

## Surah al-Zumar, Chapter 39, Verses 1 – 29

(The Groups)

Sections (juz') 23–24

Number of Verses: 75

### General Overview of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

The Chapter has 75 Verses and is revealed at Mecca. Like other Meccan Chapters, it mainly treats of God Almighty and Resurrection.

The word **zumar** indicates “groups” and the title of the Chapter, as mentioned in Verses 71 and 73, alludes to the ingress of the peoples of Hell and Paradise into their assigned dwellings. The Chapter mainly focuses on the Unity of the Creator, Lordship, and worshipping Him particularly sincere worshipping and humble veneration of Him.

The presence of people on the Day of Judgment and their being judged on the basis of the records of their deeds and the testimony of the witnesses and the ingress of sinners and the pious into Hell and Paradise receive further emphasis and detail.

### Merits of the Recitation of the Chapter

Recitation of Chapter 39 receives remarkable significance in Islamic traditions and instance of which is the Prophetic tradition saying:

*“One who recites Surah al-Zumar shall not lose hope of Divine Mercy and shall be recompensed the*

*rewards of the God fearing.*"<sup>1</sup>

According to a tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as):

*"One who recites Surah al-Zumar shall be accorded honor and dignity in this world and the Hereafter even if he lacks in worldly possessions and family support in such manner that others shall stand in awe upon meeting him and his body shall not be burned in Hell."*<sup>2</sup>

A comparison of the aforementioned merits with the contents of the Chapter concerning fear of God, setting one's hope on His Mercy, sincerity in worshipping Him, and absolute submission to the Pure Essence of Truth clearly indicates that such rewards shall be reaped by those for whom the recitation of Divinely revealed Verses serve as a prelude to reflection based upon which they have faith and do righteous good deeds.

In other words, the contents of the Chapter find their way into their heart and they turned into their permanent disposition of mind whose reflection may be fully noticed in their life. Such people deserve to reap such great rewards and Divine Boundless Bounties and Favors.

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verses 1-2**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصاً لَهُ الدِّينَ

***1. The Revelation of the Book [unto you in portions at certain times] is from Allah, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.***

***2. Indeed We have sent down this [Revealed] Book unto you in truth; So worship Allah by doing religious deeds sincerely for Allah's sake.***

The words:

***tanzil*** (“*sending down in portions at certain times*”)

and

***inzal*** (“***sending down in whole at one time***”)

are both mentioned in these two blessed Verses, opening with the Revelation of the Holy Qur’an, the former and the latter allude to the Pure Divine Essence as the Origin of Revelation and the content as well as the final goal of the Holy Qur’an respectively.

The first Verse says that this Book is Revealed by God, the All-Mighty and All-Wise.

Any book is known by its revealer or author. Being apprised of the Divine Origin of Revelation of this Glorious Revealed Book and the fact that the Omniscience of God Almighty, the Omnipotent and the All-Wise, is the Origin of the Revelation of the Book thanks to Whose Omnipotence nothing is impossible and His Boundless Knowledge embraces all things, we come to comprehend the Gloriousness of Its contents.

It will suffice to acquire certitude concerning the veracity of Its contents abounding in Wisdom, Light, and Guidance.

It is worthy of note that such expressions opening Qur’anic Chapters bear witness to the fact that the contents of this Glorious Book is wholly Revealed by God Almighty; in other words, the contents of the Holy Qur’an constitute Divine Word rather than that of the Noble Prophet (S), even though his word is also exalted and full of wisdom.

The second Verse treats of the contents and the goal of the Revelation of the Holy Qur’an saying:

***“We have sent down this [Revealed] Book unto you in truth.”***

The significant point is that there is nothing but Truth in the Divinely Revealed Book; that is why seekers of Truth proceed toward it and those thirsty of finding their way to the valley of Truth are after Its contents.

The goal behind the Revelation of the Holy Qur’an is to provide humanity with pure religion as a consequence of which the Verse closes thus:

***“So worship Allah by doing religious deeds sincerely for Allah’s sake.”***

The word religion may ad hoc designate worshipping God Almighty, since it is preceded by:

***“So worship Allah”***

which is followed by:

***“by doing religious deeds sincerely for Allah’s sake,”***

making a reference to the fact that the prerequisite of the verity of worship lies in sincerity of heart and its purity from polytheism and dissimulation.

Yet, taking into account the wide range of the meaning of the word:

**“religion” (din)**

and its lack of restrictions one may notice that it signifies a wider range of meaning embracing worship, other deeds, as well as beliefs.

In other words, the word:

**“religion”**

encompasses the corporeal and spiritual dimensions of man. In this vein, sincere servants of God Almighty are supposed to refine all the aspects of life from impurities, reject other entities besides God Almighty from their hearts, souls, words, and deeds, reflect upon Him, love for His sake, speak and act for Him, and take steps for His satisfaction – this is

**“religious sincere devotion.”**

Therefore, there would be no need to restrict the meaning of the Verse to the declaration of faith by uttering “*There is no god but Allah,*” nor is there any firm ground to delimit the meaning to

**“worship.”**

## Surah al-Zumar - Verse 3

أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ

**3. Know that the pure religion is for Allah and those who take gods besides Allah [said justifyingly] “We solely worship them that they may bring us near to Allah.” Indeed Allah will judge between them regarding that wherein they differ. Allah never guides one who is a disbelieving liar.**

The value of religion lies in its purity lest it is metamorphosed by vain desires and superstitious beliefs

**(“the pure religion is for Allah”).**

The opening clause of the blessed Verse may be interpreted in two ways.

Firstly, God Almighty solely accepts the pure religion, total submission to Divine Decree, whereas any polytheism, dissimulation, and confusion of Divine Laws to those besides them are unacceptable.

Secondly, pure religion is solely bestowed upon man by God Almighty, since human thought is imperfect and erroneous.

Taking the exegesis of the preceding Verse into account, it sounds more appropriate to acknowledge the former interpretation since the subject of purity or sincere devotion is

***“God’s servants,”***

as a consequence of which they are supposed to act accordingly.

Another argument substantiating the same is a Prophetic tradition according to which a certain man came unto him saying:

*“O Messenger of God (S)! We give out possessions to others in order to gain reputation. Will we be rewarded thereby?”*

The Noble Prophet (S) replied:

***“No!”***

The man inquired once more that at times they give their possessions for both acting upon Divine Decree and gaining reputation and he wondered whether there would be any reward for the same.

The Prophet (S) replied:

*“God does not accept anything unless it is solely done for Him.”*

Then, he recited the blessed Verse:

***“Know that the pure religion is for Allah.”***<sup>3</sup>

It is worthy of note that the third Verse substantiates the preceding One.

The former says:

***“Worship God out of sincere devotion and sincerity of heart.”***

The latter says:

***“God Almighty solely accepts righteous deeds.”***

Great emphasis is laid upon

***“sincere devotion” (ikhlas)***

in Qur’anic Verses and Islamic traditions. The opening word of the Verse, *ala* is usually employed to attract attention which also bears testimony to the significance of the subject in question.

The blessed Verse also makes a reference to the falsity of the polytheists’ baseless arguments since they turned away from the path of sincere devotion and went astray in error saying that those who acknowledge gods besides Allah as their objects of devotions justifying that they worship them to render them closer to God, God will judge between them regarding that wherein they differ on the Day of Resurrection.

The falsity and corruption of their thoughts and deeds will be known to everyone on that Day:

***“Allah and those who take gods besides Allah [said justifyingly] ‘We solely worship them that they may bring us near to Allah.’ Indeed Allah will judge between them regarding that wherein they differ. Truly Allah guides not one who is a disbelieving liar.”***

The blessed Verse serves as a serious warning to polytheists that the Day of Resurrection will be the Day on which differences shall be removed and the truth shall be clear. On such a Day, God Almighty will judge between them so that they will be recompensed for their deeds; furthermore, they will be disgraced before everyone on the Day of Resurrection.

Human immediate contact with God Almighty is accorded particular emphasis in the Qur’an– he may speak unto Him, offer Him his devotions, supplications, ask Him for forgiveness, and the acceptance of his repentance.

They are all within His Will and Omnipotence. Chapter 24 bears testimony to this fact since God’s servants recite it in all their daily prayers thereby they establish immediate contact with their Creator and invoke Him to answer their prayers.

The manner of repentance and asking God for forgiveness and answering prayers as mentioned in the devotions transmitted through many a tradition demonstrate that no intermediary is acknowledged in the Islamic faith and the same indicates the Truth of Divine Unity.

The question of intercession with God’s saints or favorites is also based on the Creator’s Permission which once more lays emphasis on the dogmatic principle of Divine Unity.

The attachment is supposed to be established since He is closer to us than ourselves, as it is thus said in the Holy Qur’an:

***“We closer to him than his jugular vein” (50: 16);***

***“Know that Allah comes in between a person and his heart” (8:24).***

Yet, He is neither far from us, nor are we far from Him; thus there is no need for intercession. He is closer to us than any other one; He is Ubiquitous and our hearts entertain Him.

Therefore worshipping intercessors, be them angels, jinn, and the like, or worshipping stone and wooden idols is baseless and false; furthermore, such worship is considered ingratitude for Divine Blessings, since the One Who bestows Bounties, rather than inanimate objects or needy creatures deserves worship.

Thus, the blessed Verse in question closes with:

***“Allah never guides one who is a disbelieving liar.”***

He neither guides disbelievers to the Straight Path in this world nor will He admit them to Paradise in the Hereafter, since they have turned away from Divine Guidance. God Almighty solely guides those who deserve and are willing to embrace it rather than those who have suppressed their faculty to accept the same.

