

KEYS TO THE GARDEN:

A SPIRITUAL COMMENTARY ON THE CHAPTER OF YASIN
SELECTION FROM BAHR AL MADID OF AHMAD IBN AJIBA

TRANSLATED BY ABDULLAH BIN HAMID ALI

E-BOOK



Renowned for its unique style, Ibn Ajiba's commentary of the Qur'an, *Al-Bahr al-Madid* (The Vast Ocean) combines traditional exegesis with spiritual contemplation, exploring the inner meanings of the sacred text. In this companion volume to our inaugural publications, Ibn Ajiba explores the outer and inner meanings of one of the most important and most commonly read chapters of the Qur'an, Sura Ya Sin. Read daily in homes and in mosques throughout the world, It is our hope that this amazing commentary propels readers towards the depths and transformative power of "The Heart of Qur'an" and truly serves as key towards paradisaal bliss.

About Author:

Ahmad ibn 'Ajiba (1747–1809) was an 18th-century Moroccan saint in the Darqawa Sufi Sunni Islamic lineage.

He was born of a sharif family in the Anjra tribe that ranges from Tangiers to Tetuan along the Mediterranean coast of Morocco. As a child he developed a love of knowledge, memorizing the Qur'an and studying subjects ranging from Classical Arabic grammar, religious ethics, poetry, Qur'anic recitation and tafsir. When he reached the age of eighteen he left home and undertook the study of exoteric knowledge in Qasr al-Kabir under the supervision of Sidi Muhammad al-Susi al-Samlali. It was here that he was introduced to studies in the sciences, art, philosophy, law and Qur'anic exegesis in depth. He went to Fes to study with Mohammed al-Tawudi ibn Suda, Bennani, and El-Warzazi, and joined the new Darqawiyya in 1208 AH (1793), of which he was the representative in the northern part of the Jbala region. He spent his entire life in and around Tetuan, and died of the plague in 1224 AH (1809). He is the author of around forty works and a *Fahrasa* which provides interesting information concerning the intellectual centre that Tetuan had become by the beginning of the 19th century. Among his descendants are the famous Ghumari brothers.

About the Translator:

Abdullah bin Hamid Ali is a resident scholar at Zaytuna College. He is the translator and annotator of the *Attributes of God* (Amal Press), a work by the great Hanbali polymath, 'Abd Al-Rahman b. al-Jawzi, and the translator of *A Return to Purity in Creed* (Lampost Productions), the last work of Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali's originally entitled *Ijma' al-'Awamm 'an 'Ilm al-Kalam* (Steering Commoners Away from the Study of Dialectical Theology). Ustadh Abdullah is the only Western graduate of the Shariah Faculty of the University of al-Qarawiyyin located in Fes, Morocco. He specializes in Islamic legal theory (*usul al-fiqh*), dialectical theology (*'ilm al-kalam/tawhid*), and Maliki jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*).

Surah Yasin

Surat Yasin is a Meccan revelation, although in another view all of it was revealed during the Meccan period except for Allah's saying, *And We have recorded what they have sent forth as well as their traces.*¹ This particular verse was revealed in connection with *Banu Salama* [a clan] that sought asylum with the Prophet.² The sura consists of 83 verses. As for the verse [42] from the previous sura (al-Fatir), *So when a warner came to them...*³ it connects with God's saying here [that], *You are undoubtedly among the messengers* by confirming in the former [sura] his role as a warner and here [in this sura his role] as a messenger, further reinforced by the [divine] oath ("By the Qur'an, Full of Wisdom"). It has been related that the Prophet said, "Yasin is called 'The Enveloper' (al-mu'imma), since it envelopes its proprietor with the good of the two abodes [of life]. It is [also called] 'The Repeller' (al-dafi'a) and 'The Fulfiller' (al-qadiya) that repels from a person every misfortune and fulfills for one every need."⁴ He says in another report, "Yasin belongs to whoever for whom it is read." And in another report he says, "No frightened person reads it without being given security; no hungry person without being satiated; no thirsty person without having his thirst quenched; no naked person without being clothed; no prisoner without being released; no unmarried person without finding marriage; no traveler without being assisted; and no loser of an item without recovering it." He also said, "Whenever one recites Yasin at death or has it read upon him, Allah sends down for every letter of it ten angels standing before him, praying over him, asking forgiveness for him, and witnessing his funeral."

Surat Yasin 36: Verses 1-4

With the Name of God, All-Merciful, All-Compassionate

Ya.Sin. By the Qur'an, Full of Wisdom. You are undoubtedly among the messengers, upon a straight path.

[Allah], The Ultimate Truth says, "Ya.Sin! O you magnificent, great and glorious master! [I swear] by the truth of the Wise and Perfected Qur'an. You are undoubtedly among the messengers." In one hadith it states, "Verily Allah I summoned me in the Qur'an by seven names: Muhammad, Ahmad, Taha, Yasin, al-Muzzammil, al-Muddaththir, and 'Abd Allah." In one view the expression, "Ya.Sin," is not valid as a personal designation [to Muhammad] due to the consensus of the seven reciters that it is to be recited with unvoiced endings (sakina), with the understanding that they are merely enunciated letters of the alphabet (mahkiya). So if those letters had been valid as names, they would have been subject to imperfect declension, like [the foreign names] Habil and Qabil (Abel and Cain). Similar is the case with [enunciated letter combinations in the Qur'an] 'Ta.Sin' and 'Ha.Mim' as in the words of the poet:

lamma samma biha al-surata fa-halla tala hamima (u) qabla al-takallumi

"Once He assigned it as a name to the *sura*, why was *HaMim* not recited prior to speaking?"

It then indicates that they are letters when they are recited. Yes! "YaSin" has been recited with a *damma* on its nun as well as *fatha* [grammatical inflection] outside of the seven [famous renditions]. Accordingly, the expression is viewed as a name for the sura. It is as if He said, "Recite: "YaSin"" with it ("YaSin") being the object of the verb ["Recite"]. It is likewise viewed as one of the Prophet's names. The rendition of

¹ Verse 12

² Tirmidhi reported it in *Tafsir, Bab: wa min surat Yasin*, 5/339. H 3226 as well as Hakim who declared it to be sound (sahih). And Dhahabi concurred with him (2/428), and Wahidi in *Asbab al-Nuzul* (pp. 378-379) reports it on the authority of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri. Tirmidhi said, "Hadith Hasan Gharib." And Hafiz Ibn Kathir in [his] *Tafsir* (3/566) commented on a hadith similar to it. Bazzar related it, but there is some solitariness (*gharaba*) in it.

³ From verse 42 from *Surat al-Fatir*

⁴ Bayhaqi reported it in *Shu'ab al-Iman* (2/481, H 2465) and declared it to be weak, from the hadith of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. He mentioned the like of it in great detail, and Qurtubi mentioned it in his exegesis (6/5602) and ascribed it to Tha'labi from the hadith of Sayyida 'Aisha.

damma [suffix] is construed as a summons. I [personally] say that apparently they (i.e., the two letters) are acronyms for the word “sayyid”: a form of abbreviation understood by lovers, one of another, expressed so as to conceal its meaning from outsiders.

He (Allah), then, swore an oath in confirmation of Muhammad’s messengership to refute those who rejected him saying, “By the Qur’an, Full of Wisdom”, i.e., “[by] that which possesses far-reaching wisdom” or “[by] that brought to perfection which no book can abrogate” or “[by] the possessor of wise words.” [In saying this], He applies the characteristic of the describer to the thing being described [and then says], “*Verily you are among those sent*. [Nay! You are] from the greatest and most splendid of them.” With this declaration, He refutes those disbelievers who say, *You are not a messenger*.⁵

[As for Allah’s saying] *Upon a path that is straight*, it means, “[Verily, you are among those sent] while being upon a straight path that conveys those who travel upon it into proximity with the Generous One (Allah).” It is, therefore, a condition (hal) from what is concealed in the prepositional phrase (jarr wa majrur). The benefit of it [being mentioned] is that the sacred law is expressly characterized as being straight even though [the phrase] *Verily you are among the messengers* necessitates the same understanding. Or [we can say that] it (the prepositional clause) is a second predicate of the emphatic particle “Verily” (inna). But, God, the Exalted, knows best.

Mystical Reflections:

Qushayri said,

“YaSin means: (Ya Sayyid!) “O Master!” He promoted him to the most noble of ranks even though he did not ascend to it through being made to hope and aspire for it. [This is] a normative practice of the Creator, Glory to Him, to deposit His secrets only with those to whom others presume to be undeserving of such distinction (taqasarat al-awham ‘an istihqaqihi). For that reason, the *idolaters* expressed wonderment at the notion of his entitlement [of it], and said: “How could He prefer the orphan of Abu Talib over all other men?” But the *Prophet* was a predetermined choice of God over all of his peers. And in this meaning, it was said,

*Hadha wa in asbaha fi atmar wa kana fi faqrin min al-yasar
Atharu ‘indi min akhi wa jari wa sahib al-dirham wa al-dinar
Wa sahib al-amri ma’a al-ikthar*

Even if he awakens in tattered garments—transformed from affluence to an impoverished state
This one has greater favor with me than my brother or neighbor—than one who possesses silver and gold,
or a governor with great wealth.⁶

⁵ From verse 43 of *Sura al-Ra’d*

⁶ The verses in their entirety can be found in an account mentioned by Ibn Kathir in *Al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya*: 8/89-90. The way the story goes is that Mu’awiya b. Abi Sufyan was having a meal when a young man from Banu ‘Udhra entered into his presence and recited a poem whose import related to his longing for his wife, Su’ad. He said, “O Commander of the Faithful! I was married to one of my paternal cousins, and I had some camels and sheep which I spent on her. Once my wealth started to run low, her father developed a dislike for me and reported me to his governor in Kufa, Ibn Umm al-Hakam, Once he became acquainted with her beauty, he detained me and demanded that I divorce her. When her waiting period expired, his governor gave him ten thousand dirhams, and in return he gave her to him in marriage. Is there any relief for me?

Upon hearing this, Mu’awiya wrote to Ibn Umm al-Hakam scolding him, and ordered him to divorce her. So, he divorced her and sent her to Mu’awiya. Mu’awiya, then, offered her the option of remaining with her husband or with Ibn Umm al-Hakam, and she chose her first husband, and then recited the following verses:

Even though this one woke up in tattered garments—finding a reduction in affluence
He is greater to me than my father and my neighbor—or the possessor of silver and gold
I fear the heat of the Fire if I betray—So let me be! There is no reason for shame.
Maybe we will return home—And just maybe we will find what we lack.

Al-Waratajbi said,

“The *Ya* alludes to the Day of the Covenant (yawm al-mithaq), and the *Sin* alludes to the secret (sirr) shared between Him and His beloved. He said: “[I swear] by the truth of the Covenant Day, by the secret between Me and My beloved ones, and by the Qur’an Full of Wisdom, you are undoubtedly among the messengers, O Muhammad!”

