, Dukhan5, Jathiya6, and Ahqaf7 open with the detached letters HM and are well known as the Seven HMs.

The reiteration of

**“HM the revelation of [this] Book”**

in a series of recurrent Chapters bears testimony to the fact that fundamental and significant issues are to be reiterated. Divine Glory (‘Izza) is one of the attributes of Allah, His Book8, His Messenger (S), and believers9. Divine Creation is based on Wisdom and Truth.

Encountering things of whose existential mysteries we are unaware may not affect the Creator but it stems from the restrictions of our knowledge as it is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an:

**“We have not created the heavens, the earth, and all that is between them for mere play. We**

***created them not except with truth; however, most of them know not***<sup>10</sup>.

A meager attempt at attending to the verses following the detached letters HM leads us to the fact that the Qur'an is from the springhead of Divine Omniscience, Glory, Omnipotence, and Wisdom. It is the source of Blessing, Bounty, and Grace. It is Illuminating and pondering on it leads one to intellection. The revelation of the Qur'an is merely possible from Omnipotent and All-Wise God, lying beyond the limited human power.

The second Verse, besides the Book of Compilation (tadwin), deals with the Book of Creation, making mention of the glory and truth of the heavens and the earth saying:

***“We created neither the heavens nor the earth nor all that is between them except with truth.”***

There is no single untrue word in His Book nor is there any unharmonious and untrue thing in His System of Creation. Everything is well calculated and stands in perfect harmony according to truth.

However, the world of creation has an end as it has a beginning.

In this vein, the Verse further adds:

***“We have appointed a term for it,”***

upon which the transient world will come to its end. Since this world is true and purposeful, there should naturally exist another world in which deeds be recompensed. Therefore, the truthfulness of this world bears testimony to the existence of resurrection, or else it would have been vain and abounding in wrong and oppression.

Despite the Truth of the Qur'an and the creation of the world,

***“those who disbelieve turn away from that whereof they are warned.”***

On the one hand, Qur'anic Verses recurrently warn them of the Great Tribunal awaiting them and on the other hand, the world of creation, with certain orders of its, warns the negligent that everything shall be reckoned; nonetheless, they heed neither of the twain warnings.

The present participle mu'ridhun “turning away,” from the root ‘-r-dh, demonstrates that attending to the Ayat (“Verses; Signs”) of creation and compilation may enable one to comprehend the Truth; however, they turn away from Truth lest that it may not affect their passions and lusts.”

## **Surah al-Ahqaf - Verse 4**

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَرُونِي مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فِي

# السَّمَاوَاتِ ائْتُونِي بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا أَوْ أَثَارَةٍ مِّنْ عِلْمٍ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

**4. Say: "Think you about all that you invoke besides Allah? Show me. What have they created of the earth? Or have they a share in [the creation of] the heavens? Bring a trace of knowledge [to substantiate your claims] if you are truthful!"**

The word Athara denotes the traces and tokens of the existence of something. The logic of Divine Oneness rests on such firm and indubitable grounds that it may be used in debates with disbelievers to defeat them.

In this vein, Imam Baqir (as) says:

*"The word*

**'Book'**

*in this Verse denotes the Torah and the Bible and the word*

**'knowledge'**

*signifies the words of the prophets' successors."*

The Prophet (S) in all matters related to his prophethood, even the manner of debate with opponents, acts upon Divine Command.

Addressing the Noble Prophet (S), thus God Almighty says in this blessed Verse:

*"O Muhammad! Ask those worshipping false deities believing in their power to show Me what they have created on the earth thanks to which they have become worthy of being worshipped and thanked.*

*Do they have any share in the creation of the heavens? Bring a book unto Me preceding the Qur'an to substantiate your claim. Ask them to show the tokens of their knowledge, if they are true in claiming the veracity of their godhead."*

The Verse in question indicates the logical argument produced to make disbelievers comprehend that each and every claimant produces arguments to substantiate his claims and each being has its own tokens. It is particularly true about those standing higher on the hierarchy of being. What characteristics have they found in the false deities in which disbelievers have sought refuge and before them they prostrate themselves invoking them to answer their prayers?