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verse 4**

لَوْ أَرَادَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا لَاصْطَفَىٰ مِمَّا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ سُبْحَانَهُ هُوَ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ  
الْقَهَّارُ

***4. Had Allah willed to take an offspring [for Himself], He could have chosen whom He willed out of those whom He created. But Glory is to Him! [He is above such things]. He is Allah, the One, the All-Subjugator.***

God Almighty has no [real] offspring:

***(“He begets not, nor was He begotten,” 112:3)***

nor any adopted children:

***(“Had Allah willed to take an offspring [for Himself]”),***

since real offspring indicate corporeality, divisibility, bearing similitude, and having a spouse, whereas He is One.

He is neither divisible nor does He have similitude nor spouse. Polytheists also regarded a number of their objects of worship as Allah’s daughters.

Treating of the false belief, the blessed Verse says:

***“Had Allah willed to take an offspring [for Himself], He could have chosen whom He willed out of those whom He created. But Glory is to Him! [He is above such things]. He is Allah, the One, the All-Subjugator.”***

At any rate, the blessed Verse is saying that having offspring is either for assistance or for spiritual intimacy. Even reflection upon such impossible supposition does not necessitate having offspring since He could select one among His noble creatures, rather than an offspring, in order to attain to such a goal.

Nonetheless, He is One God Who is the eternal All-Subjugator of all things, Needless of the assistance of any entity. He is neither perturbed by anything hence His Needlessness for intimacy with anyone or anything, nor is he in need of progeny.

Consequently,

***“Glory is to Him!”***

He is above having real or adopted children.

As mentioned above, these ignorant and lightheaded disbelievers and polytheists considered angels to be Allah’s offspring and some of them maintained affinities between Him and jinn and at times regarded Ezra (‘Uzayr) or Jesus (‘Īsa) as God’s sons unaware of the manifest truth that God’s need for real offspring would necessitate corporeality, divisibility (since an offspring is a part of the progenitor’s being which separates from him), bearing similitude (because of the similarity between the progenitor and the offspring), and the need for having a consort.

God Almighty is Glorified of all these. Adopting children is also due to the need for corporeal, moral intimacy, and the like and the All-Mighty and All-Subjugating God is Needless of such things.

Therefore, the Most Beautiful Divine Names:

***“the One” (Wahid)***

and

***“the All-Subjugating” (Qahhar)***

constitute a decisive argument against such false beliefs.

It is noteworthy that the employment of the conjunction law (“*if*”) connoting impossible conditions makes reference to the impossible supposition of God’s adoption of children and had He any need for it, He would have no need for what they say rather He could have selected one of his chosen creatures.

## Surah al-Zumar - Verse 5

خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ يُكَوِّرُ اللَّيْلَ عَلَى النَّهَارِ وَيُكَوِّرُ النَّهَارَ عَلَى اللَّيْلِ  
وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۗ أَلَا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفَّارُ

**5. He has created the heavens and the earth with truth. He makes the night to go in the day and makes the day to go in the night. And He has subjected the sun and the moon, each running for an appointed term. Know that He is the Exalted in Might, the Oft-Forgiving.**

The creation of the heavens and the earth, the rotations of the earth and the moon, and going the night into the day and vice versa are manifestations of Divine Exaltation in Might.

The blessed Verse substantiates the argument that God is Needless of His creatures and as an indication of His Unity and Exaltedness in Might is says:

***“He has created the heavens and the earth with truth.”***

The truth of their creation demonstrates that the great final end has been nothing but the perfection of beings, particularly that of man, finally leading to Resurrection.

Following the treatment of this great creation, the Verse proceeds to make a reference in passing to their extraordinary arrangement, well measured alterations, and the fascinating and prevailing systematicity, saying:

***“He makes the night to go in the day and makes the day to go in the night.”***

The expression is worthy of note – taking a glance without the globe at the earth’s rotation on its axis leading to the succession of days and nights makes one notice that it is seems as if the dark ribbon of night wraps up the brightness of the day and vice versa.

It is to be noted that the verbal form *yukawwir* derives from *takwir* which is literally employed in the sense of “roll up, wrap up” an instance of which is mentioned in particular by philologists as “wind up [a turban].”

The delicacy of this Qur’anic expression is thus clarified; nonetheless, it is ignored by many an exeget who have make mention of other points which are not so consistent with the meaning of the word.

The point worthy of note is that the earth is globular rotating on its axis and as a consequence of the rotation, the black and white ribbons of night and day constantly rotate around it as if the white ribbon goes to the black ribbon on the one hand and on the other hand the opposite occurs.

Diverse expressions have been employed in the Holy Qur'an concerning the consecution of nights and days each of which makes a reference to a delicacy from a specific angle.

It is also said in the Holy Qur'an that:

***“He merges the night into the day and He merges the day into the night”***<sup>5</sup>.

The latter expression designates the quiet and furtive consecution of days and nights.

It also says:

***“He brings the night as a cover over the day”***<sup>6</sup>

according to which the night is likened to a dark veil as if covering the brightness of the day. The blessed Verses in question treats of “winding” one over the other, the delicacy of which was mentioned above.

The blessed Verse proceeds to treat of the order and systematicity of arrangement of the world by saying:

***“And He has subjected the sun and the moon, each running for an appointed term.”***

In its rotation on its axis or its movement with the totality of the solar system toward a specific point in the galaxy by no means demonstrates neither the least disorder, nor the moon in its rotation around on its axis and around the earth reveals any disorder.

All creatures are at His Command, totally subject to the laws of creation at all times.

Subjection of the sun and the moon may also indicate their subjection through Divine Permission, as mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an:

***“And He has made the sun and the moon, both constantly pursuing their courses”***<sup>7</sup>.

The Verse closes with a warning to polytheists and suggestion of treading the path leading to Divine Favor:

***“Know that He is the Exalted in Might, the Oft-Forgiving.”***

However honorable and powerful polytheists and sinners may be, they may not escape Divine Chastisement. Thanks to His Oft-Forgiveness, He casts a veil on the sins of the repentant and bestows His Mercy on them.

The word:

***ghaffar (“Oft-Forgiving”)***

is intensive in form and derives from gh-f-r (“forgive”).

The infinitive form ghufuran is literally employed in the sense of wearing anything which keeps man from uncleanness and impurity; applied to God Almighty, it denotes that He conceals the sins committed by the repentant servant and keeps him from the torment of chastisement.

He is Omnipotent and Oft-Forgiving; the Most Gracious and the All-Subjugator. The accompaniment of these two Most Beautiful Names at the close of the Verse creates a sense of fear and hope in servants of God which mainly and finally leads to human perfection.

## Surah al-Zumar – Verse 6

خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ  
يَخْلُقُكُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِنْ بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ ۗ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ  
الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَأَنَّى تُصْرَفُونَ

**6. He created you from a single soul; then made from him his wife. And He has sent down for you [thanks to His Omnipotence] of cattle eight pairs [of the sheep, goats, oxen, and camels, two each, male and female]. He creates you in the wombs of your mothers: creation after creation in three veils of darkness [flesh, skin, and blood]. Such is Allah your Lord. His is the sovereignty. There is no god [to be worshipped] but He. How then do you turn away [from the Straight Path]?**

In spite of physical differences, all men, irrespective of sex and color of complexion, share the like genus and soul

**(“single soul”).**

The blessed Verse once more treats of the Signs of Divine Glory, His creation, and some of the diverse Bounties bestowed upon mankind.

The Verse opens with the creation of man saying:

**“He created you from a single soul; then made from him his wife.”**

Creation of all men from

**“a single soul”**

is a reference to the question of the creation of Adam, our primeval ancestor.

All human beings, though diverse in creation, dispositions, faculties, and tastes trace back to one common origin, namely Adam.

The clause:

***“then made from him his wife”***

actually indicates that God created Adam; then, He created his wife from the remainder of his clay; as a consequence of which the creation of Adam precedes that of Eve and his offspring.

***“Then” (thumma)***

does not connote temporal posteriority at all times, but at times it is employed to demonstrate delay in expressing something; an instance of which is “We noticed your work today; then we saw the work you did yesterday;” yet, what was carried out yesterday certainly precedes that of today.

Some exegetes have maintained that the aforesaid expression is a reference to the question of “the world of pre-existence” (‘alam al-dharr) and the creation of Adam’s offspring following his creation and prior to that of Eve in the form of ants is inaccurate, as mentioned above under 7:172.

It is also worthy of note that the creation of Adam’s wife was not done out of Adam’s body, but from the remainder of his clay, as clearly specified in Islamic traditions. Nonetheless, according to a tradition, Eve was created out of Adam’s lowest left rib which is groundless.

The tradition derives from Jewish and Christian traditions (Isra’iliyyat) and is consistent with the second chapter of the Book of Genesis, namely the available distorted Torah.

Furthermore, it is inconsistent with observation and sense, since as per the tradition in question, one of Adam’s ribs was removed from which Eve was created, as a consequence of which man are supposed to have one rib less in their left side, whereas we know that men and women do not differ in the number of ribs and the difference is no more than a legend.

The blessed Verse proceeds to treat of the question of the creation of quadrupeds as a significant means of human life. Men use them to produce clothes out of their skins, nourishment from their milk and meat.

They make clothes and different means of life out of their skin and fleece.

Quadrupeds are used by men as well as means of transportation:

***“And He has sent down for you [thanks to His Omnipotence] of cattle eight pairs.”***

By

***“eight pairs”***,

the Verse intends to connote “of the sheep, goats, oxen, and camels, two each, male and female,” since the word pair (zawj) is applied to either of the sexes, the males and females of the animals enumerated above make eight pairs; however it is not consistent with other Arabic expressions; consequently, Adam’s wife, namely Eve, is mentioned in the opening of the Verse in question as the

***“pair.”***

As mentioned above, the expression:

***“He has sent down for you”***

does not indicate sending down quadrupeds from above, but it denotes “descent from a higher state of hierarchy” as a Bounty bestowed upon those occupying a lower state.