It has also been said: “Verily the heart of the Qur’an is *YaSin*. The heart of it is [the verse] *Peace! A saying from a Forgiving Lord*.⁷ And I say that the latter [verse] is an allusion to the secrecy of proximity [with God] to which the Qur’an invites and around which it revolves. Its substance is that of God personally greeting His servants to live with Him and to take solace in His conversation and secrecy. Likewise, it has been said that [this verse sums up the meaning of *YaSin*] because it contains a settlement of theological doctrines (usul al-din). The author of *Al-Hashiya Al-Fasiya* stated it.

He then explained [what is meant by] “the Qur’an” by which He swore saying,

[Surat YaSin 36: 5-11]

A revelation from the Almighty Merciful; in order that you warn a people whose forefathers had not been warned. They are therefore unmindful; The decree has already been settled against most of them, so they will not believe; Verily We have placed iron collars at their necks, and they reach to their chins, so their heads are raised in aversion. And We placed a barrier before them and a barrier behind them, enveloping them completely such that they cannot see. And equal it is that you warn them or not warn them, they will not believe. Rather, you are to warn only those who follow the reminder and fear the Compassionate One in the unseen. So give tidings to such of forgiveness and a generous reward.

I say the expression “A revelation” (tanzil) is a completing clause (khabar). In other words, [it is as if He said] “It is a revelation.” For those who consider the word to be an object of a verb, though, it is as if He said, “He revealed a revelation” or “Read a revelation.” Some also read it as the object of a preposition as a substitute for “The Qur’an.”

As for [the expression] “have not been warned”, it is a description for [the phrase] “a people.” As for the particle [“ma”] translated as “have not”, it is a negation according the overwhelming majority of exegetes, or it is a relative pronoun understood as a second object of the verb phrase “in order that you warn.” That is, [in order that you warn of] the punishment of which their fathers warned. Or, it (“ma undhira”) is an infinitive clause (masdariya). That is to say: “in order that you warn a people a type of warning similar to the way warning was given to them by their fathers.” [Allah] The Ultimate Truth says: “This” or “It is a revelation⁸ of the Almighty” i.e. the Overwhelming who subdues with the eloquence of the composition of His Book the miscalculations of the stubborn; The Merciful who attracts with the subtlety of the meaning of His address the minds of those possessing [spiritual] maturity. We revealed it in order that you warn by it a people; or We sent you in order that you warn an unmindful people whose fathers had not been warned.” This is similar to His saying: *In order that you warn a people to whom no warner had come*

Also refer to *Tazyin al-Aswaq* 1/249; *Nihaya al-Arab* 2/159; and *Lata'if al-Isharat* 1/42-42.

⁷ The first sentence can be found in a hadith reported by Tirmidhi in *Fada'il al-Quran*, Chapter of Reports Concerning the Virtue of *YaSin*, 5/156, Hadith 2887. It is also reported by Darimi in *Fada'il al-Qur'an*, Chapter of the Virtue of *YaSin*, 2/548, Hadith #3416; Ahmad also reports it in *Musnad* 5/26 on the authority of Anas with the wording: “Verily every thing has a heart, and the heart of the Qur’an is *YaSin*...” Tirmidhi said, “This is a hadith of singular transmission (gharib). And Harun Abu Muhammad is an unknown transmitter (shaykh).”

⁸ Ibn ‘Amir, Hafṣ, Hamza, and Kisa’i read the word (“revelation”) as the object of a verb. Hasan reads it as the subject of an oath (qasam), and the others read it as a completion clause (khabar) to an undeclared introductory clause (mubtada’ muqaddar). The exegete (Ibn ‘Ajiba), though, reads it as a completion clause (khabar). Refer to *Al-Ithaf* 2/397 for more detail.

before you.⁹ It is also like His saying: *And We sent to them before you not a warner.*¹⁰ Or it is like, *In order that you inspire fear of the punishment of which their fathers had been warned* in light of His saying *We have warned you of a impending punishment.*¹¹ Or (it means) “in order that you warn a people in the way their fathers were warned.” But this [last view] is a weak [opinion], because no warning ever came to them. They are therefore unmindful. If the particle [“ma”] translated as “have not” (in “have not been warned”) is construed as a negation [as we have done], it would mean “they were not warned.” Otherwise, it is connected with His statement, *You are undoubtedly among the messengers; in order that you warn a people.* This is similar to when one says, “I sent you to fulan to warn him, because he is unmindful.”

[As for His saying] *The decree has already been proven against most of them, so they will not believe*, it means: “I will assuredly fill Hell with sprites (Jinn) and men altogether.”¹² That is to say that this statement pertains to them, is established against them, and is not avertable, because He knew that they would die upon disbelief. Ibn ‘Arafa said,

“Warning them while informing them that they will not believe is not equivalent to burdening one with something beyond his capacity to perform, neither rationally nor empirically. What is beyond one’s capacity as imposed by scripture is not, however, a fallacious notion while considering the affair in its appearance. Otherwise, there is no way to avoid concluding that all burdens are beyond one’s capacity to bear. But there is no benefit in such a notion, since legal responsible beings divide into two types: [The first is] he who God I knows will not believe. For such, there is no use in ordering him to have faith, since he lacks the capacity to do so. [The second is] he who *God* knows will believe. For such, there is also no use in warning and commanding him to have faith, since he lacks the capacity to be without it.”

I say that the [divine] wisdom demands burdening such people in order that proof will be established for or against them. The [divine] power, on the other hand, demands that they be pardoned. But the greater consideration in this Abode—i.e. the Abode of legal responsibility—is given to dictates of the [divine] wisdom, not the divine power.

After this, *Allah* depicts their resolve to persist upon disbelief and their inability to choose any other path by portraying them as people who wear iron collars, stiff-necked with their eyes gazing down: a parable indicative of the fact that they neither heed to the truth nor extend their necks in its direction. He, likewise, portrays them as people trapped between two barriers unable to see neither what is in front of them nor what is behind them. This is all summed up in His statement, *Verily We have placed iron collars around their necks which reach to their chins.* It means that the iron collars reach their chins, crammed against them. [As for His saying] *So their heads are raised in aversion*, it is to say that their heads are raised upward. It is said [in the language]: *Qamaha al-ba’ir fa huwa qamih* (The camel raised its head, so it has its head raised) whenever it drinks [from a pond] and then raises its head. This is all because the circle of the iron collar around the neck of its prisoner, at the point where its edges meet, is located under the chin like a ring. So it [does not allow for one]¹³ to lower his head. Consequently, one remains with his head raised. And a *ghill* (iron collar) is something that encircles the entire neck with the aim of teaching a lesson and for torment. The *adhqan/dhuqn* (chins or the chin) (*adhqan/dhuqn*) are points where the cheeks join together. It has also been said that they (*adhqan*) mean “hands.” That is because the iron collar is always attached to both the neck and hands. For this reason, it is stated in the personal Qur’an of Ubayy, *Verily We have placed iron collars on their right hands.* And in other personal copies [it reads], “...on their hands. And they are to their chins. So their heads remain raised in aversion.”

⁹ al-Sajda: 3

¹⁰ al-Saba’: 44

¹¹ al-Naba’: 40

¹² al-Sajda: 13

¹³ What is between brackets [is a translation of the verbal sentence ‘la tukhallihi’], and it is non-existent in the original manuscript. It can also not be found in any of the manuscripts relied upon in this authenticated publication.

[As for Allah's saying] *And We placed a barrier before them and a barrier behind them*, the Arabic word for "barrier" used in this verse is "sadd" or "sudd." It has been said that "sadd" is used when the barrier is made by people, and "sudd" is used when it is one of Allah's other creations such as a mountain. What this means then is that it is as if the verse says, *We have made barriers and obstructions that encompass them on all sides*. They are, therefore, detained in the world of ignorance, prevented from reflection upon the signs and indications.

[As for His saying], *So We have covered them*, it means "We have covered their eyes." In other words, "We covered them and placed a cover over them. So they do not see the truth or right direction." It is said that this was revealed with respect to Banu Makhzum among whom was Abu Jahl, who said that if he saw Muhammad P performing prayer he would smash his head. The former, with stone in hand, once came upon the Prophet while the latter was praying, but once he raised his hand it folded back toward his own neck remaining glued to his hand to the extent that they had to exert much effort to dislodge it. He then returned to his people to inform them, and one member of the clan said, "I will kill him with this stone!" But once he set out on his way, Allah obstructed his vision to the extent that he could not see the Prophet but could hear [only] his voice. He then returned to his peers, who he also could not see until they called out to him.¹⁴ It has also been said that [this verse] is mention of their [future] condition in the Hereafter and at the moment they enter Hell. In that case, it is to be construed literally. So, the iron collars will be around their necks, and the Fire will encompass them. However, the first view is weightier and more appropriate due to His saying, *And equal it is if you warn them or not warn them, they will not believe*. In other words, warning or not warning with respect to them is the same, since there are none who can guide those that Allah has misled.

It was related that 'Umar b. 'Abd Al-'Aziz recited this verse with reference to Ghaylan, the denier of destiny, and Ghaylan replied, "It is as if I never read it before. I call you to witness that I repent from my denial of destiny." 'Umar then said, "O Allah! If he is truthful, relent to him. And if he speaks falsely, overwhelm him with one who shows him no mercy." The following morning, Hisham b. 'Abd Al-Malik seized him, cut off his hands and feet, and crucified him at the gate of Damascus.¹⁵

Then, Allah mentions those who benefit from the warning by saying, *You are warning merely those who follow the Reminder*. That is, only those who follow the Qur'an, fear Allah in the unseen, and fear the chastisement of God before it is intended, benefit from the warning. Or you can say, He equated the existence of the warning with respect to those who do not benefit from it with something nonexistent. So whoever does not believe, it is as if he has not been warned. Rather, the warning is for those who benefit from it. *So give glad tidings to such people of forgiveness (which is pardon of one's sins) and a generous reward (i.e. paradise and all therein)*.

Mystical Reflections:

Anyone who undertakes the task to lecture people and warn them after an intermission between [lives of] saintly figures, it is said to him, "[We send you] in order that you warn a people whose fathers had not been warned. They are therefore unmindful." It is also said to him with regard to those who have previously been distanced from the path of right direction, "The verdict has already been passed against most of them. So they will not believe. We have placed iron collars around their necks that prevent them from lowering their heads to the saints of their time. And We have placed a barrier before them: inhibitors that prevent them from awakening to God, and a barrier behind them: obstructions that repel them from the presence of God. So We have covered them: concealing their third eyes, such that they do not see the special nature of anyone who guides to Allah. So they cannot see an inviter, and cannot respond to the call of one who summons. So the warning and its absence is of equal consequence. And the [effort of providing] treatment of their ailment is a source of fatigue."