They merely fancy that they have made themselves close to such worthless objects. Have they created anything ex nihilo to demonstrate that it stands within their power? Have they shown any extraordinary knowledge? Have you learned that they are related to heavenly beings?

The fact is that they lack any merits or privileges, but they are worthless, inanimate objects fashioned by you who claim to be sensible, knowledgeable, and humane. It stands against reason to seek refuge in inanimate things.

In short, the Verse in question bears testimony to Its Divine Origin demonstrating that whatever exists in the heavens and the earth and all things between them have come to light through Truth and the Source of Truth and the Verse substantiates Divine Oneness;

***“No one affects existence save Allah”***

and everything is from Him and is dependent on the Sublime Intellect. They are all needful of the Absolute Self-Sufficient Being.

## **Surah al-Ahqaf – Verses 5-6**

وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ يَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُ لَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ وَهُمْ عَنِ  
دُعَائِهِمْ غَافِلُونَ

وَإِذَا حُشِرَ النَّاسُ كَانُوا لَهُمْ أَعْدَاءً وَكَانُوا بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ كَافِرِينَ

***5. And he who is more astray than one who invokes [ones] besides Allah who will not answer him till the Day of Resurrection and who are unaware of their being invoked?***

***6. And when mankind are gathered, they will become their enemies and will deny their worshipping.***

The worst error is deviation from true recognition and one who turns away from the Omnipotent, Omniscient, All-Hearing, and All-Seeing God and turns to false deities will be entangled with such error, since none but God Almighty may embark upon doing anything. Polytheistic and mundane ties shall turn into animosity on the Resurrection Day.

The blessed Verse is a reproach to idolaters treading the path of error and astrayness to the extreme since they are deeply sunk in ignorance to the extent that they invoke the succor of false deities and objects of worship:

***“other than Allah”***

including angels, jinn, and prophets. The Verse is a reference to the fact that the only true object of

worship and the Provider of Needs (qadhi al-hajat) is God. According to the second Verse, whatever has been regarded as their object of worship and support turn into their enemies on the Day of Resurrection.

At the end, attention may be paid to the differences between God and false deities in the life of mankind:

## **The Role of God in the Life of Mankind**

***“He is the Creator”***<sup>11</sup>.

***“He is the Lord all that exists”***<sup>12</sup>.

***“Allah is full of kindness toward mankind”***<sup>13</sup>.

***“He is the All-Hearer of invocation”***<sup>14</sup>.

***“He responds to the distressed”***<sup>15</sup>.

***“He will surely guide them to His Paths”***<sup>16</sup>.

***“He provides the pious with support”***<sup>17</sup>.

***“He guides them unto growth”***<sup>18</sup>.

***“The hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah”***<sup>19</sup>.

***“He has taught [man] by the pen”***<sup>20</sup>.

***“If man thanks, He will give him more [of His Blessings]”***<sup>21</sup>.

***“And when I am ill, it is He who cures me”***<sup>22</sup>.

***“And Who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the Day of Recompense”***<sup>23</sup>.

## **The Role of Deities Other Than God in the Life of Mankind**

***They have no power over creation “They cannot create [even] a fly”***<sup>24</sup>.

***“They are unaware of their invocations to them”***<sup>25</sup>.

***“They do not hear his invocation”***<sup>26</sup>.

***“They have no power to remove the adversity from you”***<sup>27</sup>.

***“They are their enemies.”***

***“They are unable to ward off adversity from you”***<sup>28</sup>.

***“They harm them and profit them not”***<sup>29</sup>.

To sum it up, mention may be made of Yusuf’s (Joseph) words to his fellow inmates:

***“Are many different lords [gods] better or Allah, the One, the Irresistible?”***<sup>30</sup>.

## **Surah al-Ahqaf – Verse 7**

وَإِذَا تُلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

***7. And when Our Clear Verses are recited to them, the disbelievers say of the truth when it reaches them: “This is plain magic!”***

Dominance of obduracy leads to the denial of the Clear Signs, i.e. the illuminating Qur’anic Verses. The obdurate regarded the prophets’ miracles incredible, but interesting and weird;

***(“This is plain magic!”)***.

The Verse in question demonstrates that disbelievers regarded Qur’anic Verses as extraordinary since despite the fact that the Holy Qur’an was revealed in eloquent Arabic and Arab polytheists were speakers of the Arabic tongue, they knew that composing such Verses were beyond them; nonetheless, the prejudice predominant at the time of pre-Islamic ignorance in Arabia and the arrogance and vanity deeply rooted in the hearts of polytheists impeded them from believing in the prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets (S) and confessing that It is the Word of God, so that whenever they heard a Verse, they attributed magic and sorcery to the Noble Prophet (S).