A tradition narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali (as), concerning the interpretation of the Verse in question,

*“sending down eight quadrupeds in pairs is their creation by God.”*<sup>8</sup>

Some have also maintained that:

***inzal (“sending down”)***

is taken from nuzul (“showing hospitality to guests; first food served to a guest”) as mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an:

***“therein are they to dwell forever, an entertainment from Allah”***<sup>9</sup>.

It is to be noted that even though quadrupeds are not used for transportation as they were used in the past, but the use of such animals has been on the increase for making other significant products.

Even today, man mainly uses quadrupeds for their milk, meat, clothes, and other means of life produced out of their wool and skin; as a consequence of which breeding them constitutes one of the significant revenues for powerful countries.

The blessed Verse proceeds to treat of other forms of Divine creation, saying:

***“He creates you in the wombs of your mothers: creation after creation in three veils of darkness [flesh, skin, and blood].”***

It is needless to say that

***“creation after creation”***

designates consecutive creations rather than creation at one single time.

It is worthy of note that the verbal form *yakhluqukum* is in the present tense, indicating progressiveness and making a brief but significant reference to extraordinary developments and the different remarkable forms of the fetus in the womb which is according to embryologists one of the most extraordinary and the most intricate forms of Divine creation such that the science of embryology is a complete course in Divine Unity and theology.

Few people may study such questions in details and fail to praise the Creator.

The phrase:

***“three veils of darkness”***

refers to the darkness of the womb and the chorion consisting of three thick membranes or veils covering the fetus.

Ordinary painters have to paint in a well-lit workspace, but the Creator of mankind paints such fascinating paintings in such strange dark place that everyone is enthralled by it, where no one may have access to it. He constantly provides for the nourishment of the fetus that is in a dire need of it for growth.

In the well known prayer titled ‘Arafa which is a complete and perfect course on Divine Unity, enumerating Divine Bounties and manifestations of His Omnipotence before His Threshold, the Chief of the Martyrs (Sayyid al-Shuhada’), Imam Husayn (as), says:

*“You made my creation to be preceded by drops of semen, then you proceeded with my creation through placing me in the three veils of darkness, amidst flesh, skin, and blood. You provided for all my vital functions; then you brought me into the world in perfect health.”*<sup>10</sup>

Following the reference to the tripartite chains of Divine Unity regarding the creation of men and quadrupeds and the developments of fetus, the blessed Verse closes thus:

***“Such is Allah your Lord. His is the sovereignty. There is no god [to be worshipped] but He. How then do you turn away [from the Straight Path]?”***

It seems as if following an observation of such glorious manifestations of Divine Unity, man has been able to experience personally such manifestations; then the blessed Verse proceeds to make a reference to His Sacred Essence saying:

***“Such is Allah your Lord.”***

Any attentive perceiver may perceive Him beyond such manifestations. The eyes of the head and the heart see the manifestations and the Creator respectively.

***“You have come out with many a manifestation, so that I may look at you with many an eye!”***

The expressions

***“your Lord”***

and

***“His is the sovereignty”***

are provided as arguments for the exclusivity of the Divine Pure Essence as the object of worship expressed in the formula

***“There is no god but Allah.”***

He is the Creator as well as the Sole Sovereign and Nurturer; in other words, the Sovereignty in all the world of existence solely belongs to Him, so other entities in this world do not deserve to be the objects of worship.

The blessed Verse calls the ignorant thus:

***“Why do you turn away from the Straight Path of Divine Unity?”***

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verse 7**

إِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا يَرْضَىٰ لِعِبَادِهِ الْكُفْرَ وَإِنْ تَشْكُرُوا يَرْضَاهُ لَكُمْ  
وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ إِنَّهُ  
عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ

***7. If you disbelieve, then indeed Allah is not in need of you; He likes not disbelief for His servants. And if you are grateful, He is pleased therewith for you. No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another. Then to your Lord is your return, and He will inform you what you used to do. Indeed, He is the Omniscient of that which is in breasts.***

The preceding Verse treats of Divine Bounties in the creation of man and the provisions bestowed upon him by God. Verse seven makes mention of man’s obligation which is his gratitude for the bestowal of Divine Bounties.

Therefore, the blessed Verse in question says:

***“If you disbelieve, then indeed Allah is not in need of you”***

since His servants will reap the recompense of their disbelief and gratitude.

It further adds that Divine Needlessness does not mean that His servants are not supposed to be grateful for the Divine Bounties bestowed upon them nor are they permitted to disbelieve, since obligation is another Divine Bounty,

***“He likes not disbelief for His servants and if you are grateful, He is pleased therewith for you.”***

The Verse in question proceeds with treating of another question, namely any man’s responsibility for his acts and deeds, since the question of obligation will remain incomplete without such obligation:

***“No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another”***.

It is worthy of note that obligation without recompense is meaningless.

The Verse closes with the question of Resurrection and man’s return to God Who shall inform him of his past deeds:

***“Then to your Lord is your return, and He will inform you what you used to do”***.

It is worthy of note that Divine Reward and Retribution of human acts and deeds necessitate being fully aware of secrets.

Thus the Verse comes to its close:

***“Indeed, He is the Omniscient of that which is in breasts.”***

Therefore, the philosophy of obligation, its characteristics, human responsibility, and Divine Reward and Retribution are expressed in concise and consistent clauses. In the mean time, the Verse is a decisive reply to the followers of the school of predestination whose number among Islamic schools of thought has been unfortunately large.

The blessed Verse explicitly says:

***“He is never pleased with His servants’ disbelief”***

which clearly bears testimony to the fact that contrary to the false belief maintained by the followers of the school of predestination it is not His Will that disbelievers disbelieve in Him, since as long as He is not pleased with something, He will not will it. Divine Will and Satisfaction are not apart.

It is a source of wonder that the biased have made attempts to conceal the evident meaning of the clause by restricting the meaning of:

***“servants” (‘ibad)***

to the pious or the infallible; however the word in question clearly embraces all servants. God is never pleased with any of His servant's disbelief in the same manner that He is pleased with their gratitude.

It is also noteworthy that everyone's responsibility against his own acts and deeds are acknowledged by all Divine religions. 11

It is also possible that a wrong doer may have an accomplice the render him support in one way or another, an instance of which is the one who innovates some vicious thing or tradition and whoever acts upon them will be responsible like the innovator against the sin of innovation of vicious things. 12

## Surah al-Zumar – Verse 8

وَإِذَا مَسَّ الْإِنْسَانَ ضُرٌّ دَعَا رَبَّهُ مُنِيبًا إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا خَوَّلَهُ نِعْمَةً مِنْهُ نَسِيَ مَا كَانَ  
يَدْعُو إِلَيْهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَجَعَلَ لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَتَّعْ بِكُفْرِكَ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكَ  
مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ

**8. And when some hurt touches man, he cries to his Lord, turning to Him in repentance. But when He bestows a favor upon him from Himself, he forgets that for which he cried for before [for its removal], and he sets up equals to Allah, in order to mislead [himself and others] from His Path. Say: "Take pleasure in your disbelief for a while: surely you are of the dwellers of the Fire!"**

Man is of a small capacity for tolerating hardships and when hardships touch him, he cries out but the Holy Qur'an criticizes him for his transient attention toward God in vicissitudes of life and says that he forgets God when he enjoys comfort:

**("And when some hurt touches man, he cries to his Lord").**

The preceding Verses produce arguments for Divine Unity and man's making attempts at acquiring knowledge about Him through reflecting upon the signs of His Glory in horizons and souls (afaq wa anfus); however, the blessed Verse in question opens with Divine Unity as perceived through man's primordial disposition thus clarifying that man's perception through his intellection and studying the order of creation is something innate in his natural disposition manifesting themselves in vicissitudes and hardships; nonetheless, when the storm of disasters is abated, such forgetful man is once more preoccupied with neglect and vanity.

The blessed Verse says:

**"When some hurt touches man [the Light of Divine Unity illuminates his heart], he cries to his Lord, turning to Him in repentance. But when He bestows a favor upon him from Himself, he**

***forgets that for which he cried for before [for its removal], and he sets up equals to Allah, in order to mislead [himself and others] from His Path.***

***“Man”***

ad hoc makes a reference to those people who are uncultured and unrefined since they turn away from prophetic teachings, otherwise those refined by men of God, like their educators, remember Him at all times in ups and downs and seek Divine Favor.

***“Hurt” (darr)***

ad hoc indicates any kind of physical or mental harm or discomfort. The verbal form ***“khawwalahu,”*** deriving from khawl is employed in the sense of constant taking care of something or someone and since such care necessitates bestowal of favor, the word designates “bestow.”

Some exegetes also maintain that khawl indicates rendering service; therefore, ***khawwalahu*** indicates “granted him servants,” and it is also applied to bestowing favor to someone. Some have also taken the word in the sense of taking pride; as a consequence of which they take the meaning as honor someone through bestowal of a favor.<sup>13</sup>

The above explanations reflect the question of Divine bestowal of Favors and Bounties and His special care for His servants.

Muniban, as an adverb of manner, indicates that at the time of hardship when the veils of vanity and neglect are removed, man abandons everything and everyone besides God Almighty and turns to Him.

The word:

***“repentance” (inaba)***

demonstrates that God Almighty is man’s origin and place of return.

***Andad (“equals”)***

is the plural form of nidd which is close in meaning to mithl; however the latter possesses a wider range of meaning, since the former is only used in the sense of likeness in essence.

The verbal form:

***“sets up” (ja’ala, literally “set up” [past tense])***

demonstrates that man falsely imagines equals and peers for God, whereas it is inconsistent with reality.