Al-Wartajibi said,

¹⁴ Tabari reported an abridged version of the incident (22/152) on the authority of 'Ikrima, and Hafiz Ibn Hajar ascribed it to Ibn Ishaq's *Sira* and Abu Nu'aym's *Dala'il* in *Al-Kafi al-Shafi* (139) on the authority of 'Ikrima from Ibn 'Abbas

¹⁵ Have a look at the *Tafsir* of al-Nasafi (3/97)

“The barrier placed behind them is a barrier of subdual that has existed from pre-eternity (azal). And the barrier placed before them is the wretchedness of infinity looking forward. So *Allah* prevented them by Himself from Himself. There is no doubt then that they are in the cover of hard heartedness. They will never enjoy the blessing of sight.”

Only those whose hearts soften to the mention of God and whose souls long for the meeting with God benefit from the reminder of those inviting to God. So give him glad tidings of forgiveness of his sins, concealment of his flaws, and a generous reward, which is the [opportunity to] gaze upon the countenance of the Magnificent Lord.

Then, *Allah* rebuffs those who denied the Resurrection among those whose wretchedness had been preordained by saying [in 36: 12], *Verily, We revive the dead and record what they have sent forth and their traces. And everything We have captured in a plain record.*

Allah, the Ultimate Truth, the Majestic, says, *Verily We revive the dead.* That is to say: “*We* resurrect them after they die,” or “*We* bring them out of idolatry into faith.” The master of our spiritual guides (shuyukh), Sidi ‘Abd Al-Rahman al-Fasi said,

“Once He ordered [Muhammad P] to offer glad tidings of forgiveness and the generous reward to those who benefit from the warning, He gave knowledge of the ruling of those who have not believed nor benefited from the warning; stating that He will resurrect them. And their judgment is to Him; just as He said elsewhere, *Only those who hear respond. And the dead will be resurrected by Allah.*”¹⁶

[The statement] *And We record what they have sent forth* is what they have done previously of righteous and other deeds. *Their traces* are the good remnants they left behind, such as knowledge they imparted, a book they composed, an endowment they founded, a citadel or mosque they erected; or it is a reference to their bad remnants, such as a heresy they introduced into Islam and the like, as in God’s saying, *Man will be informed on that day what he sent forth and left behind.*¹⁷ That is, “what he sent forth of work” and “what he left behind of his remnants.” In one hadith it states, “Whoever initiates in Islam a good practice that others adopt will get the reward of it and the like of the reward of those who adopt it until doomsday without anything being subtracted from their rewards. And whoever initiates in Islam a bad practice will bear its burden and the burden of those who adopt it without any part of their own burdens being lessened.”¹⁸ Another hadith reads, “There are seven things continuously reward a person after his death: one who plants a seedling; excavates a well, sets loose a river, imparts knowledge, builds a mosque, hands down a Qur’an or a pious child.” Refer to Mundhiri’s [collection for more details].¹⁹

All of this is included in the meaning of Allah’s saying, Be He Exalted, *And their traces.* It has been said that *their traces* refers to the steps they take to the mosque for the Friday congregation and other prayers.

And everything, We have captured means “We have retained” or “We have counted and elucidated.” [As for] *In a plain record*, it refers to the Guarded Slate, since it is the master depository of all records. Some, however, say it refers to the conduct-report books (suhuf al-a’mal). [In any case] the intent is to frighten people into keeping count of the good and bad they have done to provide a disincentive for disobedience to *Allah* and motivation to obey *Him*.

¹⁶ al-An’am: 36

¹⁷ al-Qiyama: 13

¹⁸ Muslim reported it in *Zakat*, Chapter of the Encouragement of Charity Even if With Half a Date, 2/704-705, Hadith #1017 from the hadith of Jarir.

¹⁹ Bazzar reported a similar version in *Kashf al-Astar* (149); as did Bayhaqi in *Shu’ab* (Hadith #3449) from the hadith of Anas b. Malik. Ibn Majah also reported it with a similar wording in his *Muqaddima* (hadith 242) from the hadith of Abu Hurayra.

Mystical Reflections:

[It is as if Allah said] “Verily, We revive hearts that are dead with heedlessness and ignorance. We then enliven them with knowledge and gnosis, and record exoteric knowledge, secrets, and experiential knowledge they have sent forth as well as their traces. That is, [We record the divine] lights acquired from them that are transferred to others. Qushayri said,

“We revive hearts that were dead with hardness with the various forms of responsiveness and means of approximation, and We record what they have presented. And their *traces* are the footsteps they took to the mosques, the time they spent in communion with Us, their tears that overflowed upon the courtyards of their perimeters, and the puff of each breath.”

Then, *Allah* struck a similitude for the rejection of Quraysh. Included therein is a consolation for the Prophet . He said [in 36: 13-19],

And strike for them a similitude that of the companions of the town when the messengers came to them; When We sent to them two [messengers], and they belied them, so We consolidated [their strength] with a third, and they [the messengers] said: “Verily, unto you have we been sent.” They said: “You are nothing more than mortals like us, and the All-Merciful has not revealed anything. You are all just liars.” They responded: “Our Lord knows that we have indeed been sent unto you. And we have no greater obligation than to offer a clear proclamation.” They said: “Indeed we see a bad omen in you. If you desist not, we will assuredly stone you and a grievous penalty shall touch you from us.” They responded: “Rather, your omen is your own. Have you not been reminded? Rather, you are a people of excess.”

I say: [the word translated as] “Strike” at times means “Make” which transmits to two objects. [The word for] “similitude” is the first object and “companions” is the second object. [“Strike”] also means “a likeness” as in the saying, “I have such of this strike”, i.e., of this likeness. And “companions” is a [linguistic] substitute (badl) for “similitude”, and “when” is a substitute for “companions.” And *Have you not been reminded?* is an introductory clause of condition (shart) whose completion clause (jawab) has been omitted. The One True God, splendid is His majesty, says, *Strike for them*, i.e., for Quraysh *a similitude of the companions of the town*, i.e., strike for them the similitude of the companions of the town of Antioch, i.e., mention to them an amazing story: the story of the companions of the town. *When there came to it*, i.e., when the messengers came: the messengers of Jesus v^{20} . He sent them as inviters to the truth to the people of Antioch. And they were idolaters. *When We sent* is a substitute for the first *when*, i.e., when We dispatched to them two [messengers]. Jesus v [was the one who] dispatched them, and they are John and Paul; or Sadiq and Saduq; or two others. So once they approached the city they saw an old man tending to some of his small livestock. And he was Habib, the carpenter. He inquired about their business, and they replied: “We are the messengers of Jesus. We invite you from worship of idols to the worship of the All-Merciful God.” He said to them, “Do you have a sign?” They said: “We cure the sick, and we restore health to those born blind and those suffering from vitiligo.” And he had a son who had been ill for years. Upon touching him, he recovered, so Habib became a believer. The news spread and a multitude of people were cured by their hands. So the king summoned them and said, “Do we have a god other than our gods?” They responded: “Yes! The one who created you and your [so-called] gods!” He said to them: “Stay here until I look into this affair of yours.” So he imprisoned them. Then Jesus v dispatched Sham’un who entered [the town] unnoticed and befriended the king’s entourage until they gave consideration to him to the point of raising news of him to the king, who also gave consideration to him. One day he said to the king: “It has reached me that you have imprisoned two men. Have you heard what they have to say?” The king responded: “No I have not.” He then summoned them, and Sham’un said: “Who sent you?” They said:

²⁰ This is the statement of Qatada that Tabari reports (22/155), while apparently “We sent” refers to them being prophets that Allah sent. And what indicates this is the response of those they were sent to, *You are nothing more than mortals like us*. And such a dialogue only happens between people and those who Allah has sent. So if those [who were sent] were in fact among the disciples [of Jesus] they would have utilized an expression that suitably indicates that they have come from Jesus v . Refer to *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (3/569) and *Al-Bahr Al-Muhit* (7/313).

“God, the one who created everything, has provided sustenance to every living creature, and has no associate.” He said to them: “Describe him in brief.” They said: “He does what He wills and judges what He pleases.” He said: “What is your sign?” They said: “Whatever the king wishes.” He then summoned a young boy who was born blind. So the two of them supplicated to God to give sight to the young boy. Sham’un said to the king: “Do you think if you asked your god to do the like of this that he could do it; giving both you and him nobility?” The king responded: “I am keeping no secret from you. Undoubtedly, our god neither sees nor hears; and He neither harms nor gives benefit.” He then said: “If your god is able to revive a dead person, we will believe.” So they asked that a boy who had been dead for seven days prior be brought before them, and his life was restored.” The boy then said: “Verily, I entered seven valleys of Hell because of dying upon faith in idols. And I warn you against what you are upon.” They then believed. The boy then said: “I also opened the gates of Heaven and saw a vibrant man (shabb) with a handsome face interceding for these three [men].” The king then said: “Who are they?” The boy said: “Sham’un and these two.” So the king was bewildered. And once Sham’un observed that the boy’s words had affected the king, he advised him and the king believed, and a group of his people believed. As for those who did not believe, Gabriel shouted at them, and they all perished²¹ in the manner that will be said in His saying, *It is nothing more than a single shout and they were then motionless.*

And this is the meaning of His statement here, *So they belied them*, i.e., the companions of the town belied the messengers, so we consolidated [their numbers]: i.e., strengthened [them]. Shu’ba’s rendering of the word [“consolidated”] in the verse is understood as “So We overwhelmed and subdued them with a third” who was Sham’un. And He abandoned mention of the object of the act [of “consolidation” or “subdual”] because the aim is to make mention of the one by which consolidation of strength was established, i.e., Sham’un as well as the plan with which he was graced in order to strengthen the truth and debase what was false. And since the address is bent toward a particular purpose, He applied its context to it as any other purpose is rejected. They said, i.e., the three [messengers] to the people of the town: “Verily, we are unto you messengers from Jesus who is from Allah.” It has also been said that they were prophets from Allah Y that He sent to a town. And the statement made by the disbelievers supports this view: *You are only mortals like us*. That is because such a statement is said only to one who claims to be sent from Allah (risala). That is [precisely what is meant by] the statement that: *You are only mortals like us. And you have no distinction over us, and the All-Merciful God has not sent down anything*, i.e., “revelation “ (wahy). “You are nothing more than liars in what you claim about being messengers from Allah.” *They said: Our Lord knows that we are unto you undoubtedly messengers*. He emphasized the second [declaration] instead of the first because the first was a mere notification. The second [declaration] was a response to rejection. It, therefore, requires an additional emphasis. And *Our Lord knows* is construed as if it is an oath sworn when emphasis is being made. Similar are statements like, “God is witness” and “God knows.” [As for] *And it is merely our duty to offer a clear proclamation*, it means a plain delivery revealed by plain signs that corroborate its veracity.