## **Surah al-Ahqaf – Verse 8**

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ إِنِ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَلَا تَمْلِكُونَ لِي مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئاً هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تُفِيضُونَ فِيهِ كَفَىٰ بِهِ شَهِيداً بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

***8. Or they say: “He has fabricated it.” Say: “If I have fabricated it still you have no power to support me against [the Wrath of] Allah. He knows best of what you say [engage in debates] among yourselves concerning it! He is sufficient as a witness between me and you! And He is the Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”***

The verbal form tufidhun is from the root f-w-dh (“to enter, to flow”). If someone falsely claims to be a prophet, God shall disgrace him and no one may impede his disgrace and support him against God. Obduracy and impiety result in diverse contradictory words and conducts.

It is mentioned in the preceding Verse that polytheists and disbelievers claimed that the Qur’an was magic and the Prophet (S) was a liar.

Addressing the Prophet (S), the Verse says unto him:

“O Muhammad (S)! Do disbelievers produce such false claims saying that the Qur’an is your own fabrication?”

God bids you to respond to them saying:

‘If I fabricate the Qur’an for your guidance and attribute it to Divine Revelation, you shall have no power to do anything to my benefit and save me from torment. God knows better as to what you say, viz. your criticism and mockery regarding Divine Verses. God is sufficient for me to be a witness between us. He is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful.’”

## Surah al-Ahqaf – Verse 9

قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدَعَاٍ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَمَا أَدْرِي مَا يُفَعَلُ بِي وَلَا بِكُمْ إِنِ اتَّبَعُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ  
إِلَيَّ وَمَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ

**9. Say: “I am not unprecedented among the Messengers nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I only follow that which is revealed to me and I am but a plain warner.”**

The word bid’ indicates something novel and unprecedented. The Noble Prophet’s (S) opponents reacted as if no prophets preceded him and his prophethood is something novel. The Prophet utters solely the Divine Word and practically follows nothing save the Divine Revelation. Therefore, his words and conduct may serve as a model for mankind. Divinely appointed guides, even in substantiating their truthfulness, act upon Divine Command.

The Verse in question says:

**“O Muhammad (S)! Say unto the disbelievers that you are not the first divinely appointed prophet. You are not unaware of the preceding prophets so as to regard my prophethood as falsity, but God Almighty, out of His Grace and Mercy appoints prophets and messengers at all times to provide mankind with Divine Guidance.”**

By saying:

*“I am unaware as to what God shall do with me and you,”*

it may be meant that the Prophet (S), despite his sublime station of prophethood, is not fully aware of Divine Ordainments, but admits that Omnipotence solely belongs to God and he does not command or forbid people out of his taste, but he is totally obedient to Divine Revelation.

He is Divinely appointed to fulfill his mission and his claim does not transgress prophethood. In the same vein, he does not consider himself to be independent in judgment and discretion. He is appointed to apprise people of their evil deeds and warn them against the torment in store for them out of evil deeds as a recompense of their vices.

## Surah al-Ahqaf – Verse 10

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَكَفَرْتُمْ بِهِ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ  
فَأَمَّنَ وَاسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ إِيَّاهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ

**10. Say: “Tell me! If this [Qur’an] is from Allah and you deny it, and a witness to it from among the Children of Israel testifies that this Qur’an is like it and he believed while you are too proud [to believe].” Verily, Allah guides not the people who are wrong doers.**

Wrong doing impedes insight and results in deprivation from Divine Grace.