The clause:

***“in order to mislead [himself and others] from His Path”***

reflects the vanity of those in error who make attempts at misleading others to error. Man a time the Holy Qur'an refers to the link between reflection upon Divine Unity through innate primordial disposition and vicissitudes of life as the scenes of its manifestation.

The low capacity of forbearance makes this vain man to turn to Divine Unity in vicissitudes, but when the storms of disasters are abated, he obdurately treads the path of polytheism.

Many are such inconstant and capricious people and few are those who may not be perturbed by triumphs, Bounties, and storms of vicissitudes.

A small vessel or a pond is easily perturbed by a breeze, but the Pacific Ocean, because of its vastness, may not be agitated by harsh storms, hence the title "Pacific."

The blessed Verse closes with a decisive warning to these people:

***"Say: 'Take pleasure in your disbelief for a while [and spend a few days in neglect and vanity, but know that]: surely you are of the dwellers of the Fire!'"***

How may such narrow minded and misleading person have any other thing in store for him?

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verse 9**

أَمَّنْ هُوَ قَانِتٌ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ سَاجِداً وَقَائِماً يَحْذَرُ الْآخِرَةَ وَيَرْجُو رَحْمَةَ رَبِّهِ قُلْ هَلْ  
يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

***9. Is one who is obedient to Allah, prostrating himself or standing in prayer during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord [is better or such a person]?***

***Say: "Are those who know equal to those who know not?" It is only men of understanding who will remember [and get a lesson].***

Alongside the preceding Verses depicting the characteristics of the people of Fire, the blessed Verse in question treats of the believers' characteristics.

The preceding Verse says that some people solely invoke God in hardships and forget Him in peace of mind and comfort whereas the Verse question says that believers irrespective of hardships and comforts remember God Almighty at all times.

This Verse reflects the employment of the Qur'anic methodological treatment of questions to ask the rhetorical question:

Is such person worthy of Divine Reward or the one who worships God Almighty:

***“prostrating himself or standing in prayer during the hours of the night, fearing the [chastisement] of the Hereafter and Hoping for the Mercy of his Lord?”***

The disbelieving, forgetful, capricious, astray, and misleading man is too apart from the one whose soul is awakened and when the neglectful are asleep prostrates before his Friend and invokes Him in awe and hope.

They neither regard themselves secure from chastisement in comfort nor do they lose their hope for His Mercy in hardship; as a consequence of which they constantly, willfully, and attentively tread the Path toward their Friend.

The present participle:

***qanit (“obedient”)***

indicates the accompaniment of obedience with humbleness. *ana'* is the plural form of *ana'* which indicates hour and portion of time.

The emphasis laid on the hour of night reveals that at that time presence of heart is more and impurities springing from dissimulation are less than any other time.

***“Prostrating” (sajidan)***

Precedes:

***“standing in prayer” (qa'iman)***

since prostration is a higher state of worship and the absoluteness of Divine Mercy and Its lack of restriction to the Hereafter reflects the inclusivity of Divine Mercy in this world and the Hereafter.

According to a tradition narrated from Imam Baqir (as) attested in 'Ilal al-Shara'i' and Kafi:

***“Is one who is obedient to Allah, prostrating himself or standing in prayer during the hours of the night”***

is interpreted as night prayer.<sup>14</sup>

Addressing the Prophet (S), the Verse reads:

***“Are those who know equal to those who know not?”***

The reply to this rhetorical question follows thus:

***“It is only men of understanding who will remember [and get a lesson].”***

Though the question signifies a wide range of meaning explicitly referring to those who know and those who know not, men of understanding and the ignorant, but owing to the fact that the preceding question treats of the inequality of believers praying to God at night time and disbelievers, the latter question alludes to the same question, namely those obdurate disbelievers are not on a par with sincere devout believers.

It is to be noted that the aforementioned rhetorical question and is regarded as one of the fundamental slogans of the Islamic faith bears testimony to the Glory of knowledge and the knowledgeable against the ignorant and with due consideration of its inclusivity, it is evident that the two groups are neither on a par at Divine Threshold nor from the viewpoint of the aware; they are far apart in this world and the Hereafter. They are inwardly and outwardly unlike to one another.

The word:

***knowledge (‘ilm)***

is not employed ad hoc in the sense of knowing some terms or the material links amongst things; in other words, it does not indicate “formal sciences” but it denotes a specific knowledge and awareness that leads man to obedience (qunut) to God Almighty and fear of Judgment makes man to set his hopes on Divine Mercy.

This the truth of knowledge and formal sciences constitute knowledge in case they are in this vein; otherwise, they lead to vanity, neglect, wrong doing, and corruption in this world and they are no more than futile discussions not leading to spiritual realization.

Contrary to what the ignorant imagine regarding religion as the opium of people, the most fundamental prophetic calls addressed gaining knowledge thereby proclaiming their objection against ignorance at all times.

Besides the Qur’anic Verses imbued with the exposition of such truth, Islamic traditions abound in such unimaginable expressions concerning the significance of gaining knowledge.

According to a prophetic tradition:

*“Life is solely fruitful for two people: a knowledgeable person whose views are followed and students giving their ears to a scholar.”<sup>15</sup>*

A tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) says:

*“Scholars are the inheritors of prophets, since the latter left no worldly possessions but they left sciences and traditions and whoever possesses anything enjoys abundant possessions of prophets’ heritage.”*

Imam Sadiq (as) further adds:

*“Be careful from whom you gain your knowledge [from real scholars or pretenders to knowledge]. Know that at any era, there are just and trustworthy individuals from amongst us, the Prophet’s (S) Household, who reject the extremists’ distortions, the deviants’ baseless claims, and the justifications of the ignorant in order to remove the impurities from this pure religion.”*<sup>16</sup>

The blessed Verse in question makes mention of three groups of people: those who know, those who do not know, and men of understanding.

A tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) includes an interpretation concerning the three groups mentioned herein:

*“We are those who know, our enemies are those who do not know, and our followers are men of understanding.”*<sup>17</sup>

According to a tradition, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali (as) departed one night from the Mosque at Kufa toward his house while he was accompanied by one of his intimate friends, Kumayl ibn Ziyad. Passing by a house from which they could hear a man reciting:

***“Is one who is obedient to Allah, prostrating himself or standing in prayer during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord”***

with a pleasing and sad voice, Kumayl was quite pleased with the spiritual state of the man though he refrained from uttering any word.

Imam ‘Ali (as) turned to him and said:

*“Do not be pleased by this man’s voice. He is among the people of the Hell! I will inform you of that soon!”*

Kumayl was taken aback since Imam ‘Ali (as) had been able to read his mind and besides, he had informed him of the apparently pious man’s place in Hell.

Before long, Seceders (Khariji’s, khawarij) disobeyed Imam ‘Ali (as) and the Imam waged war against them, though they knew the Qur’an by heart as It was revealed to the Holy Prophet of Islam (S).

Standing among the carcasses of the rebellious disbelievers, Imam ‘Ali (as), holding his sword in his hand, turned to Kumayl and pointed with his sword at one of heads fallen on the battleground and said unto him:

*“O Kumayl! Is one who is obedient to Allah, prostrating himself or standing in prayer during the hours of the night, fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the Mercy of his Lord.”*

By which he meant that it was the same person reciting the Holy Qur'an that night and whose seemingly spiritual state had made you wonder. Kumal kissed the Imam and prayed for repentance. 18

## Surah al-Zumar – Verse 10

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمْ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَأَرْضُ  
اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةٌ إِنَّمَا يُوَفَّى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

**10. Say: “O My servants who believe! Stand in awe of your Lord and keep your duty to Him. Good is for those who do good in this world and Allah’s earth is spacious [so if you cannot worship Allah at a place, then emigrate to another]! Only those who are patient shall receive their reward in full without reckoning.”**

Having faith is not sufficient and it is supposed to be accompanied with fear of God Almighty and abstention from committing sins:

**(“O My servants who believe, stand in awe of your Lord and keep your duty to Him”).**

The Noble Prophet of Islam (S) said:

*“There shall be no reckoning for a group of people and they will be admitted to Paradise without answering questions.”*

Then he recited the blessed Verse:

**“Only those who are patient shall receive their reward in full without reckoning.”**

Following the discussion concerning the comparison between vain disbelievers and believers obedient to Divine Command and also the one between

**“those who know”**

and

**“those who do not know,”**

this Verse and the following Verses treat of the main guidelines of sincere and devout servants in the form of “seven injunctions” included in a number Verses each opening with:

**“say” (qul).**

The Verse opens with fear of God and asks the Prophet (S):

***“Say: O My servants who believe! Stand in awe of your Lord and keep your duty to Him.”***

The first guideline is fear of God and abstention from committing sins and the sense of obligation and responsibility at Divine Threshold. Fear of God serves as a shield against fire protecting man against deviation from the Straight Path. It is the main possession on the Day of Resurrection, and the standard for human character and dignity at Divine Threshold.

The second injunction is concerned with

***“doing righteous good deeds”***

in this world which is the abode of deeds and encourages people to act upon it through making mention of the consequences of doing good, saying:

***“Good is for those who do good in this world.”***

Doing good in this world through good words and deeds, in thoughts regarding friends and strangers leads to great rewards in this world and the Hereafter. Fear of God is a preventive factor and doing good is a moving one and the composite of which is abstention from committing sins and carrying out obligatory and preferable religious duties.

The third injunction is encouraging believers to

***“emigrate”***

from the centers of polytheism, disbelief, and sin:

***“Allah’s earth is spacious [so if you cannot worship Allah at a place, then emigrate to another]!”***

It is a response to those people of frail faith who sought pretexts and said that they were not able to carry out our Divine obligations under polytheist rule at Mecca.

The Holy Qur’an says that God’s earth is not limited to Mecca; Emigrate to Medina, the earth is spacious. Move from centers polluted with polytheism, disbelief, and suppression hindering your freedom and carrying out your obligations to another place.