They said: “We see an evil omen from you, i.e., “We are pessimistic of you.” And that was because they abhorred their religion and were averse to it. And the custom of the ignorant is to wish for everything for which they have a penchant and their natures accept, and to be pessimistic about anything they are averse to and abhor. So if a tribulation befalls them, they say, “This is a bad omen.” And if a blessing occurs to them they say, “This is a good omen.” It was said also that they were denied rain, and then they said that. It was said also that they were stricken with leprosy. It was said as well that their words differed with one another, and then they said to them: “If you desist not from this declaration of yours, we will assuredly pelt you to death with stones; or we will assuredly banish you; or we will assuredly revile you, and a grievous penalty shall reach you from us and the punishment of fire will afflict you from us.” And it is the most severe form of punishment.” The messengers responded: “The cause of your pessimism is with you. It is your disbelief. Have you not been reminded?”, i.e., [have you not been] admonished and invited to submission (Islam)? “You see an evil omen, and you say what you say. Nay! You are a people committing excess transgressing bounds in disobedience. And because of that, you have been overcome by pessimism; not because of the messengers.” Or “Nay! You are a people committing excess in your misguidance and misdirection, whereas you are pessimistic about God’s messengers ᵁ those from whom blessing is to be taken.”

The Mystical Reflection:

²¹ Have a look at *Tafsir al-Baghawi* (7/11-12).

Whenever Allah sends a godly impulse (warid) upon the heart of a saint first, and then he falls into doubt about it and repels it, and He sends it again to which he repels also, and then consolidates it with a third, its veracity must be affirmed and one must act in accord with its instruction. Otherwise, a person will fall into distress and ill comportment because when the heart has been purified from impurities only the Truth manifests itself therein. Otherwise, it must be considered suspect until its face is revealed. And the remainder of the verse contains a consolation for those saints and pious folk who are met with rejection. And by Allah comes success.

[Surat YaSin 36: 20-27]

And there came from the outskirts of the city a man running and saying: "O People! Follow the messengers! Follow those who ask you not a wage and who are guided aright. And what is with me that I would not worship the one who cleaved my very being and unto Him you shall return? Shall I take besides Him gods such that if the All-Merciful One wills harm for me their intercession would avail me naught nor could they rescue me. I would then undoubtedly be in manifest error. I certainly believe in your Lord. So hear me!" It was said (unto him): "Enter Paradise." He said: "O I wish my people could know just how my Lord has forgiven me and made me among the honored ones."

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says, *And there came from the outskirts of the city a man running.* He was Habib, the carpenter.²² And he was in a cave in the mountain worshipping Allah. And once the news of the messengers had reached him, he came to them and openly professed his faith. Qushayri said:

"In the story, he came from a town (qarya), then He called it a city (madina). He said, *from its outskirts* even though there was not much of a disparity between the two. Thus, has He set loose His custom in making what is few into many from the act of His servant when He is satisfied with him and unites the many out of His bounty whenever He offers and grants it."

And when he arrived, he asked them, "Do you request a wage in return for what you say?" They said: "No." He said: "O my people! Follow the messengers! Follow those who ask not a wage for the proclamation of the message and who are guided aright upon the main path of guidance, advice, and the proclamation of the message." They said: "And you follow the religion of these folk?" He said: "And what is with me that I not to worship the One who cleaved my being?", i.e., "created me and unto to Him you all return." In this phrase there is a transfer from the first person to the second person. The outward meaning demands that he say, "And to Him shall I return." The reality is that the intent is, "What is with you that you worship not?" However, once he referred to them indirectly through the first person, he bestowed direction most kindly by insinuating that as advice to himself and as sincere advice, whereas he wanted for them the same that he wanted for himself. He proceeded in this fashion when saying, *And to Him you shall all return.* The intent is to chide them because of their abandonment of the worship of their creator for the worship of other than Him.

Then he said, *Shall I take besides Him gods?* i.e. idols. *Such that if the All-Merciful One wills harm for me.* This phrase is an introductory clause of condition. Its completion clause is, "their intercession for me will avail me naught nor will they rescue me from something unpleasant by giving support and victory." *Indeed I would then...* ,i.e., if I was to take a god other than Him *be in manifest error* such that no rational person would miss. *Verily, I believe in your Lord. So hear me!*, i.e., hear my faith so that you will bear witness to it on the Resurrection Day. Then his people killed him.²³ And once he died, it was said to him, *Enter Paradise!* And he was buried in Antioch, and his tomb is there.

²² Tabari reports it (22/159). Suyuti ascribes it in his *Al-Durr* (5/491) to 'Abd Ibn Hamid. And 'Abd Al-Razzaq, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Mundhir, and Ibn Abi Hatim all relate it on the authority of Qatada.

²³ Ibn Kathir ascribed it in his *Tafsir* (4/568) to Ibn Ishaq concerning what had reached him from Ibn 'Abbas, Ka'b, and Wahb.

And Allah did not say, “It was said to him” because the words are conveyed for the clarification of the statement, not for clarifying he to whom it was said due to him being identified. This also indicates that Paradise is created [and exists] now. Al-Hasan said, “When the people wanted to kill him, God raised him up. So he is in Paradise.”²⁴ And he will not die until the heavens and earth expire. Then once he entered Paradise seeing its bliss and what God had prepared for the people of faith, he said, *O I wish my people could know by what my Lord has forgiven me* i.e. the reason for which my Lord has forgiven me, *and made me among those honored* with Paradise. And it is the belief in Allah and His messengers; or [belief] in the forgiveness of my Lord and his good treatment. So “what” [in “with what”] is a relative pronoun [meaning “that which”] whose referent is omitted due to its subordination to the same grammatical case as the relative pronoun; or [it is] an infinitive construct (masdariya) [i.e. “my Lord’s forgiveness”]. It has also been suggested that “what” is an interrogative article, but it is rejected because the ‘alif’ [that attaches to ‘ma’ meaning “what”] is not omitted [from the Qur’anic script]. Kawashi said,

“He wished to inform his people that Allah had forgiven him to encourage his people to follow the messengers, in order that they accept Islam. So he advised his people during life and after death. Thus should every inviter to Allah I be striving and advising the servants of God: that he not resent them if they offend him; that he suppress every cause of rage that reaches him because of them. It has been related that the Messenger of Allah [said]: “The forerunners (subbaq) among the nations are three: ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, the companion of *YaSin*, and the believer of the family of Pharaoh.”²⁵

Qushayri said:

“Habib had indeed conveyed the admonition and was sincere in counsel. However, it is as they said and sung:

*wa kam suqta fi atharihim min nasihatini wa qad yastafidu al-bulghata al-mutanassihu*²⁶

“And so much counsel have you conveyed in their traces—And often it happens that the adviser acquires what is needed.”

So because he remained sincere in his state and endured what he met from his people and returned to his Lord, He received him with His attractive reception and granted him refuge in the shelter of His graciousness, and he found what He had promised him of the kindness of His giving. So he wished to inform his people of his state, and his wish came true in them being given knowledge of his state. And the dialogue that occurred in his regard was revealed, and his people were informed.”

Mystical Reflections:

The most beloved of creatures to Allah are the most beneficial of them to one’s dependents and those that offer them the best advice. One particular hadith reads, “For Allah to guide one person by you is better for you than the choicest livestock.”²⁷ Therefore, one who desires to achieve the love, the favored position, and approximation to the Beloved One should bear the adversities encountered in directing the servants of God, and embark upon journeys in that [aim] in order to achieve great prestige with Him and significant closeness. May God realize that for us by His gracious bestowal and generosity.

²⁴ Baghawi mentioned it in his *Tafsir* (7/15).

²⁵ Suyuti ascribed it in *Al-Durr Al-Manthur* (5/492) with similar wording to Tabarani and Ibn Mardawayh with a weak chain of narration on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas.

²⁶ The verse was composed by Al-‘Abbas b. al-Faraj al-Rayyashi. Refer to *Al-Kamil* of Al-Mubarrid (2/392).

²⁷ This is a portion of a noble hadith reported by Bukhari in *Fada’il al-Sahaba*, Chapter concerning the virtues of our master, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib, hadith # 3701, Muslim reports it in *Fada’il al-Sahaba*, Chapter concerning the virtues of our master, ‘Ali b. Abi Talib 4/1872, hadith #2406 from the hadith of Sahl b. Sa’d.

Then, *Allah* mentions the destruction of his people, saying [in 36: 28-29],

And what We sent down upon his people after him of a squadron from the sky and what We do send down; it was merely a single shout after which they are brought motionless.

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says, *And what We sent down upon his people after him*, i.e., after his murder or [after] raising him up, *of a squadron from the sky* in order to destroy them, *and what We do send down* and what is fitting in Our judgment concerning the destruction of his people that We send down upon them a squadron from the sky in the same way that He did with you on the day of Badr and Khandaq due to your favored position with Us.” And in that [statement] is a belittlement of their destruction and a magnification of the stature of the Messenger v. The author of *Al-Kashshaf* said,

“If you were to say: “Why did He send down forces from Heaven on the day of Badr and Khandaq even though a single angel would have sufficed? The cities of the people of Lot were destroyed by one feather from Gabriel’s wing. The towns of Thamud and the people of Salih [were destroyed] by a single shout? I would say: it is because Allah gave favor to Muhammad P with everything over the most distinguished of prophets and those possessing firm resolve: in addition to Habib, the carpenter.” (Paraphrasing the author): If the penalty had been a single shout, Gabriel v would have shouted at them and they would have lied motionless, lifeless.”

Mystical Reflections:

Every threat directed at those who belied the messengers is equally applicable to those who belie the saintly friends, since they are the successors to the prophets; except that the punishment of those who persecute the saintly friends is at times manifest upon their persons and wealth. Other times it is hidden in the form of the hardness of their hearts and being obstructed from performing righteous deeds, and the eclipse of the light of faith and the light of submission, and spiritual remoteness and dying upon disbelief. And that is the gravest misfortune as Allah I says [in 36: 30-32],

O what regret that befalls people! Not a single messenger comes to them except that they mock them. Have they not seen how many generations before them We have destroyed unto to whom they shall never return? And verily each and every one will be brought forth to Us.

I say [that the statement] *How many We destroyed* is connected to *Have they not seen* concerning those who were subjected [to that destruction], *and that they* is a [linguistic] substitute (badl) for *how many*. This is like saying, “Have they not seen the numerous times we have destroyed the generations before them being that they shall not return to them.” [As for] *And verily each and every one [will be brought forth to Us]*²⁸ means “The case is that all shall be brought forth into Our presence.” According to another rendition though, it means “And not a single one of them persists except that they will be gathered and brought forth for the Reckoning.”

The Ultimate Truth Y says, *O what misfortune that befalls people! Come! It is now your time to come!*” Then He explains why regret befalls them, saying, *Not a single messenger comes to them except that they mock them*. For surely those who deride those who offer sincere advice—whose advice will bring them the best of rewards in the two abodes are most deserving of regret. [It is also fitting that] those who regret to feel regret for them and for those who lament to lament. Or, they attract the regret of the two weighty creations, the angels and believers.