In the blessed Verse in question, God says:

*“O Muhammad (S)! Ask them to inform you of their sayings. If this Qur’an is Revealed by God and a witness from the Children of Israel bears witness to its veracity but you waxed proud and disbelieved in it, what will be in store for you? Are you not from among wrong doers? God shall not guide wrong doers.”*

It is reported that by

**“witness”**

(shahid) ‘Abd Allah ibn Salam is being meant. He was one of the ascetics and scholars of the Children of Israel. By “like it” (mithlihi) the verses and meanings of the Torah are being intended that testify to the Qur’an as Divine Revelation and is consistent with it in terms of Divine Teachings and Promises and Threats.

In short, the Verse signifies that the Noble Prophet (S) is Divinely appointed by God to provide the Jews with guidance saying that as per the testimony of their own scholars it is substantiated that the Qur'an is Divine Revelation but they deny it out of their vanity. Are they not wrong doers? Sunk in wrong doing, they are not guidable.

## Surah al-Ahqaf - Verse 11

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَوْ كَانَ خَيْرًا مَا سَبَقُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَإِذْ لَمْ يَهْتَدُوا بِهِ  
فَسَيَقُولُونَ هَذَا إِفْكٌ قَدِيمٌ

**11. And those who disbelieve say of those who believe: "Had it [the Islamic faith] been a good thing, they would not have preceded us thereto!" And when they have not let themselves be guided by it, they say: "This is an ancient lie!"**

The enemy does not enter from one single way and his words and logic are not in the same vein.

At times he says:

"Islam is worthless or else we would have preceded in embracing it. He sometimes says the call to embrace the Islamic faith is an age old and precedent lie."

The blessed Verse addresses either the disbelievers from Quraysh or the Jews or disbelievers in general who were the Noble Prophet's (S) contemporaries. Since they regarded themselves as wealthy, noble, magnanimous, scholars, and knowledgeable, they considered the Noble Prophet's (S) poor Companions, e.g. 'Ammar, Suhayb, and Ibn Mas'ud as unworthy and weakling.

To persuade the believers they said unto them that had there been merits and felicity in following Muhammad (S), we would have preceded you in embracing the Islamic faith. According to the blessed Verse, since disbelievers did not find their way toward felicity and merits and were deprived of guidance and their vanity and prejudice impeded their hearts from being enlightened by the Qur'anic light and admitting the true source of the Qur'an, they pretend ignorance and say this Qur'an is a fabrication attributed by Muhammad (S) to God.

The content of the Verse resembles one<sup>31</sup> as per which disbelievers said that the Qur'an is nothing save ancient lies (in hadha asatir al-awwalin).

## Surah al-Ahqaf - Verse 12

وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَى إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِسَانًا عَرَبِيًّا لِيُنذِرَ  
الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَيُبَشِّرَ لِلْمُحْسِنِينَ

**12. And before this was the Scripture of Musa (Moses) as a guide and a mercy. And this is a confirming Book in the Arabic tongue to warn those who do wrong and as glad tidings to good doers.**

Revelation of the Divine Book is a Divine tradition

**(“And before this was the Scripture of Musa”).**

Through the glad tidings included in preceding Scriptures, the Holy Qur’an confirms them.

The antecedent of

**“before this”**

is the Holy Qur’an which is preceded by Torah, the Scripture of Musa which had been Divinely Revealed as the precursor of all Divine Scriptures as a Mercy demonstrating the Path of Guidance through the Books of the Torah.

This Book, namely the Qur’an, which is revealed in the eloquent Arabic tongue confirms what is included in the Torah and other Divine Books so that it may inspire awe in disbelievers as to the torments of this world and the world to come and threaten disbelievers and polytheists and bear the glad tidings of Paradise and the stations prepared for them as rewards of the good deeds to the pious and the beneficent.

## **Surah al-Ahqaf – Verses 13-14**

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

**13. Indeed those who say: “Our Lord is Allah,” and thereafter stand firm and straight [on the Islamic faith of Monotheism], on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.**

**14. Such shall be the dwellers of Paradise, abiding therein [for ever] – a reward for what [good**

**deeds] they used to do.**

To say

***“our Lord is Allah”***

signifies nothing by its mere form, but it connotes the choice of the True Path and standing firm on It. It is hard to stand firm on the True Path, but it turns facile through a great reward like Paradise abounding in bounties and devoid of grief. Thus hard tasks turn more convenient through great rewards.