The question of emigration constitutes one the most significant issues that not only played the most fundamental role in the triumph of the Islamic rule as a consequence of which served as the starting point of the history of Islam but also enjoys an extraordinary significance at all times thereby believers do not surrender against pressure and suppression prevalent in their environment and on the other hand leads to the dissemination of the Islamic faith to different regions of the world.

In this vein, the Holy Qur’an<sup>19</sup> says:

***“Indeed, as for those whom the angels take [in death] while they are wronging themselves they [angels responsible for taking away their souls] ask [them]: ‘in what [conditions] were you?’ They reply: ‘We were weak and oppressed on the earth.’ They ask: ‘Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to emigrate therein?’ Such men will find their abode in Hell – what an ominous place!”***

The Verse clearly indicates that where emigration is possible, no pretext as to pressure and suppression is to be acknowledged at Divine threshold.<sup>20</sup>

Since emigration usually entails many a problem in different aspects of life, the fourth injunction is thus expressed regarding patience and perseverance:

***“Only those who are patient shall receive their reward in full without reckoning.”***

The verbal form:

***yuwaffa*** (“***shall receive in full***”)

deriving from w-f-y on the one hand and the phrase:

***bi-ghayri hisabin*** (“***without reckoning***”)

on the other clearly demonstrates that the perseverant patient shall receive the best reward at Divine Threshold and patience and perseverance are above any other act.

A well known Prophetic tradition narrated by Imam Sadiq thus bears testimony to the significance of perseverance and patience:

***“When the scrolls of deeds are unrolled and the scales of Divine Justice are installed, there shall be neither of the twain for those who were perseverant despite being entangled with hardships and vicissitudes.”***

Then the Noble Prophet (S) recited the Verse in question according to which God Almighty shall reward the patient without reckoning.

Some maintain that the occasion of revelation of the blessed Verse was the emigration of a large number of Muslims to Ethiopia led by Ja’far ibn Abi Talib. It has been reiterated above that occasions of Revelation provide further exposition for the Verses rather than restrict their significance.

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verses 11 – 13**

قُلْ إِنِّي أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصاً لَهُ الدِّينَ

وَأْمُرْتُ لِأَنْ أَكُونَ أَوَّلَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

قُلْ إِنِّي أَخَافُ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

**11. Say: "Indeed I am commanded to worship Allah when at the same time I have rendered the faith pure for him."**

**12. Say: "Indeed I am commanded to be the first Muslim [i.e., the first of those who submit themselves to Allah]."**

**13. Say: "Indeed if I disobey my Lord, I am afraid of the torment of a great Day."**

The Noble Prophet (S) was keen on worshipping God sincerely and carrying out other obligations of his despite the agreement or disagreement of others;

**("I am commanded; sincerely; the first Muslim");**

as a consequence of which the Noble Verse says:

**"Say that having purified my religion for him, I am commanded to worship God."**

Verse 12 reads:

**"I am commanded to be the first Muslim, namely be the first to submit fully to Divine Command."**

Verse 13 is thus concerned with the seventh and the last injunction, fear of Divine Chastisement on the Day of Resurrection,

**"Say that if I disobey my Lord, I am afraid of the torment of the great Day [of Resurrection]."**

It is herein indicated that the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) is one of the servants of God; he is also commanded to fully submit to Divine Command.

His obligations even far exceed others since he is supposed to be the forerunner in this respect. He neither claimed divinity nor did he deviate the path of sincere servanthship, but he took pride in such state hence he is the model for all Muslims.

He never regarded himself to enjoy any privilege and the same clearly indicates his high rank and truthfulness, unlike pretenders who expect others to worship them claiming that they stand above human beings in terms of rank, essence, and origin and calling their adherents at times to provide them annually with gold and precious stones as per their weight!

The Noble Prophet (S) is actually saying that he is unlike tyrant sovereigns who oblige people to carry out obligations but regard themselves superior to carrying out obligations.

It demonstrates a significant point pertaining to the formative side of education, namely any educator and leader is supposed to be the forerunner in acting upon the injunctions of his school; he is supposed to be the first believer in his own doctrine, the most assiduous individual and exceed others in making sacrifices such that others trust his sincerity and regard him as a role model in all matters.

It is thus clarified that his being the forerunner of total submission to Divine Will is true since he was the first Muslim in all respects, e.g. in terms of faith, sincere devotion, deeds, making sacrifices, jihad, resistance, and perseverance. All accounts of his life bear testimony to the same.

## Surah al-Zumar – Verses 14 – 15

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْبُدُ مُخْلِصاً لَهُ دِينِي

فَاعْبُدُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ قُلْ إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ  
الْقِيَامَةِ أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ

**14. Say: “Allah Alone I worship while I have rendered the faith pure for him.”**

**15. So worship what you like besides Him. Say: “[real] losers are those who will lose themselves and their families on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed that will be a manifest loss!”**

Monotheism surpasses prophetic teachings. Sincere devotion has been so far mentioned four times in this Chapter since history reveals that accretion of superstitions, idiosyncratic tastes, and distortions have been the worst blights of religion.

Following an exposition of the seven injunctions in the preceding Verses, i.e., fear of God, doing righteous good deeds, emigration, patience, sincere devotion, total submission [to Divine Will], and dread of the Master of the day of judgment, emphasis is once more put on ethical norms particularly those against diverse motives behind polytheism, saying:

**“Allah Alone I worship while I have rendered the faith pure for him. So Worship what you like besides Him, [since real] losers are those who will lose themselves and their families on the Day of Resurrection.”**

They neither made use of their own life, nor did their families could have led them to deliverance, nor

could they provide them with honor and intercession at Divine Threshold.

***“Indeed that will be a manifest loss!”***

The word

***“loss”***

is thrice reiterated to awaken man and make him aware of the loss of the soul on the Day of Resurrection.

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verse 16**

لَهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ مِنَ النَّارِ وَمِنْ تَحْتِهِمْ ظُلَلٌ ذَلِكَ يُخَوِّفُ اللَّهُ بِهِ عِبَادَهُ يَا عِبَادِ فَاتَّقُونَ

***16. They shall have coverings of Fire above them and coverings [of Fire] beneath them. With this [torment] Allah frightens His servants: “O My servants, therefore fear Me!”***

The chastisement of those who have turned away from God Almighty and have turned toward others and have thereby incurred loss is that fire encompasses them from all sides.

The Noble Verse in question thus presents a depiction of manifest loss:

***“for and above them stand canopies of fire and beneath them are canopies of fire as well!”***

Thus, they are enfolded with fire. What loss may be worse than that? What torment may be more excruciating than that?

The word ***sulal***, the plural form of *sulla*, indicates “awning, marquee, and canopy” installed from above, hence its application to the sense of a carpet spread underneath is a metaphorical extension of the semantic range of the word.

Some exegetes maintain that since the people of Hell are entangled in the layers of Hell, coverings of fire are both above and below them and even the word *sulal* is not supposed to be applied to lower coverings.

A similar depiction is to be found elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an<sup>21</sup>:

***“On the Day when the torment shall cover them from above them and from underneath their feet and it will be said: ‘Taste what you used to do!’”***

It is a depiction of the state of their world in which ignorance, disbelief, and wrong doing encompassed them.

Further emphasis is laid on it to give them a lesson:

***“With this [torment] Allah frightens His servants: ‘O My servants, therefore fear Me!’”***

The word:

***‘ibad (“servants”)***

and its relation to “God” reiterated in this blessed Verse indicates that Divine Warning against torment is for His Mercy and Favor so that His servants do not meet such ominous fate; as a consequence of which it becomes clear that the word *ibad* ad hoc does not necessarily signify “believers” rather it is applied to everyone, since in case of wrong doing, no one is secure from Divine torment.

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verses 17 – 18**

وَالَّذِينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ أَنْ يَعْبُدُوهَا وَأَنَابُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرَىٰ فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ أَتَمُّ  
الْأَلْبَابِ

***17. Those who avoid false deities [powers antithetical to God] by not worshipping them and turn to Allah, for them are glad tidings; so announce the good news to My servants.***

***18. Those who listen to the Word and follow the best thereof, those are [the ones] whom Allah has guided and those are men of understanding.***

One of the characteristics of sincere believers and God’s servants is their avoidance from false deities, since it is a prelude to attentiveness to God.

These Verses compare and contrast biased and obdurate polytheists for whom Hell fire is in store with truth seeking servants of God, saying:

***“Those who avoid false deities [powers antithetical to God] by not worshipping them and turn to Allah, for them are glad tidings; so announce the good news to My servants.”***

Since the word *bushra* is used in the broad sense of the word, it encompasses all kinds of

### ***“good tidings”***

for Divine Bounties, material and spiritual; however such inclusive good tidings solely belongs to those who avoid from worshipping false deities and turn toward God as it embraces faith and doing righteous good deeds.

Furthermore, the word taghut is taken from tughyan indicating transgression of bounds.

Therefore, the word is applied to any object of worship other than God Almighty, e.g. Satan and tyrants. It is worthy of note that it is used both in the singular and the plural.

### ***“Avoidance from taghut,”***

employed in its broad sense, indicates any kind of polytheism, idolatry, concupiscence, Satan worship, and submission to tyrant rulers.

### ***“Turning toward Allah” (inaba ila Allah)***

embraces fear of God, piety, and faith. It is needless to say that such people deserve the good tidings.

It is worthy of note that worshipping Taghut is not restricted to bowing down and prostration in worship, but it includes any kind of obedience as well.

According to a tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as):

*“One who obeys a tyrant ruler, he worships him.”*<sup>22</sup>

*Thus the elite servants of God are represented:*

***‘Announce the good news to My servants.’***

Verse 18 says:

***“Those who listen to the Word and follow the best thereof, those are [the ones] whom Allah has guided and those are men of understanding.”***

These two Verses have turned to an Islamic slogan demonstrating Muslim freethinking and selectiveness in different issues.