Have they not seen how many generations before them We have destroyed means “Do they not know how often We have destroyed the past generations before them?” *That they will not return to them* means “[Do they not observe] the fact that they shall never return to them until they join them?” So there is a moral

²⁸ The renditions of Ibn ‘Amir, ‘Asim, and Hamza would translate this way. The renditions of other Qur’anic recitation specialists would be construed according to the latter translation mentioned thereafter. Refer to *Al-Ithaf* 2/400.

lesson and admonition to be taken from them for anyone who takes heed. *And verily each and every one will be brought forth to Us* means “And verily each of them will be gathered and brought forth for the Reckoning” or “punished.” And He mentioned “every” after “each” because “each” is stated to express the encompassment of something, while “every” is a hyperbolic form whose meaning is “to gather together” (ijtima’). That is to say that the place of gathering (mahshar) shall unite them. So all of them shall be gathered and brought together for the Reckoning.

Mystical Reflections:

“O what regret befalls the people! Not a single inviter comes to them inviting to God upon the path of perfect spiritual guidance (tarbiya) except that they mock him. Have they not seen how many generations before them We have destroyed? They died upon heedlessness and spiritual exclusion (hijab). And each of them will be brought forth for the scolding and reckoning. They died barred [from God’s light], and they will be resurrected barred because of their rejection, in this world, of those who can remove the veil and open the door for them. And they are the exemplars (shaykhs) of spiritual guidance who exist in every age.” Or “O what regret befalls those who take a direction. No divine impulse (warid) comes to their hearts except that they set out mocking. And if they had comprehended from Allah they would have acted upon those impulses that come to their pure hearts.” Then He mentioned the signs of His power to resurrect and produce, saying [in 36:33-36]:

And a sign for them is the dead earth. We have given life to it and caused to come out of it a grain from which they eat. We have also placed therein gardens of dates and grapes, and cleaved therein of springs; so that they would eat from its produce and what their hands have done. Will they not show gratitude? Glory to Him who created all pairs from what the earth causes to grow and from themselves and from that which they know not.

I say [that the statement] *And a sign for them* is an introductory clause (mubtada’), and the phrase *the dead earth* is a completing thought (khabar). [Allah] The One Ultimate Truth says, *And a sign for them is the dead earth*. That is, “And a sign for them that indicates that Allah shall resurrect the dead and bring them forth for reckoning is that He gives life to the dry earth with water, which then quivers and grows with plant life.” “And We caused to come out of it a grain: a species of grain from which they and their livestock eat.” He said *from which* first as a way of indicating that the grain is the thing that the majority of one’s food supplement pertains to, and the well-being of man is maintained by making use of it. When it runs low, drought occurs and harm ensues. And when it is lost, destruction comes and tribulation descends. *We have also placed therein* in the earth *gardens*, i.e., plantations of dates and grapes *and cleaved therein of springs*. “Of” is effusive according to [the linguist] Al-Akhfash, but others hold the view that the object [of the verb is “cleaved”]. That is to say, “what you enjoy of springs.” *So that they would eat from its produce*, i.e., from God’s produce. In other words, “so that they would eat from what Allah I created of produce” or “from a fruit that Allah creates from that” according to the rendition of the *Two Brothers*.²⁹ *And what their hands have done* means “and the planting, watering, pollination, and other things that their hands have done of things that they stumble upon in the realm of wisdom until the produce reaches its full growth.” Meaning that, the [the growth of the] produce in itself is an action of Allah and contains traces of the work of the children of Adam in light of wisdom and a concealment of the secrets of Lordship. Originally this [expression] was “from Our produce” as in His saying, “And We made and We cleaved.” Then He spoke in the third person’s voice. It is also possible for the pronoun to refer back to the “dates” while excluding consideration of the “grapes” in this case, because it is known that they fall within the ruling of “dates.” [This verse] has also been construed as a negation to mean, “[what] their hands did NOT do” to indicate that the fruit is Allah’s creation, while the hands of people neither did it nor are capable of doing it. “Will they then not show thanks to God for these significant blessings?” And this is an encouragement to show gratitude.

²⁹ Hamza and Kisa’i spelled the word “thamar” translated as “produce” with two ‘u’s’ instead of two ‘a’s’ as “thumur.” It is either the plural of the word “thamara” as in the word “khashaba” and “khashab.” Or it is the plural of the word “thimar.” And “thimar” is the plural of “thamara.” For that reason, it is the plural of the plural (jam’ al-jam’). See *Sharh al-Hidaya* of Al-Mahdi 2/285, and *Ithaf Fudala’ al-Bashar* 2/25.

Glory to Him who created all pairs from what the earth causes to grow of dates, trees, crops, and fruits in how He made them of various tastes, smells, forms, shapes; different leaves of the trees; the different types of branches, lights and flowers, and the different forms of its fruits: some of which grow individually and others combined, along with their expanded four natures of heat, coldness, moistness, and dryness, and all the different uses taken from each of them. And from themselves come children—male and female; and of what they have no knowledge of the various kinds of which Allah has not made them aware nor have they achieved knowledge. For in the sea, there are marvels that people have no knowledge of. Allah I says, And He creates what you know not.³⁰ And the benefit of exoneration (tanzih) is to negate similarity in essence from any of these pairs.” But Allah I knows best. Qushayri said,

“It is astonishing how some can deny the foundations of the faith saying: “There is no proof of it in the Holy Book. And most of the proofs found in the Qur’an merely indicate through inference (istidlal).” But Allah guides to His light whomever He pleases. If they had been fair and preoccupied themselves with the most important thing to them they would have not squandered the foundations of faith, and they would have satisfied themselves with blind faith (taqlid). They also claimed excellence in the matters of jurisprudence. In this meaning, it has been said:

“O you who assume the vanguard³¹ of leadership
 In the dictation and instruction of matters of jurisprudence;
 You lack knowledge of the proofs for divine unity which anchor them
 Grounding the branch and elevating the root.”

I say that this is a summation of praise for the knowledge of legal theory while abandoning the knowledge of the root of the science of legal theory (asl al-asl), which is the special knowledge of theology, i.e., witnessing and seeing. I, personally, have to say about that in response:

“O you who assume the vanguard in knowledge of the foundation which anchors it
 You have missed the taste of spiritual experience to be taken solace with”

Mystical Reflections:

“And a sign for them” is the soul dead with ignorance. “We have enlivened it” with knowledge and brought out from it” a celestial knowledge (‘ilm laduni). So from it hearts and souls take nourishment. “And We made therein gardens” of gnosis “from dates” of the realities and “grapes” of the outward laws. “And We cleaved therein of springs” of wisdom, “so that they can eat from its produce and from what their hands have done” of exertions and hardships. For verily they produce movements of witnessing. “Glory to Him who created all pairs” of spiritual states, virtues, and exponential and experiential knowledge of what is extracted from souls and spirits, and from what none except Allah knows.”

Surat Yasin 36: 37-40

And a sign for them is the night. We strip from it the day, and they are of a sudden in darkness. And the sun runs to a resting place for it. That is the decree of the Mighty, The Knowing. And the moon, We have appointed for it mansions such that it returns like the old date cluster. Neither for the sun is it appropriate to catch the moon nor for night to beat out the day, whereas each swims in a set orbit.

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says *And a sign for them is the night. We strip from it the day*, i.e., “We bring out from it the day such that nothing of the light of day remains [at night].” [This expression is] borrowed from [the expression]: “He stripped the skin from the sheep” or “He removed the light from him in the way that he would remove a white tunic such that time itself becomes bare, like a black man who removes a white garment from himself.” This is because the basis of what is between the sky and earth from the air is

³⁰ al-Nahl: 8

³¹ ‘Dast’ translated above is the front of the house.

darkness. So part of it adorns itself with the light of the sun, like a dark house wherein a lamp has been lighted. Once the lamp is removed, darkness overtakes it. *And they are of a sudden in darkness*, i.e., entering into darkness.

And a sign for them also is the sun which runs to a resting place for it, i.e., to a determined boundary given to it to which it reaches from its orbit until the end of the year. It was likened to the resting place of a traveler that he reaches during his journey. Or “to a boundary it has from its daily journey in view of the people,” which is sunset. And it has been stated in the sound hadith that has come on the authority of Abu Dharr [that the Prophet P said], “Verily, it (the sun) prostrates every day under the Throne, and then asks permission to take leave. It is then given leave. But soon it will ask permission to take leave and will not be given leave. It will then rise from its place of setting.” Abu Dharr said, “He (the Prophet) P said: And that is Allah’s saying: *And the sun runs to a resting place for it*.”³²

And it is related that Ibn ‘Abbas said that the sun is like the well-water scoop [in its motion]. It runs by day in the sky in its orbit, and when it moves westward it runs by night under the earth in its orbit until it rises from the east. Similar is the case with the moon. This is what Al-Kawashi has related about it. And this may not contradict what has come in the hadith mentioning that it prostrates under the Throne since the Throne surrounds everything. So wherever it ends, it remains underneath it. Al-Aqlishi related from the hadith of ‘Ikrima from Ibn ‘Abbas: “A sun has never risen before seventy thousand angels goad it saying to it: “Rise!” And it responds: “I will not rise over a people who worship me instead of Allah.” Then an angel comes to it from Allah ordering it to rise. It then comes forth providing merely a small amount of light the children of Adam require. Then Satan comes to it seeking to dissuade it from rising, and it rises between his two horns, but Allah I scorches him underneath it. And no sun has ever set without falling to God prostrate. Satan then comes to it seeking to dissuade it from prostrating, and it sets between his two horns, but Allah I scorches him. And that is what the Prophet meant [when he said]: “A sun does not rise without going between the horns of Satan and does not set without going between the horns of Satan.”³³ This is all according to Shaykh al-Fasi, exemplar of our shaykhs.

Ibn ‘Abbas and Ibn Mas’ud read this verse as, “[And the sun] runs, not to a resting place for it.” It means that it runs incessantly non-stop. But the rendition of the majority conforms more to the hadith.

That is the decree of the Mighty, the Knowing, i.e., that running according to that matchless decree and precise reckoning is the decree of the Conqueror, by His power over everything within fathomable reach, the Knower of every detail.