After threatening opponents and bearing glad tidings to the beneficent believers, the blessed Verse enumerates the qualities of believers standing firm on the True Path and the rewards to fall into their share through their good deeds. Good doers (muhsinin) are those who utter their belief, confirm from the bottom of their hearts, and stand firm on the Path of True Religion in terms of faith and practice.

They need not fear of what is in store for them nor do they grieve as to their past deeds.

Needlessness of fear and grief by believers standing firm on the Path may refer to fears and grieves in the other worldly matters. On the Resurrection Day, they stand near to God and are saved from the great distress there.

They neither fear of torment nor are they grieved since as per the Verse in question, negation of fear and grief from the beneficent may include their mundane life and that to come, since one who fears God fears no one but is enclosed within the enclosure of:

***“There is no god but Allah”***

(La ilaha illa ‘Ilah).

He does not grieve since one who loves God and seeks meeting his Lord may not be grieved from mundane matters but such a person has joined those regarding whom it is said:

***“God is satisfied with them and they are [satisfied] with Him.”***

It is worthy of note that it is solely through clemency and perseverance that man may attain to perfect faith and certitude. It is not sufficient to utter the declaration of the faith verbally and confirm it by heart in order to attain to perfect faith.

The perfect believer is one who admits no impediments in his way attains to the station of certitude by sight (‘ayn al–yaqin) or real certitude (haq al–yaqin). Such attainment is possible through firm will to act. To put it short, perfect faith depends on clemency, perseverance, and standing firm so that one may struggle against his concupiscence and ward off devils such that angels may find their ways into his heart and he may attain to the station of peaceful soul (nafs al–mutma’inna).

Such a person may be termed as perfect believer and as per the Verse in question; there will be no fear or grief for him.

The second Verse in question makes mention of another merit of good doers and those standing firm on the Path of Faith, as per which they are from among the dwellers of Paradise for good as a reward for their good deeds in this world, admitting to Divine Oneness, standing firm in their faith without any instability in their certitude and faith in their mundane life. Paradise is the reward of those who act rather than those who merely talk.

## Surah al-Ahqaf – Verse 15

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمَلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ  
ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَبَلَغَ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً قَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ  
نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَصْلِحْ لِي فِي  
ذُرِّيَّتِي إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَإِنِّي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

**15. And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship. And she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him, and the weaning of him [lasts] thirty months, till when he attains full strength and reaches forty years, he says: “My Lord! Grant me the power and ability that I may be grateful for Your Favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I may do righteous good deeds, such as please You, and make my offspring good. Truly, I have turned to You in repentance, and truly, I am one of the Muslims [submitting to Your Will].**

Being dutiful and kind to one’s parents is highly rewarded by God.

The phrase:

**“We enjoined”**

is attested five times in the Qur’an three instances of which are employed for parents<sup>32</sup>. Owing to the hardships of pregnancy, delivery, and suckling, mothers enjoy a special privilege and deserve further kindness. It is noteworthy that being dutiful and kind to one’s parents does not depend on their being Muslims.

The basis of man’s life and his felicity and improvement rests on unanimity, kindness, and philanthropy and his closest relations are his parents who partially form his material existence. That is why God Almighty enjoins man to do good to his parents.

In this vein, motherly love for her child is one of the wonders of the world and one of the secrets of creation, since despite suffering so many hardships and so much pain, however her child be ugly in form or character, her love never turns into disgust. She bears the child for a period of nine months and her delivery is very painful. She suckles her child.

According to the Verse, such activities last thirty months. Therefore, compared with fathers, mothers suffer further hardships; however, fathers undergo many hardships for their children in other respects. In bringing up their children, parents undergo many a hardship to provide for their children's provisions and education until their children reach majority.

The verse connotes guidance through intellect since any fair individual knows through their reason that they are dutiful against their parents and the verse stands on such rational command.

The Qur'an<sup>33</sup> says:

***“Is there any reward for good other than good?”***

which is a reference to the rational command in question.