According to Verse 17,

***“so announce the good news to My servants,”***

then these servants are presented as people who listen to the words irrespective of the speakers’ characteristics and make use of their intellection to select the best of them. They are devoid of any kind

of bias or obduracy, nor is their thought limited by anything.

They seek truth and turn toward it wherever they find it. They drink their fill of the pure springhead of truth. They are not only after truth and good words, but also are they selective between good and better and choose the latter. This is the characteristic of a true Muslim and a truth seeking believer.

Regarding the word:

***qawl*** (“**word**”)

in the clause:

***yastami'un al-qawl*** (“**[They] listen to Word**”),

exegets present different exegeses.

Some maintain that

**“Word”**

indicates the Holy Qur’an and whatever is included in It in terms of obedience and lawfulness and regard following the best to indicate obedience to God Almighty.

Some others hold that the word is employed in the broad sense of Divine Command irrespective of being mentioned in the Holy Qur’an or elsewhere. However, there exists no argument to substantiate such restricted exegeses, since the apparent meaning of the Verse includes any kind of word.

The faithful servants of God select the best from amongst all the words and follow the same and act upon it.

It is worthy of note that as per the blessed Verse, those following Divine Guidance are solely considered to be amongst such people as men of understanding solely belong to such people.

It makes a reference to the fact that such people are outwardly and inwardly guided; in other words, they are outwardly guided through intellection and understanding and inwardly through Divine Light and Assistance. Such truth seeking freethinkers may solely take pride in the twain.

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verses 19 – 20**

أَفَمَنْ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ أَفَأَنْتَ تُنقِذُ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ

لَكِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ غُرَفٌ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا غُرَفٌ مَبْنِيَّةٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ  
وَعْدَ اللَّهِ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ الْمِيعَادَ

**19. Is then one against whom the Word of chastisement is justified [may be guided?] Will you save him who is in the Fire?**

**20. But those who fear their Lord and keep their duty to Him, for them are built lofty rooms [in Paradise], one above another under which rivers flow. [This is] the Promise of Allah and Allah does not fail in [His] Promise.**

Owing to their obduracy and bias, some people prevent themselves from Divine Forgiving;

**(“against whom the Word of chastisement is justified”).**

The blessed Verse is saying that the Noble Prophet (S) was keen on guiding polytheists and those in error and was saddened by those who deviated from the true Path and were not attentive toward realities.

Verse 20 is a consolation for him by saying that this world is arena of free will and trial as a consequence of which some people, owing to their disbelief, deserve Hell fire, saying:

**“Is then one against whom the Word of chastisement is justified [may be guided?] Will you save him who is in the Fire?”**

The clause:

**“against whom the Word of chastisement is justified”**

alludes to Qur’anic Verses, e.g.

**“That I will fill Hell with you [Satan] and those of them that follow you, together!”<sup>23</sup>**

Justification of Divine Word regarding chastisement of this group was not evidently preordained, since they taste Divine chastisement because of their evil deeds and their persistence in wrong doing, corruption, and sinfulness, such that their spirit of faith and distinction is doomed to perdition and they all deserve Hell fire.

Thus, the clause:

**“Will you save him who is in the Fire?”**

is a delicate allusion to the fact that their being doomed to Hell fire is so evident that it is as if they are in fire now. It is to be noted that such people have severed all their ties with God Almighty and are thus left

with no way toward deliverance; even the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) who is a

***“Mercy for all the world”***

may not save them from Divine chastisement.

As a source of consolation for the Noble Prophet (S) and believers, the blessed Verse closes thus:

***“But those who fear their Lord and keep their duty to Him, for them are built lofty rooms [in Paradise], one above another under which rivers flow.”***

The people of Hell dwell in coverings of fire:

***“They shall have coverings of Fire above them and coverings [of Fire] beneath them”***

but for the people of Paradise are:

***“built lofty rooms [in Paradise], one above another under which rivers flow,”***

since looking at flowers, water, rivers, and gardens from above the rooms is more pleasing.

The word:

***ghuraf***

is the plural form of ghurfa (“lofty room”) is taken from gharf indicating “take up; ladle” hence the water taken from the river for drinking is referred to as ghurfa; however, it is figuratively applied to the upper stories of buildings.

Such beautiful lofty rooms in Paradise are further embellished with the rivers flowing underneath, thus the blessed Verse further adds:

***“under which rivers flow.”***

The Verse closes with:

***“[This is] the Promise of Allah and Allah does not fail in [His] Promise.”***

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verse 21**

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَلَكَهُ يَنَابِيعَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُ بِهِ زَرْعًا  
مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ ثُمَّ يَهِيَجُ فِتْرَاهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ حُطَامًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرًا لِأُولِي  
الْأَلْبَابِ

**21. See you not that Allah sends down water from the sky and causes it to penetrate the earth [then makes it to spring up] as water springs and afterward thereby produces crops of different colors and afterwards they wither and you see them turn yellow; then He makes them dry and broken pieces. Indeed, in this is a Reminder from men of understanding [to know that the world is transient].**

Rain is the source of springs and subterranean waters. Natural phenomena serve to fulfill Divine Will (making plants to grow is God's work but it is done by means of water). In the blessed Verse in question, the Holy Qur'an once more returns to the arguments substantiating Divine Unity and the Hereafter and pursues to complete the foregoing discussions concerning disbelief and faith.

From amongst the signs of Divine Glory and Lordship in the world of existence, mention are made of sending down rain from the sky and making verdure grow with many a color out of the colorless water, different stages of life, and attaining to the final stage.

Addressing the Noble Prophet (S), the Verse gives a lesson to all believers, saying:

***“See you not that Allah sends down water from the sky?”***

The life giving drops of rain are sent down from the sky. They penetrate the penetrable layer of the earth and the process of penetration stops at the impenetrable layer. The water fills the subterranean basins and thence it exudes in the forms of rivers, manmade subterranean water canals, and spring wells.

The clause:

***salakahu (“caused it [rain water] to penetrate it [the earth]”)***

makes a brief reference to what has been already mentioned. The word **yanabi'** is the plural form of yanbu' (“spring”) is taken from n-b-' (“well up; gush forth [water]”).

Had the earth had no impenetrable layer, one single drop of water would not have been reserved in it and all rain would have flowed into seas.

There would have been no spring, nor manmade subterranean water canal, nor well. Had it had solely one penetrable layer, all rain would have penetrated into the earth such that it would have been impossible to have access to it.

The two penetrable and impenetrable layers are made use of in digging shallow, semi-deep, and deep wells.

The Verse further adds:

***“Afterward thereby [God Almighty] produces crops of different colors.”***

The kinds of plants, e.g. wheat, barley, rice, and corn, as well as their qualities and colors differ; some are light green in color, some have broad and some narrow and delicate leaves.

The word zar' is applied to plants with fragile stems, as the opposite of shajar often applied to trees with strong trunks.

The former is broader in its semantic range embracing non-nutritive plants, e.g. different kinds of flowers, luxurious plants, and medicinal herbs extraordinarily diverse in types, forms, and colors, such that at times different colors are quite interestingly and delicately intertwined in one branch, stem, twig, or even one single flower or blossom which sing the song of Divine Glory and Unity.

The Verse further treats of the other stages of the plant:

***“afterward thereby produces crops of different colors and afterwards they wither and you see them turn yellow.”***

Harsh winds blow uprooting those whose roots are weak,

***“then He makes them dry and broken pieces.”***

It serves as a reminder for thinkers and intellectuals,

***“Indeed, in this is a Reminder from men of understanding.”***

It is a reminder referring to the well measured and astonishing system of the world of existence and Divine Lordship reflected in this astounding scene and also a reminder of the end of life and extinguishing the flames of life, Resurrection, and the raising of the dead.

Despite the fact that the Verse depicts the world of plants, but It warns mankind that the same happens in your lifespan, though whose duration may differ; however they share the same features: birth, youth and rigor, withering away and old age, and finally death.

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verse 22**

أَفَمَنْ شَرَحَ اللَّهُ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ فَهُوَ عَلَى نُورٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَوَيْلٌ لِلْقَاسِيَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مَنْ  
ذَكَرَ اللَّهَ أَوْلَيْكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

***22. Is he whose breast Allah has opened to [convert to] Islam, so that he is [alighted on] light from His Lord [like someone entangled with bias, obduracy, and vanity]? So woe to those whose hearts are hardened against remembrance of Allah! They are in plain error!***

The Islamic faith rests on arguments and one possessing extension of mind (sharh sadr) may draw a distinction between truth and falsity through Divine Light.

The blessed Verse in question is asking:

***“Is the one whose breast is opened to convert the Islamic faith by God and is mounted on Divine Light is on a par with the lightless hardhearted deprived of Divine Guidance?”***

The Verse further adds:

***“Woe to those whose hearts are so hardened and impenetrable that they may not be affected by remembrance of Allah.”***

Neither fruitful admonitions, nor good tidings, nor warnings, nor moving Qur’anic Verses, nor life giving rain of Divine Revelation may cause flowers of fearing God and piety grow in their hearts. In other words, they have neither freshness, nor leaves, nor flowers, nor shade!

Such people

***“are in plain error.”***

The word qasiya is taken from qaswa indicating coarseness, uncouthness, and impenetrability and the word qasi is applied to rough stones.

Likewise, the word is applied to hard hearts unaffected by Divine Light and Guidance.

The expression is employed as the opposite of “extension of mind” and openness of heart, since extension and openness alludes to preparation for acceptance. A desert or a spacious mansion may accommodate more people and likewise, an opened mind and broad breast may accept more realities.