And the moon, We have appointed for it mansions. For some, mention of the moon at the outset [leads them to] construe it as an object of an unexpressed verb. (In other words, “Observe the moon. We have appointed for it mansions”). Other exegetes, though, construe the word, “moon”, as an introductory clause whose fulfillment clause is “We have appointed for it phases.” And there are twenty eight phases: 1) the frontal sector of Aquarius (dalw); 2) the rear sector of Aquarius; 3) the belly of Pisces (hut); 4) Aries (natah); 5) 18 to 29 Taurus (Al-Butayn); 6) Pleiades/29 Taurus to 10 Gemini (thurayya); 7) Gemini 10-24 (Dabran); 8) Gemini 24 to 9 Cancer (Haq’a); 9) 9 to 20 Cancer (Hana’a); 10) 20 Cancer to 7 Leo (Dhira’); 11) 7 to 18 Leo (Nathara); 12) 22 to 27 Virgo (Sarfā); 13) 28 Leo to 12 Virgo (Jabha); 14) 18 to 28 Leo (Tarfa); 15) 12 to 22 Virgo (Zubra); 16) 27 Virgo to 24 Libra (‘Awwa’); 17) 24 Libra to 4 Scorpio (Simak); 18) 4 Scorpio to 15 Scorpio (Ghafri); 19) 15 Scorpio to 3 Sagittarius (Zubana); 20) 3 Sagittarius to 10 Sagittarius (Ikli); 21) 10 Sagittarius to 24 Sagittarius (Qalb); 22) 24 Sagittarius to 13 Capricorn (Shawla); 23) 13 Capricorn to 16 Capricorn (Na’a’im); 24) 16 Capricorn to 4 Aquarius (Balda); 25) 4 Aquarius to 12 Aquarius (Sa’d al-Dhabih); 26) 23 Aquarius to 4 Pisces (Sa’d al-Su’ud); 27) 4 to 23 Pisces (Sa’d al-Akhbiya);³⁴ 28) [23 Pisces to 9 Aries (al-Fargh al-Awwal)].

³² The hadith was reported by Bukhari in *The Beginning of Creation*, Chapter of the Description of the sun and moon, Hadith #3199), and Muslim in *Faith*, The Chapter Explaining the Time Wherein Faith Will Not Be Accepted, 1/139, Hadith #251) from the hadith of Abu Dharr ®.

³³ Reported by Ibn ‘Asakir in *Tahdhib Tarikh Dimashq*: 3/124

³⁴ Have a look at *Al-Bahr Al-Muhit* 7/322 and *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* 6/5632-5633

The moon descends every night into one of them without traversing it nor falling short of it according to an even measurement. It descends into them from the first night until the 28th, and then it becomes hidden for two nights or for one night whenever the month is shortened.

It is also obligatory to presume that there is an omitted noun annexed next to [the phrase] “We appointed for it mansions.” That is to say, “We have appointed its movement” or “its light such that it increases and decreases.” This is because it means nothing [to say that] the moon has been appointed mansions such that “mansions” is taken to be a container [for the moon]. Then, once it reaches its final mansion it forms into a very fine crescent such that it returns like the “date cluster” (‘urjun). That is, like the stalk stripped of its leaves (shimrakh); in other words, like the date cluster once it shrivels up and becomes curved. Describing it as “old” (qadim) is to say that it is aged, transformed by time (‘atiq muhawwal)³⁵ such that when it grows old, it becomes thin, bends, and loses its luster. Hence, He drew a corollary between the old date cluster and the moon from three regards:

Neither for the sun is it appropriate (i.e., it is neither befitting nor correct for it) to catch the moon such that it unites with it simultaneously and invades its airspace in such a way that its light is effaced before the completion of its time, because each of the illuminated objects has its independent sway (sultan). The sun’s sway is during the day, and the moon’s sway is at night.

Nor for night to beat out the day (i.e., nor does the night outstrip the day). In other words, the sign of the night does not outstrip the sign of the day even though it is they that are the two luminaries (nayyiran). And the affair shall remain in accord with this arrangement until the Hour at which time God will fuse the sun and the moon. They will be wrapped up and thrown into the Fire.

Each swims in a set orbit (i.e., and all of them are in an orbit swimming) moving along. So [the word] “each” (kull) conceals within itself the pronoun “them” [in “of them”] which is an allusion to the sun and the moon. For verily the alteration of states necessitates a kind of multiplicity in the essence [over which change is occurring]. Another view is that [the concealed pronoun] is a reference to “the constellations” (kawakib) in general. Similarly, [the verse] is read as “Each is in an orbit swimming” and “Each is swimming in an orbit.” And that is a type of rhetorical eloquence (badi’).

Mystical Reflections:

And a sign for them is the night of heedlessness from which we strip the daylight of wakefulness, and the daylight of wakefulness from which we strip the night of heedlessness. So a person remains between heedlessness and wakefulness until the sun of gnosis (‘irfan) shines upon him and rests firmly in his heart. Such has no setting. This understanding is alluded to by His saying, *And the sun runs to a resting place for it*. And its resting place is the hearts of the Gnostics. “And the moon of faith, We appointed for it mansions that increase and decrease with the increase and decrease of free time (tafarrug) and direction of one’s self toward God (tawajjuh), until the sun of gnosis (‘irfan) rises upon it and strips away its light, such that neither increase nor decrease remain. Qushayri said,

“The one who resembles the sun at all times in the light of his gnosis is a Gnostic, the one of firm unshakable footing (sahib tamkin), unchanging in color (ghayr mutalawwin). He towers, standing in the constellations of his felicity. Eclipse does not seize him, nor do clouds keep back his light. The one who resembles the moon is a person whose states change color while in motion. He whose color changes possesses a degree of expansion (bast) that can raise him up to the boundary of arrival (wisal) and then send him back to lassitude (fatra) such that he falls into contraction (qabd) from the pure state he was in before. He, then, will shrink and return to a diminished state of being until he pushes his heart beyond its time (waqt) and the Ultimate Truth I is gracious to him, and grants him the grace to recover from his lassitude and sober from his inebriation. The spiritual states of such a one continue to cast off contamination until it approximates arrival (wisal) such that it is gifted with

³⁵ That is to say that a year (hawl) or more has passed over it.

the attribute of perfection. It then begins a move toward loss, decrease and complete vanishing. Thus is his state until his journey entitles him to his divided portion. The wise poets would sing:

“Each day your color changes to something different is most attractive.”³⁶

Then he mentioned another proof saying [in 36: 41-44]

And a sign for them is that We bore their progeny in the freighted ship; and We created for them of its likeness that which they ride. And if We so pleased, We would drown them without a cry for help and without rescue; except by a mercy from Us and a gratification to a time.

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says, *And a sign for them is that We bore their progeny* (i.e., their children) who they dispatch for their commerce, or their infants and wives who accompany them. The word “dhurriya” [translated as “progeny”] is applied to wives since they are the planting grounds of progeny [mazari’uha]. They were specifically mentioned because it is harder for them to remain settled in ships and their clinging to them is more amazing; or He made special mention of them because of their physical weakness from undertaking travel. So the blessing is more apparent with respect to them. So [“freighted” (mashhun) in] *We bore them in the freighted ship* means “full” (mamlu’). Apparently, the pronoun [“their”] in “their progeny” is to connote the general category (jins) [of people as opposed to a specific group]. So it is as if He said, “the progeny of their species and kind.” Ibn ‘Abbas and others, though, said that the “progeny borne” is a reference to the people of Noah [rescued with him] in the Ark. As for His saying, *And We created for them of its likeness that which they ride*, this refers to the ships that exist among the children of Adam until the Resurrection Day. And in their regard He spoke when He said, *And if We so pleased, We would drown them* etc. As for using the word “dhurriya” [translated as “progeny”] to refer to “fathers” (aba’), Ibn ‘Atiya has stated that such a use is unknown in the language. Rather, what is meant by “dhurriya” is the general category of beings (jins), or the reality of what has already preceded. Accordingly, Allah’s statement *And We created for them of its likeness that which they ride* is a reference to camels. For surely they are the ships of the Arabs. And “If We so pleased, We would drown them when they ride the ships of the seas without a cry for help” (i.e., none around to help them or none who can ask for help and without rescue). [This latter understanding] is more eloquent. In other words, [the construction that means that] they would no longer retain any power to call out for help. *And they would not be rescued* (i.e., saved) from death; *unless it be by a mercy from Us and a gratification for a time* (i.e., they will not be rescued) except by a mercy from Us so that such could enjoy life until the end of his lifespan. In other words, [“a mercy” and “a gratification”] are taken to be the purpose and aim of his rescue. Some have said, though, that the exception refers back to three different clauses: “We would drown them”; “without a cry for help”; and “nor will they be rescued.” [That is to say, “Were it not for a mercy from Us and a gratification for a time, We would drown them; there would be no cry for help from them; and they would also not be rescued].

Mystical Reflections:

When the thoughts of the Gnostics swim in the seas of divine oneness and the secrets of individuation (tafrid), the waves of bewilderment from God’s majestic pride crash down upon them. So if they have received prior care for proper formation, they will take refuge in the ship of the Shari’a after riding it in the orbit of the Haqiqa. And Allah alludes to this when He says, *We bore their progeny in the freighted ship; and We created for them of its likeness that which they ride*. And if one has not received prior care, he will drown in the sea of crypto-infidelity and rejection of Allah’s existence (zandaqa wa ilhad) as Allah I says, *And if We so pleased, We would drown them without a cry for help* from a well-disciplined spiritual guide (shaykh kamil)—and they will not be rescued; except by a mercy from Us and a gratification until the time of spiritual perfection (kamal) when he achieves balance. Qushayri said,

³⁶ This was sung by a slave girl in a particular story. Have a look at it in *Al-Risala Al-Qushayriya* 156 and *Al-Kibrat Al-Ahmar* 2/147.

“The verse is an allusion to carrying the creation in the ship of safety in the oceans of divine providence (taqdir) when its waves crash down with various forms of alteration and influence. And how many a person has drowned in his preoccupations during the night and day, not finding rest for a single moment in the toil of his deeds, suffering the weariness of his works, and gathering his wealth while forgetting the final consequence of it all. Then he said about Allah’s I saying, *And if We so pleased, We would drown them*: “Were it not for the attributes of his generosity and graciousness, they would be visited by the same sort of trials that the likes of them had been visited before them. He, however, because of the goodness of His openhandedness, He has guarded them in all of their states.”

Then, He mentioned their ingratitude for these blessings, saying [in 36: 45-47],

And when it is said to them: “Take guard of what is before and behind you so that you may attain mercy”; And not a single one of the signs their Lord come to them except that they turn aside from it; And when it is said to them: “Spend of what God has provided you with”, those who are ungrateful say to those who have faith: “Shall we feed those who if God so pleased would feed them Himself? Indeed you are in manifest error.

I say: The fulfillment clause of [the word] “when” (idha) [in His saying: “When it is said to them: “Take guard...”] is omitted. It is presumed to be [the phrase] “they turn aside” [i.e., “When it is said to them:”...”, they turn aside”]. The fact that He later says, “...they turn aside [from it]” is proof [for the correctness of this presumed omission].

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says, *And when it is said to them* (i.e., when it is said) to the disbelievers of the Quraysh: *Take guard of what is before you and behind you*. That is to say, [“Take guard against”] your past sins and those misdeeds that you have yet to do; or “...what is before you” [means: “Take guard against”] similar punishments that have descended upon the nations before you that rejected faith as well as the matter of the Hour which will succeed you”; or [it means: “Take guard against”] the trial of this world in front of you and the torment of the Hereafter which will come after you [die], “so that you will attain mercy” so that you are in anticipation of God’s mercy. So when that is said to them, they turn aside [in aversion].