However, when we compare this Verse with:

***“And worship Allah and do not associate false deities with Him in any way and do good to your parents”***<sup>34</sup>

which is attested in four Qur'anic Chapters for the sake of emphasis and we take the large number of traditions and narrations narrated from the Infallibles (as) we notice that the number is so large that enumerating all of them will run to many a page.

Taking the Qur'anic Verses and the traditions and narrations bears testimony to the fact that as per Divine Command doing good to one's parents is on a par with worshipping God based on which it is obligatory to be dutiful to one's parents and obey them unless their commands be inconsistent with Divine Commands and those of His Messenger.

It is incumbent upon every individual to make every attempt to do good to them and obtain their satisfaction at all times and to the extent possible to do so since obedience to them and obtaining their satisfaction are on a par with obedience to God and obtaining Divine Satisfaction.

Man attains to the perfect state of physical and mental development when he is forty years of age. It clearly demonstrates whether he treads the path of felicity or is astray.

Thus God Almighty says that within a period of forty years, man may proceed on the path of felicity and thus say in a state of need and gratitude:

***“Bestow upon me the blessing that I may be grateful for the abounding material and immaterial***

***bounties granted to me and my parents and as a token of gratitude act upon Your Satisfaction.”***

Such individual not only invokes God to respond to his needs but also seeks felicity and welfare for his offspring.

He turns to the threshold of the Absolute Self-Sufficient God and sincerely addresses God saying:

***“I have turned toward you. I have submitted to Your Will and Command.”***

Experts of Islamic law have employed:

***“the bearing of him and the weaning of him [lasts] thirty months”***

and

***“the mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years”<sup>35</sup>***

to conclude that pregnancy in the least lasts six months which together with two months of suckling amount to thirty months.

## **Surah al-Ahqaf – Verse 16**

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ نَتَقَبَّلُ عَنْهُمْ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَنَتَجَاوَزُ عَنْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ فِي أَصْحَابِ  
الْجَنَّةِ وَعَدَ الصِّدْقِ الَّذِي كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ

***16. They are those from whom We shall accept the best of their deeds and overlook their evil deeds. [They shall be] among the dwellers of Paradise – [this Paradise is] a promise of truth, which they have been promised.***

The value of deeds lies in their being accepted;

***(“They are those from whom We shall accept ...”).***

For instance, being dutiful and doing good to one’s parents and being grateful to God leads to the acceptance of one’s good deeds and being dutiful to and doing good to one’s parents and gratitude toward God results in Divine Forgiving.

***“They”***

in this Verse refers to the people some of whose qualities are enumerated in the preceding Verse. The Verse in question makes mention of their good deeds and intentions accepted by God better than what they have done. God forgives their sins and has promised them to enter Paradise. His Promise is true

and shall be fulfilled.

The Verse indicates that such Grace and Mercy are the rewards of three good deeds of theirs:

1. Being dutiful and doing good to one's parents
2. Their invocation and supplication to the Absolute Self-Sufficient for the bounties granted to them and their parents
3. Their repentance and turning away from opposition to embracing the Islamic faith in case of committing any sin or fault, since invocation and supplication at the Threshold of the Omnipotent God as well as repentance from committing sins and faults serve as two gates of Divine Mercy and Grace.

Mention will be made of a number of traditions concerning showing respect for parents:

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as) said:

*"The most significant Divine obligation is to do good to one's parents."*<sup>36</sup>

The Messenger of Allah (S) Said:

*"Any good doing child who looks at his parents out of kindness is granted the Divine Reward of pilgrimage to Ka'ba for each and every look. He was asked concerning a child who looks kindly at his parents one hundred times a day and he replied: "God is the Greatest and the Most Pure"*<sup>37</sup>.

The Messenger of Allah (S) Said:

*"A servant who is obedient to his parents and God shall dwell on the highest place in Paradise"*<sup>38</sup>.

The Messenger of Allah (S) Said:

*"One who obtains the satisfaction of his parents, has gained the satisfaction of God and one who angers his parents, angers God"*<sup>39</sup>.

The Messenger of Allah (S) Said:

*"One who wishes to have his life prolonged and his daily sustenance increased should do good to his parents and provide for his blood relatives"*<sup>40</sup>.