According to a report narrated by Ibn Mas’ud, the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) was asked concerning the interpretation of the Verse,

***“In what manner man may attain to extension of mind?”***

the Noble Prophet replied:

***“When Light penetrates into human heart, it broadens in extent and returns.”***

He was again inquired regarding the tokens thereof, to which he replied:

***“The tokens include attentiveness toward the everlasting abode, separation from the abode of vanity, and preparation for welcoming death prior to its occurrence.”***<sup>24</sup>

According to the exegetic work by ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim,

***“Is he whose breast Allah has opened to [convert to] Islam, so that he is [alighted on] light from His Lord [like someone entangled with bias, obduracy, and vanity]?”***

is revealed for the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali (as).

As per some Qur’anic exegetic works,

***“So woe to those whose hearts are hardened against remembrance of Allah”***

is addressed to Abu Lahab and his offspring.<sup>25</sup>

It is worthy of note that Light in

***“[alighted on] light from His Light”***

is expressed such that it reminds one of a mount on which believers are alighted on it whose speed is extraordinary, whose path is bright, and whose rigor encompasses the world over.

## **Surah al-Zumar - Verse 23**

اللَّهُ نَزَّلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِي تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ  
رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ  
يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ

***23. Allah has sent down the Best Statement, a Book whose [Verses] resemble each other. The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver from [its recitation]. Then their skin and their heart soften to the remembrance of Allah [through faith and intimacy]. That is Divine Guidance. He Guides therewith whom He wills and whosoever Allah sends astray [because of his disobeying Him], for him there is no guide.***

The word:

***hadith***

is employed in the sense of “word, statement.”

In the blessed Verse in question, it makes a reference to the Holy Qur’an which is the Best Statement, since it embraces comprehensiveness, eloquence, and firmness.

The word:

***mutashabih*** (“***similar; polysemous; equivocal***”)

is per se polysemous, since some of the Verses are equivocal as opposed to the clear and unequivocal Ones.

According to a Verse in Chapter three,

***“They [constitute] the Mother of the Book and others [are] equivocal”;***

however, the word *mutashabih* in this Verse implies the similarity of Qur’anic Verses and it is employed as an adjective modifying all the Verses.

The word:

***mathani***

is the plural form of *mathniya* (“inclination, tendency”) indicating the proximity of Qur’anic Verses such that some of which interpret some others; in other words, the same meaning may be found in different forms.

It is noteworthy that the preceding Verses treated of God’s servants who listen to the words and select the best of them and also mention was made of open breasts and broadened minds prepared to embrace Divine Word.

In the same vein, the blessed Verse in question makes mention of the Holy Qur’an in order to complete the foregoing discussions concerning Divine Unity and Resurrection substantiated with arguments put forward for the veracity of prophethood.

The Verse opens with:

***“Allah has sent down the Best Statement, a Book whose [Verses] resemble each other.”***

It further proceeds with an enumeration of the merits of the Holy Qur’an among which three merits of this Glorious Divine Book is mentioned:

***“a Book whose [Verses] resemble each other.”***

The word *mutashabih ad hoc* refers to a statement whose constituent elements are consistent and harmonious, in which neither inconsistency nor discrepancy may be found, but one is better than the other.

Furthermore, another characteristic of this Book is that it is oft-repeated (*mathani*). The expression may allude to the reiteration of different topics mentioned in the stories and admonitions, but they are never boring, rather they are enthusing and invigorating.

It is one of the fundamental principles of eloquence that as required, a point may be reiterated in a novel and interesting manner for a more profound impression in the audience.

Besides, the reiteration of Qur'anic themes help to interpret each other and may thus provide answers to many a question. Some maintain that it makes a reference to the reiteration in reciting the Holy Qur'an and the fact that Qur'anic Verses never lose their freshness through repetition.

Some also make a reference to the Revelation of the Qur'an once at one single time on the Night of Decree (laylat al-qadr) and also at different times within a period of 23 years. It is also possible that the reiteration of the Qur'anic Truth at any time and a novel manifestation of the same out of occultation refer to the passage of time.

The first interpretation sounds more preferable; however the foregoing interpretations are not inconsistent, rather they complement each other.

Furthermore, the Verse proceeds toward an exposition of the last characteristics of the Holy Qur'an, namely its extraordinary and profound impression, saying:

***“The skins of those who fear their Lord shiver from [its recitation]. Then their skin and their heart soften to the remembrance of Allah [through faith and intimacy].”***

This is an elegant depiction of the unusual impression caused by Qur'anic Verses in welcoming hearts that causes fear and awe in the first place which leads to awakening and beginning of motion. Such fear makes man attend to his different obligations.

It is in the second place that he attains to flexibility and welcoming the Word of Truth leading to peace of mind.

The two fold state demonstrating different stages of:

***“treading the Path toward Allah”***

which is quite understandable.

The blessed Verses revealing Divine Wrath and warning the Noble Prophet (S) make the hearts shiver which are followed by the Verses designating Divine Mercy and thus leading to peace of mind. Reflection upon the Essence of Truth and the Pre-eternality and Infiniteness of His Pure Essence causes fear in his heart as to the manner through which He may be known, but pondering on the Signs of the Sacred Essence in the horizons and souls bestows peace of mind on him.<sup>26</sup>

The history of Islam abounds in instances of the extraordinary impression of the Holy Qur'an in the hearts of both believers and non-believers whose hearts were prepared to welcome It and such unusual impression bears witness to the Divine Revelation of this Holy Book.

According to a tradition narrated on the authority of Asma',

***“Upon the recitation of the Holy Qur’an, the Companions of the Prophet (S) wept and shuddered in awe.”***<sup>27</sup>

Regarding the pious, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali (as) makes an exposition of such truth in the best possible manner:

*“Those stand in prayer at night time, recite the Holy Qur’an in a meditative and clearly enunciated manner, immerse their souls in it in a pleasing sadness, seek the cure of their pain in it; whenever they come unto any encouraging Verse, they set their hopes on it and the eyes of their hearts gaze at it in astonishment and they set it as their example, and when they come unto One in which there are warning and inspiration of awe, they listen to them wholeheartedly, as if they the moans and the flames of the awe inspiring Hell fire echo in their hearts.”*

The blessed Verse closes thus:

***“That is Divine Guidance. He Guides therewith whom He wills and whosoever Allah sends astray [because of his disobeying Him], for him there is no guide.”***

It is true that the Holy Qur’an is revealed for the Guidance of all, but truth seekers and the pious may solely benefit from the Light of Its Guidance.

Those whose hearts are intentionally sealed and the shadows of bias and obduracy dominates their souls not only may not benefit from It, but also owing to their obduracy and enmity, they sink further in error.

Thus the Verse proceeds with:

***“He Guides therewith whom He wills and whosoever Allah sends astray [because of his disobeying Him], for him there is no guide.”***

Such error is owing to their own deeds springing from their will and it is in no way inconsistent with the human free will.

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verse 24**

أَفَمَنْ يَتَّقِي بِوَجْهِهِ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَقِيلَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ  
تَكْسِبُونَ

**24. Is he then who will confronts with his face the awful torment on the Day of Resurrection [through faith and righteous good deeds on a par with one who neglects Divine Wrath on the Day of Resurrection]? And [on that Day] it will be said to the wrong doers]: “Taste what you used to ear!”**

The fruit of fearing God Almighty is to turn his face away from Divine Wrath on the Day of Resurrection. The blessed Verse in question compares wrong doers and sinners with the believers whose state has been already mention so that such comparison shed more light on realities.

The Verse in question asks:

**“Is he who turns away with his face the excruciating Divine torment on a par with the one who is secure on that Day and Hell fire never touches him?”**

It is noteworthy that the Verse says:

**“confronts with his face the awful torment.”**

The word face is used in this expression since it is one of the most organs of the body and the significant human sources, i.e., vision, hearing, smell, and taste, are in it and human beings are basically recognized through their faces; that is why they try to shield their hands, arms, and other organs against it to save it from perils.

However, the wrong doing people of Hell have to defend themselves with their faces, as their hands and feet are in fetters and shackles as mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an<sup>28</sup>:

**“Indeed We have put on their necks iron collars [in which their hands are also laid] reaching to the chins, so that their heads are raised up.”**

Some have maintained that the expression indicates that they will be cast into Fire on their faces, so that their first organ touching the fire will be their faces, as it is mentioned in 27:90,

**“And whoever brings an evil deed, they will be cast down on their faces in the Fire.”**

It is also held that the expression solely implies their inability to save themselves from Hell fire. The three interpretations are not inconsistent and they may all be comprehended from the contextual content of the Verse.

The blessed Verse further adds:

**“And it will be said to wrong doers: ‘Taste what you used to earn!’”**

Angels responsible for inflicting torment inform them of the excruciating reality that the torment is the consequence of what you used to earn. Now they embrace and hurt you and the expression per se is

another mental torment for them.

It is worthy of note that the Verse does not say: “Taste the consequences of your deeds,” but it says:

**“Taste your deeds”**

which is another piece of evidence for

**“embodiment of deeds.”**

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verses 25 – 26**

كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

فَأَذَاقَهُمُ اللَّهُ الْخِزْيَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

**25. Those before them belied and so the torment came on them from directions they perceived not.**

**26. Therefore, Allah made them to taste the disgrace in the present life, but greater is the torment of the Hereafter if they only knew!**

The history of disbelievers and tyrants is a lesson for future generations. The foregoing discussions made a reference in passing to the excruciating torments of disbelievers on the Day of Resurrection; however, the blessed Verse in question treats of their torments in this world, lest they may imagine that they are secure in their mundane life.