The Exalted One says, “And not a single one of the signs of their Lord pointing to His Oneness I and the truthfulness of His messenger comes to them except that they turn aside from it, giving it no attention nor raising their heads to it. In other words, it is their custom to turn away from every sign and admonition.

And when it is said to them: “Spend of what God has provided for you” i.e. give charity to the poor, “Those who reject faith among the idolaters of Mecca say to those who believe: “Shall we feed those who if God so pleased He would feed himself.” Ibn ‘Abbas is reported to have said: “There were hypocrites (zanadiqa) in Mecca, and when they were ordered to give charity to the indigent, they would say: “No. By God! Does Allah impoverish him, and We are to feed him?!”³⁷ It has been said that the occasion of [revelation of] the verse was that once the weak among the Quraysh entered Islam, the Quraysh prevented them from making their prayers (Salawat). So one of the believers encouraged them to give charity, and they responded with the aforementioned response. It has also been related that Quraysh withheld charity from the indigent—the believers and disbelievers of them—because of a crisis that afflicted them. So the Prophet encouraged them to spend on the indigent, but they said out of insolence: “Shall we feed a people whom God desires to impoverish and torment?” And one of their proverbs is:

“Be with Allah over the manager, until a man grazes his camels placing those that are fat in the green pasture, and the lean in the dry desolate field.” So when one of those people was encouraged to do this, he would say:

³⁷ Refer to *Al-Bahr Al-Muhit* 7/325 and *Tafsir al-Qurtubi* 6/5641.

“I honor whatever God honors, and I dishonor whatever God dishonors.” It is also plausible to construe this response of theirs as a form of derision [of the Prophet]. So it is as if they said: “Why doesn’t your supposed God provide for them?”

Al-Kawashi said,

“Some stingy people might cling to this verse saying: “I do not give those who Allah has denied.” But this is not correct because Allah I enriches and impoverishes, and has assigned a portion of the wealth of the well-to-do person for the poor as He pleases. It is also mentioned in *Al-Ihya’* that “The aim of charity and its legislation is for one to become liberated from the vice of stinginess. And that is a benefit that accrues to the giver of charity by extracting him from the love of worldly things and the attachment of his heart to that which dissuades from God. So these [stingy] people have not understood God’s wisdom and then said what they said.”

Then He said, “*Indeed you are in manifest error in your ordering us to spend*” or “to act on other aspects of your religion.” Another rendering of this is that it is a statement directed from Allah to those who reject faith.

Mystical Reflections:

[It is as if He said] “When it is said to the laity, ‘Take guard against what is before you of this life’s adversities and what is behind you of the horrors of the Hereafter so that you may attain mercy in both worlds.’” For every perfect spiritual guardedness (taqwa) protects a person during life and after death. There is also the possibility that this protection will be transferred to one’s progeny as can be seen among the progeny of the friends of Allah. Or “When it is said to them: “Take guard against thoughts of planning regarding what is before you [of your future], because its affair is not in your control. So most of what you construct of planning is demolished by the winds of destiny. “And [take guard against] the thoughts of planning regarding what has gone before you” because it is fundamentally seeking to make happen what has already occurred and spending one’s time without benefit (ta’til al-waqt bi la fa’ida). *So that you may attain mercy* by the station of satisfaction (rida’), calmness, and serenity of heart under the streams of the divine decree (qada’). They turned aside and became engrossed in the ravines of heedlessness and thoughts. And not a single sign pointing to the oneness of Allah I and His oneness in creation and management comes to them except that they turn away from it. Qushayri said,

“This is the description of those who He has set free to run in the ravines of abandonment, He has branded with the mark of denial, deafened from hearing right guidance, and dissuaded by abandonment from the path of moderation (suluk al-qasd). So any time a sign offering a disincentive [from wrong] comes to them, they meet by turning away, are outwardly averse to taking a moral lesson from it, the whole while being in anguish and dejection (inqibad). And when they are ordered to spend and feed [the needy], they respond: “God is the provider of all creatures. And if He so pleased, He would look upon them with His favors.”

[Surat Yasin 36: 48-54]

And they say: “When is this promise, if you speak truthfully?” They anticipate nothing more than a single cry that will seize them while they argue. They, then, are not able to bequeath advice nor return to their families. And when the Trumpet is blown, they will of a sudden issue forth from their graves to their Lord. They say: “O Woe to us! Who has raised us up from our resting place?” This is what the All-Compassionate One has promised, and the Messengers have spoken truthfully. It is merely a single cry, and they will be of a sudden all brought before Us. So, today, no soul shall be wronged in the least; and you are rewarded only what you used to do.

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says, “And they say—derisively: “When is this promise?” (i.e., the promise of the resurrection and standing) “if you speak truthfully in what you say?” This [question] is addressed to the

Prophet and his companions. Allah I says, *They anticipate nothing more than a single cry* (i.e., the first blast [of the trumpet]) *that will seize them while they argue* (i.e., they dispute with one another about their civil affairs) while the affair of the Hour never appears to their minds. So it will come to them unexpectedly.

Hamza's rendering [of this verse] is ["...as they triumph over their interlocutors"]. The other [authorities] however agree with the first rendering.

They, then, are not able to bequeath advice (i.e., they are not able to offer an iota of advice or direction) regarding their affairs. *Nor return to their families* (i.e., they are incapable of returning) to their abodes. Rather, they die once they hear the cry. *And when the Trumpet is blown* (i.e., the second time) after an interval of forty years of lifelessness on the earth. And the word, "sur", [translated as "trumpet"] is synonymous with the word "qarn" (horn); or the plural of the word, *sura* (form/image).

...they will of a sudden issue forth from their graves to their Lord i.e. moving hastily to the place of gathering.

They say: "O Woe to us! Who has raised us up from our resting place?" (i.e., from the places where we lie [madja']. Mujahid and Ubayy b. Ka'b said, "Disbelievers will undergo a slumber within which they experience the joy of sleep, but when a cry is made out to the inhabitants of the graves, they will say: "O Woe to us! Who has raised us?" Ibn 'Atiya objected to this [interpretation] though. He said, "This is merely a metaphor. For it is said of one who has been killed (qatil): "This is his resting place until the Day of Standing." And the angels say in response: *This is what the All-Compassionate One has promised, and the Messengers have spoken truthfully.* Or the believers will say it; or the disbelievers [will say it] recollecting what they had heard from the messengers, and then they will answer it for themselves; or some will answer it for others. As for "what" [in "what the All-Compassionate One has promised"], it is stated as an allusion to a clear noun (masdariya), i.e., "This is the *promise* of the All-Compassionate One and the *truthfulness* of the messengers." It is [an aspect of Arabic rhetoric referred to as] *using an abstract noun/meaning to refer to the meaning indicated by the passive participle*; or ["what"] is a relative pronoun i.e. "This is *that which* the All-Compassionate One has promised and *that which* the messengers spoke truthfully about."

It is merely a single cry, and they will be of a sudden all brought before Us for the Reckoning. Then it will be said to them on that day, "So, today, no soul shall be wronged in the least; and you are rewarded only what you used to do" of good or evil.

Mystical Reflections:

Once a person's certainty increases significantly, future matters become as if they are happening to him, and those that are postdated become as if they are fleeting. He then prepares for them before they assail, and he makes preparations for meeting them prior to their occurrence. These are the intelligent ones who looked at the interior of the lower life when other people looked at its exterior. They attached importance to their postdated matters when other people were deluded by those that were fleeting; as has come in the hadith concerning the description of the friends of God.

Then, The Ultimate Truth I clarified their end, saying [in 36: 55-59], *Verily the companions of the Garden today are in preoccupation, gleeful; They are—and their spouses—in shades upon thrones, reclining; They have therein fruits, and they have whatever they demand; Peace: a statement from a merciful lord. "Be distinguished today! O you criminals!"*

I say: "Peace" (salam) is a substitute for "whatever" [in "whatever they demand"]; or a completion clause (khabar) of an undeclared subject (mudmar); or an initiation clause (mubtada') whose completion clause (khabar) has been omitted; or [it means] "From that is peace"; a rendering that is most apparent so that it would be all-inclusive ('amm) "And they have whatever they wish for" as in His saying, *And you shall*

*have therein all that you demand.*³⁸ And part of the sum of that is “peace as a statement from a merciful lord.” So a stop is made at “whatever they demand” [during recitation]. As for “a statement”, it is as if [He said], “a statement will be said to them.” Some [grammarians] construe [the phrase] as a conferring of distinction (ikhtisas) [upon those entering the Garden].

يقول الحق جلّ جلاله: { إِنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ الْيَوْمَ فِي شُغْلٍ } - بضم الغين وسكونها - أي: في شغل لا يوصف؛ لِعَظْمِ بَهْجَتِهِ وَجَمَالِهِ. فَالْتَنَكِيرُ لِلتَّعْظِيمِ، وَهُوَ افْتِضَاضُ الْأَبْكَارِ، عَلَى شَطِّ الْأَنْهَارِ، تَحْتَ الْأَشْجَارِ، أَوْ سَمَاعِ الْأَوْتَارِ فِي ضِيَاةِ الْجِبَارِ. وَعَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ وَابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قِيلَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَنْفُضِي إِلَيَّ نَسَانَنَا فِي الْجَنَّةِ، كَمَا تُفْضِي إِلَيْهِنَّ فِي الدُّنْيَا؟ قَالَ: " نَعَمْ، وَالَّذِي نَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ إِنْ الرَّجُلَ لِيُفْضِيَ فِي الْغَدَاةِ الْوَاحِدَةِ إِلَى مِائَةِ عَذْرَاءٍ " وَعَنْ أَبِي أَمَامَةَ: " سَنَلُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: هَلْ يَتَنَاقَحُ أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ؟ فَقَالَ: نَعَمْ، يَدُكَّرُ لَا يَمَلُّ، وَشَهْوَةٌ لَا تَنْقَطِعُ، دَحْمًا دَحْمًا " قَالَ فِي الْقَامُوسِ: دَحْمُهُ - كَمَنْعُهُ: دَفَعَهُ شَدِيدًا. وَعَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخَدْرِيِّ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: " أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ إِذَا جَامَعُوا نِسَاءَهُمْ عَادُوا أَبْكَارًا " ، وَفِي رِوَايَةِ أَبِي الدَّرْدَاءِ: " لَيْسَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ مَتًى " وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ: " بُولُ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ عَرَقٌ يَسِيلُ تَحْتَ أَقْدَامِهِمْ مِسْكًَ " وَعَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ النَّخَعِيِّ: جَمَاعٌ مَا شُنَّتْ، وَلَا وَلَدَ. هـ. فَإِذَا اشْتَهَى الْوَلَدَ كَانَ بِلَا وَجَعٍ، فَقَدْ رَوَى الْحَاكِمُ وَابِيهَيْقِي عَنْهُ - عَلَيْهِ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ - " إِنْ الرَّجُلَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ لِيُولَدَ لَهُ الْوَلَدُ، كَمَا يَشْتَهِي، فَيَكُونُ حَمَلُهُ وَفَصَالُهُ وَشَبَابُهُ فِي سَاعَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ " انظر البدر السافرة

I say: The truth is that the preoccupation of the people of the Garden is disparate. Among them are those who will be preoccupied with sensate pleasures (na'im al-ashbah), like the bright-eyed maidens (hur), children, food and drink according to what they have an appetite for. And among them are those who will enjoy intellectual delights (na'im al-arwah), like gazing at God's magnificent face, seeing the beloved [Prophet P], private communions and conversations [with Him], unveilings [of eternal truths] (mukashafat), and upward progression in knowledge of the [divine] secrets at every moment. And among them are those who are given the joy of both forms of bliss. And it will be mentioned in the [mystical] reflections.