## **Surah al-Ahqaf – Verses 17-18**

وَالَّذِي قَالَ لِيُؤْتِنِي إِفٍّ لَكُمْ أَتَعِدَانِي أَنْ أُخْرَجَ وَقَدْ خَلَتِ الْقُرُونُ مِنْ قَبْلِي وَهُمَا  
يَسْتَغِيثَانِ اللَّهَ وَيْلَكَ آمِنْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَيَقُولُ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنَّهُمْ  
كَانُوا خَاسِرِينَ

**17. But he who says to his parents: “Fie upon you both! Do you hold out the promise to me that I shall be raised up [from the grave posthumously] when generations before me have passed away?” While they invoke Allah for help [and say unto him]: “Woe to you! Believe! Verily, the Promise of Allah is true.” But he says: “This [promise] is nothing but the tales of the ancient.”**  
**18. They are those against whom the Word [of torment] is justified among the previous generations of Jinn and mankind that have passed away. Indeed, they are ever the losers.**

Unworthy children insult their parents;

**(“Fie upon you both!”)**

but faithful and compassionate parents seek God’s assistance to guide their children and ask them to do good deeds and keep away from vices.

In the Verse in question, mention is made of unfaithful and ungrateful individuals who are cursed by their parents:

**“He who says to his parents: ‘Fie upon you both! Do you hold out the promise to me that I shall be raised up when generations before me have passed away?’”**

Faithful parents do not desist before their obdurate son,

**“they invoke Allah for help [and say unto him]: ‘Woe to you! Believe! Verily, the Promise of Allah is true.’”**

But he says:

**“This [promise] is nothing but the tales of the ancient.”**

What you say concerning the Last Day and Reckoning is superstitions and legends of the ancients and I shall never submit to believing them.

The qualities enumerated in this Verse concerning such obdurate individuals are as follows:

1. disrespect toward parents, since

**“Fie”**

refers to impurities and connotes insult and humiliation.<sup>41</sup>

2. Such people not only disbelieve in the Last Day but also mock such belief and regard it on a par with legends and superstitions

3. Enjoining them to embrace the true faith falls onto deaf ears as they do not submit to the Divine Will and they are conceited with false pride and ignorance. Compassionate parents make every attempt to rescue their obdurate children from the abyss of ignorance and the painful torment in the world to come; however, the unworthy children persist in their disbelief and their parents find no other alternative but to leave them.

According to Verse 18:

“Obdurate disbelievers are those against whom the Word [of torment] is justified among the previous generations of Jinn and mankind that have passed away. Indeed, they are ever the losers [viz. they shall suffer the painful chastisement and shall abide in Hell].

The reason is that they are all losers. What loss is worse than losing all one’s capabilities and gaining the Divine Wrath? In comparing the dwellers of Paradise and Hell in these Verses we notice that one group attains to growth and development and the other loses all their capabilities and turns into losers.

The former are grateful to God and their parents but the latter are ungrateful and show their disrespect to their parents. The former shall abide in Paradise near to God and the latter are the dwellers of Hell to abide there among faithless people.

Each of them joins their lot. The former repent of their sins and faults and submit to the Will of God and the latter are rebels sunken in false pride. It is to be noted that the latter are obdurate in their deviation from the true path and rely on their predecessors and shall be raised up in Hell with their likes.”

## Surah al-Ahqaf – Verse 19

وَلِكُلِّ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوا وَلِيُؤْفِيَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

**19. And for all [viz. Jinn and mankind, the preceding and coming generations], there will be degrees according to that which they did, that He may recompense them in full for their deeds. And they will not be wronged.**

Divine degrees and stations are consistent with human deeds. Resurrection shall be a reward for the faithful and a chastisement for evil doers

**(“He may recompense them in full for their deeds”).**

## **“And”**

(wa) in

## **“and for all”**

(wa li-kulli) refers to the last two Verses; the former concerns those who embrace the true faith and submit to the Divine Will following their maturity and development invoking God to grant success to them and their parents, repenting their evil deeds and turning to God Almighty and the latter concerns those who showed disrespect for their parents and denied the veracity of the Resurrection Day. Each of them shall be granted degrees of ascension consistent with their deeds.

Every act shall be recompensed in full and no one shall be wronged.