In this vein, the blessed Verse says:

**“Those before them belied and so the torment came on them from directions they perceived not.”**

Expected blows are less excruciating than unexpected ones, e.g. those from the most intimate friends, the most beloved means of life, from the water which is the source of his life, from the gentle breeze which invigorating, and from the serene land which is his abode and place of rest and security. Such Divine torments are very excruciating.

The accounts of the peoples of Noah, ‘Ad, Thamud, Lot, Pharaoh, and Qarun (Korah) reveal that they were inflicted with quite unexpected torments.

Verse 26 indicates that their mundane torment was solely corporeal but they were inflicted with mental

chastisement as well,

***“Allah made them to taste the disgrace in the present life.”***

It is not an issue when someone is inflicted with a hardship but he manages to save himself honorably, rather the hardship lies in falling a victim to torments disgracefully,

***“but greater is the torment of the Hereafter if they only knew!”***

The word greater (akbar) designates the severity of the torment.

According to a Prophetic tradition narrated on the authority of ‘Abbas, the Noble Prophet’s (S) paternal uncle,

*“Upon shuddering with fear of God, a servant is absolved of his sins in the same manner that withered leaves fall from the trees.”*<sup>29</sup>

It is evident that one who is so affected out of fear of God that leads him to repentance shall be certainly forgiven by God Almighty.

As mentioned above, it is narrated from Asma’ that upon being asked of the Prophet’s (S) Companions, the answer provided is that as mentioned in the Holy Qur’an, upon hearing or reciting the Verses, tears ran from their eyes and their bodies shuddered with fear.

The transmitter asked Asma’ concerning those who faint upon hearing Qur’anic Verses and they fall into a state of ecstasy, to which the latter replies:

*“I seek refuge in God Almighty from Satan.”*<sup>30</sup>

The tradition is actually a decisive critique of Sufi pretenders who convene sessions in which Qur’anic Verses and certain prayers are being recited and bodily movements lead them to ecstasy as a consequence of which they shout and pretend to swoon and some of them may really faint; nonetheless, such states are not reported from the Noble Prophet’s (S) Companions but they are Sufi innovations.

It is worthy of note that at times, one may faint out of awe and fear of God, but it is quite different from Sufi activities in aforementioned prayer sessions.

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verses 27-28**

وَلَقَدْ ضَرَبْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

## قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوَجٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ

**27. And indeed We have put forth for [the Guidance of] man, in this Qur'an every kind of similitude in order that they may remember.**

**28. An Arabic [and eloquent] Qur'an, without any crookedness in order that they may fear God.**

Guiding and reminding men of their duties, through producing arguments or similitude, is of significance.

The Holy Qur'an includes:

**“every kind of similitude”**

for reminding him of his obligations and making him to avoid neglectfulness.

Ordinary people

**(“for man”)**

are more prone to be impressed by similitude rather than argument.

Proceeding with the aforementioned discussions, the blessed Verse in question mainly treats of the Holy Qur'an and Its characteristics.

Mention is made in the first place of the question of the comprehensiveness of the Holy Qur'an:

**“And indeed We have put for [the Guidance of] man, in this Qur'an every kind of similitude in order that they may remember.”**

The Divine Book includes the excruciating fates of the disobedient and tyrants in the past, the dire consequences of sinfulness, every admonition, secrets of creation and its systematicity, clear and precise Laws and Injunctions, and whatever is required for man's guidance in the form of similitude

**“in order that they may remember”**

and return to the Straight Path. It is worthy of note that the Arabic word mathal is applied to any word that embodies a truth, depicts something, or likens something to something else.

The expression includes all the facts and points included in the Holy Qur'an and specifies Its comprehensiveness.

Verse 28 provides another depiction of the Holy Qur'an saying:

**“An Arabic [and eloquent] Qur'an, without any crookedness.”**

Three characteristics are being enumerated herein. Firstly, the expression Qur'an—an makes a reference to the fact that Qur'anic Verses are being recited at all times in daily prayers and otherwise, in solitude and in assemblies, and throughout the history of Islam to the end of the world; such that It is an ever illuminating Light of Guidance.

The other point is the eloquence, elegance, and impressiveness of the Divine Word expressed by the word:

**“Arabic” (‘Arabiyy-yan),**

since the word is ad hoc employed in the sense of “eloquent.”

Some philologists and exegetes maintain that *‘iwaj* and *‘awaj* are applied to inward and outward crookedness respectively, an instance of which is to found elsewhere in the Qur'an<sup>31</sup>:

**“You will see in it [i.e., plain] nothing crooked or curved,”**

as a consequence of which a number of philologists consider the former interpretation to be general.<sup>32</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Revelation of the Holy Qur'an with so many characteristics is that man may fear God and be pious.

The other point worthy of note is that the penultimate Verse closes with:

**“in order that they may remember,”**

where as the last One ends in:

**“in order that they may fear God.”**

The reason is that Remembrance at all times is a prelude to fear of God; in other words, the latter is the fruit of the former.

## **Surah al-Zumar – Verse 29**

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلًا فِيهِ شُرَكَاءُ مُتَشَاكِسُونَ وَرَجُلًا سَلَمًا لِرَجُلٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ  
مَثَلًا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

**29. Allah puts forth a similitude [for Divine Unity and polytheism]: a [slave] man belonging to many partners disputing with one another [giving him contradictory orders], and a [slave] man belonging entirely to one master [taking his orders solely from him]. Are those two equal in**

***comparison? All the praises and laudations are to Allah! But most of people know not.***

Monotheists are preoccupied with the satisfaction of the One God, whereas polytheists are preoccupied at all times with the satisfaction of different gods.

It is not ill-advised to illustrate examples concerning God in religious discussions, since the blessed Verse in question uses a similitude to liken total submission to God to a slave's obedience to his master:

***("belonging entirely to one master")***.

The Verse is saying that all individuals and paths besides God lead to contradiction and inconsistency, since every man is to his taste and desire:

***("many partners disputing with one another")***.

Thus the Holy Qur'an illustrates the fates of polytheists and monotheists by employment of the similitude as per which a slave belongs to several masters each of whom order him to do something and the point is that the orders are contradictory.

Therefore, the slave is perplexed as to which order is supposed to be acted upon. To add insult to injury, each and every master asks the other to meet the slave's demands and the latter is perplexed, miserable, and destitute.

Au contraire, mention is made of a man obedient to one single person:

***("a man belonging entirely to one master")***

whose master and orders to be taken and carried out are specifically clear. He is neither in doubt, nor perplexity, nor contradiction; rather he takes his steps calmly and confidently, since he is under the guardianship of one single person who supports him anywhere and anytime.

***"Are those two equal in comparison?"***

Such are the states of polytheists and monotheists. The former are entangled with every contradiction and inconsistency.

Each and every day they set their hearts on an object of worship and turn toward different masters at all times. They lack in peace of mind, security, and a clear path to tread.

Au contraire, the latter set their hearts on God, select Him from the entire world, and seek refuge in His Boundless Mercy. They have turned away from all beings besides God and are totally obedient to Him. Their path is straight and evident and their fate is clear.

According to a tradition narrated from Imam 'Ali (as) he says

*“I am the man who was totally obedient to the Messenger of God (S) at all times.”*

It is narrated in another tradition:

*“The men who were actually obedient were ‘Ali (as) and his adherents.”*

The Verse closes with:

***“All the praises and laudations are to Allah!”***

God Almighty illustrates such examples to beacon the Path. He produces clear arguments to draw a distinction between Truth and falsehood. He calls every one to sincere devotion leading to security and peace of mind.

It is the most exalted Bounty that requires praise and laudation.

***“But most of people know not,”***

in other words, despite such clear arguments, some people are preoccupied with mundane possessions and unchecked vain desires such that they may not find their way to Truth.

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1. Majma' al-Bayan, the opening of the Chapter.
  2. Majma' al-Bayan; Thawab al-A'mal; Nur al-Thiqalayn.
  3. Ruh al-Ma'ani [Exegesis], vol. 23, p. 212, under the blessed Verses in question.
  4. Surah al-Hamd or Surah al-Fatiha
  5. 35:13
  6. 7:54
  7. 14:33
  8. Tafsir Burhan, under the blessed Verse in question.
  9. 3:198
  10. The 'Arafa Prayer, see Misbah al-Za'ir by Ibn Óawus.
  11. For further information, see the exegesis of 17:15.
  12. For further information, see the exegesis of 6:94.
  13. See Lisan al-'Arab; Raghib's Mufradat; the Exegetic work titled Ruh al-Ma'ani.
  14. Apud Nur al-Thiqalayn, vol. 4, p. 479.
  15. Kafi, vol. 1, Bab Sifat al-'Ilm wa Fadlihi (“The Chapter on the Characteristics of Knowledge and its Excellence”) Tradition 7.
  16. Ibid, Tradition 2.
  17. Majma' al-Bayan [Exegesis], under the Verses in question.
  18. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 496, the section on accounts of Kumayl.
  19. 4:97
  20. For further discussions concerning the significance of emigration in Islam and its different dimensions, see the Holy Qur'an 4:100; 8:72.
  21. 29:55
  22. Majma' al-Bayan, under the Verses in question.

23. 38:85
24. Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 8, p. 5691, exegesis of Chapter 39, under the Verses in question.
25. Tafsir Safi, under the blessed Verse in question.
26. The word taqsha'iru ("he has gooseflesh with fear") derives from qusha'rira ("having gooseflesh with fear, shudder"), see Raghīb's Mufradat; Lisan al-'Arab; Tafsir Kashshaf; Ruh al-Ma'ani; Tafsir Qurtubi.
27. Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 8, p. 5693.
28. 36:8
29. Majma' al-Bayan, under the blessed Verses in question. Abu al-Futuh Razi and Qurtubi have transmitted the Prophetic tradition with minor variations.
30. Ālusi, Ruh al-Ma'ani, vol. 23, p. 235.
31. 20: 107
32. Raghīb's Mufradat.

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