The Qur'an says:

فمن يعمل مثقال ذره خيراً يره و من يعمل مثقال ذره شراً يره

***“So whosoever does good equal to the weight of an atom shall see it and whosoever does evil equal to the weight of an atom shall see it”***<sup>42</sup>.

In short, the Verse apparently refers to the fact that degrees are the results of deeds and since people are quite different in their deeds, their degrees are quite different. Each and every individual's degree is determined by his qualities and morals acquired by himself in his mundane life.

## **Surah al-Ahqaf – Verse 20**

وَيَوْمَ يُعْرَضُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَلَى النَّارِ أَلْهَبْتُمْ طَيِّبَاتِكُمْ فِي حَيَاتِكُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَاسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ  
بِهَا فَالْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُونِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَبِمَا  
كُنْتُمْ تَفْسُقُونَ

***20. On the Day when those who disbelieve will be exposed to the Fire [it shall be said]: “You received your good things in the life of the world, and you took your pleasure therein [without saving anything for this day]. Now this Day you shall be recompensed with a torment of humiliation, because you were arrogant in the land without a right, and because you used to rebel against Allah’s Command.***

Diverse physical and mental torments shall be in store for evil doers on the Resurrection Day beginning posthumously with reproach, humiliation, losing one's capabilities and bounties, and regretting their loss.

Concerning the manner of dying, Imam 'Ali (as) in Nahj al-Balagha says:

*"In his last minute, man thinks about what he has done in his lifetime (fi-ma afani 'umrahu)"*<sup>43</sup>.

The blessed Verse in question treats of the manner of torments of the Resurrection Day, when disbelievers are exposed to Hell fire. It will be said unto them that the bounties granted to you in your mundane life, e.g. outward ones like health, property and wealth, delicious food and inward ones such as intellect, intelligence, and bravery were spent inappropriately rather than employing them for the attainment of felicity, virtue, and perfection.

You spent them on the pleasures of the flesh and as a consequence of ingratitude for such blessings, disobedience against Divine Command you will pay for your ingratitude by suffering from a humiliating torment (jaza'an wifaqan). Since recompense is supposed to be consistent with deeds, false pride and vicious conduct shall be chastised by humiliating torment ('adhab al-hawn).

## Surah al-Ahqaf – Verse 21

وَأذْكُرُ أَخَا عَادٍ إِذْ أَنْذَرَ قَوْمَهُ بِالْأَحْقَافِ وَقَدْ خَلَّتِ النَّذُرُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ  
أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

**21. And remember [Hud] the brother of 'Ad, when he warned his people in Ahqaf. And surely, there have passed away warners before him and after him [saying]: Worship none but Allah; truly, I fear for you the torment of a mighty Day."**

The proper noun Ahqaf is from hiqf ("flowing sand") is applied to a region covered by sand in the South of the Arabian Peninsula located between the Yemen, Oman, and Aden in which the people of 'Ad dwelt (cf. Tahqiq fi Kalimat al-Qur'an).

Addressing His Messenger in this Verse, God says:

**"Remember 'Ad's brother [namely Prophet Hud (as)]."**

It is said that Hud (as) was 'Ad's brother by blood or from the latter's tribe. Hud (as) was asked to inspire awe in his Bedouin tribe and threaten them.

God Almighty appointed Hud (as) as His Messenger to encourage the people of 'Ad to worship the One God saying unto them:

***“Do not worship any god other than the One God. I fear for you the torment of a mighty Day.”***

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2. 41
3. 42
4. 43
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6. 45
7. 46
8. 41:41
9. 63:8
10. 44:38–39; 40:2–3; 41:2–4; 42:3–5; 43:2–3, 6; 44:3
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31. 6:25
32. 29:8; 31: 14; 46:15
33. 55:60
34. 4:40
35. 2:233
36. Mizan al–Hikma, vol. 10, pp. 7–9
37. Bihar al–Anwar, vol. 74, p.73
38. Kanz al–’Ummal, vol. 16, p. 467
39. Kanz al–’Ummal, vol. 16, p. 470
40. Kanz al–’Ummal, p. 16, p. 475
41. cf. Raghīb’s Mufradat
42. 99:7–8
43. Sermon 109

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