[As for] His saying [about the people of the Garden], “gleeful” (fakihuna) (i.e., experiencing delight) in blissful comfort. And the faakih/fakih (gleeful) is the one who experiences bliss (mutana'im). From [this word] comes the word fakaha (jesting), since it is something from which delight is taken. Similarly, is [the word] fakiha (fruit).

Then Allah I says, *They—and their spouses—are in shades* (zilal pl. of zill), i.e., the place upon which the sun does not fall. One rendition reads “in canopies” (zulal pl. of zulla), like [the word] *burma* and *buram*. And it (zulla) is what shields you from the sun. And the shade of the people of the Garden is not removed by a sun. Allah I says, *and [in] extended shade*.³⁹

[Allah then says.] ...upon thrones (ara'ik pl. of arika). And it is the bed found inside the curtained canopy (hajala). So, the *ara'ik* (thrones) are a reference to the furnished beds with the condition that they have curtained canopies over them. Otherwise, it is not an *arika*. The *hajala* is the silk garment that shields the bed (sarir). And they “recline” upon them like kings upon thrones.

They have therein fruits in abundance of whatever they crave. *And they have whatever they demand* comes to them forthwith; or whatever they wish for from the perceptible or intellectual delights. [The understanding of this word is taken from] the Arab phrase, “Demand whatever you please”, i.e., wish for it. Farra' said, “It originates from [the word] *da'wa* (claim).” And they demand only what they deserve. *Peace: a statement from a Merciful Lord* (i.e., among the most important of things they demand is peace which will be said to them as a statement from a Merciful Lord without mediator in order to emphasize their magnification). And that is the epitome of what they wish for in addition to seeing Him. And an inseparable consequence of mercy is their preservation in that state.

Qushayri said,

“They hear His speech and His salutation of peace without a mediator. And He added stress with His saying, “Peace!” and His saying, “from a Merciful Lord” in order that one knows that it is not delivered on the tongue of an emissary. And the mercy in that

³⁸ Fussilat: 31

³⁹ Surat al-Waq'ia: 30

state is for Him to grant them the beatific vision while greeting them with peace in order to perfect the blissful delight for them.”

And in the hadith on *the Prophet's* authority “While the people of the Garden are in their bliss, suddenly a light will shine for them, and they will raise their heads when suddenly the Lord will have faced them from above them and He will say: “As-Salamu ‘alaykum, O people of the Garden!” Then He will look at them and they will look at Him.”⁴⁰

Then He mentioned those who are remote and veiled [from seeing Him] saying, *Be distinguished today! O you criminals!* i.e. isolate yourselves from the believers and be alone. And that will be when the believers are gathered and steered into the Garden. Qatada said, “They are isolated from every good.” It is related that Dahhak said, “Every disbeliever has a house made of fire wherein he resides. He neither sees nor can be seen forever.”

Mystical Reflections:

Verily the companions of the Garden that is hastened for His friends today are in great preoccupation. You do not find them preoccupied by anything other than Allah between witnessing and seeking sight, reflection and contemplation in the place of witnessing, dialogue, communion, and confiding one's secrets. Their time is guarded, and their moments of movement and stillness are observed with sincerity. So their foremost concern is something other than the temporal world and those who live for it. They and those who cling to them are in the shades of satisfaction and the coolness of surrender exploring; in view of the face of the Beloved finding bliss.

Qushayri said,

“*Verily the companions of the Garden are today* (i.e., those who seek it and are striving for it and working to achieve it). And for the like of this, let the workers work. So they are in this world in search of the Garden from Him who confers it, as has come in the hadith, “Most of the inhabitants of the Garden are the simple-minded.”⁴¹ And whoever is in this world free from the world, it is not a stretch for him to be in the Garden free from the Garden. *He specifies with His mercy with whomever He pleases.* I say: So the simple-minded (balah) are the people of the veil who worship God seeking reward and are content with the perceptible bless.” Then he said, “And it is said [of]: “The Ultimate Truth I [that] neither truth nor falsehood attach to Him.” So there is no contradiction between their preoccupation with their delights with their families, and their witnessing of their Lord, in the same way that they are today seeking permanence to their acquaintance with Him by any means available. (wa la yaqdahu bi istifa’I huzuzihim fi ma’arifihim) a paraphrased quotation (mukhtasaran).

⁴⁰ Ibn Majah reported it in *al-Maqaddima*, The Chapter Regarding What the *Jahmiya* Denied, 1/66, hadith #184; and Suyuti added in *Al-Durr Al-Manthur* 5/501: “They ascribed it to Ibn Abi al-Dunya in *Sifat al-Janna wa al-Nar*, Ibn Abi Hatim and Al-Ajurri in *Al-Ru’ya*, and Ibn Mirdawayh on the authority of our master, Jabir.

⁴¹ Bayhaqi reported it in *Shu’ab al-Iman* 2/120-126, hadith #1366) from the hadith of Jabir. Bayhaqi then says, “This hadith with this chain of narration is objectionable (munkar).” Bayhaqi likewise reports it in the same place (hadith #1367), as does Daylami (*Firdaws*, hadith #1463), and the author of *Al-Kanz* (hadith #39283) ascribed it to Bazzar from the hadith of Anas b. Malik. ‘Iraqi says in *Al-Mughni* (3/20): “Bazzar reports it from the hadith of Anas, but he declares it to be weak. Qurtubi declares it to be sound in *Al-Tadhkira*, but this isn’t so. Ibn ‘Adi said: “Verily it is objectionable (munkar).” Refer to *Al-Kamil* of Ibn ‘Adi (3/1160) and *Al-‘Ilal Al-Mutanahiya* (2/934).

I say: The author of *Al-Nihaya fi Gharib al-Hadith* (1/155) says: “*Balh* (simple-minded) is the plural form of the word *ablah*. And he is the gullible person or one who is unmindful of evil, disposed to goodness. It has been said that they are those who are predominated by sound hearts and good opinions of people, because they disregard worldly matters and lack expertise of how to behave in it, who have betaken themselves to the concerns of the Hereafter, and preoccupied themselves with them, such that they have become entitled to be the majority of the inhabitants of the Garden. As for the simple-minded (ablah) person defined as he who is without reason, he is not the one intended in this hadith.

I say: What is found in Sura al-Waqi'a concerning mention of the bliss of the forerunners indicates that the bliss of the bright-eyed maidens and children is combined with the bliss of the eyes and satisfaction, because they, in the lower life, joined between the execution of the duties of the Shari'a and seeing the secrets of spiritual realization (haqiqa). But Allah I knows best.

His saying: "Peace: a statement from a merciful lord." Ibn 'Ata' said, "Peace (al-Salam) is one who is majestic of enormous gravity. And what is most splendid in gravity is what one sees with one's own eyes and encounters in person (musafaha) as when He says: *Peace: a statement from a merciful lord*. Qushayri said:

"Mercy at that moment is for Him to leave them perpetually in the state of hearing the *Salam* or the state of [that] encounter, so that bewilderment does not accompany them nor confusion overcomes them." Wartajibi said, "The "Peace" of God is beginningless without end (azali al-abad), never cut off from His righteous servants in this world nor in the Hereafter. However in the Garden all the veils are lifted from their ears and they look directly at His face." I say: He might lift [the veils] in the abode of this world [also], and make the "Peace" [salutation] of Allah be heard by His servants; just as it happened for some of the saints (awliya').

It has been said that "Merciful" (rahim) alludes to the fact that they will never be barred from His beauty in addition to being left perpetually in the state of peace and [good] company; such that bewilderment does not accompany them as has already been stated. It has also been said that the allusion to the state of mercy is to convey that the achievement of that state is not the result of some entitlement to it nor because of any action done by the person. Rather, it is only by mercy in order that the sinner experiences relief and a basis for hope. The supercommentator said it.

His saying, *Be distinguished today!* is an allusion to that the absence of the overseer is one of the most perfect blessings and the remoteness of one's enemy is one the most splendid forms of knowledge to have ('awarif). So the saints are in the affirmation of closeness, and the enemies are in torment with orderlies. Refer to al-Qushayri.

Then, He mentioned the rebuke of his enemies on the Day of Resurrection, saying [in 60-65]: *Have I not covenanted to you, O children of Adam, that you not serve Satan? Indeed, he is a manifest enemy; and that you serve Me? This is a straight path. And he has already led astray from you numerous people (jibillan). Do you not then comprehend? This is the Inferno that you have been promised; Enter therein today because of what wherein you used to reject faith; Today We seal their mouths, their hands shall speak to Us, and their feet shall bear testimony to what they used to earn.*

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says in rebuke of the disbelievers on the Day of Resurrection, *Have I not covenanted to you, O children of Adam, that you not serve Satan? Indeed, he is a manifest enemy*. It is said that one has "covenanted with another" when one gives counsel to him. And this covenant was established through either the tongues of the messengers or on the day of *Am I not your lord?* or the rational proofs [of His existence] that He erected for them and the transmitted evidences commanding His worship and discouraging the worship of others. And the worship of Satan means obedience to him in what he whispers and embellishes for them.

[As for His saying] *And worship Me* is read together with *and that you not worship [Satan]*. That is, "We covenanted to you that you not obey Satan. And acknowledge My oneness and obey Me. This is a straight path" alluding to what He counseled them concerning disobedience to Satan and obedience to the All-Merciful One. In other words, this is a far reaching path toward moral integrity. There is no path straighter than it. In that is an allusion to their commission of crime against themselves after perfect advice. So there is no argument after excuses have been exhausted. And there is no injustice after reminding and warning.

And he has already led astray from you jibillan (i.e., numerous people)—there are a number of linguistic variants mentioned about this matter in the books of qur'anic recitation. That is to say, "Satan has already

instigated the ruin of numerous people away from My straight path due to their association of partners with Me.” *Do you not then comprehend?* He scolded them for abandoning the use of their intellects with which He furnished them, but they used it in what harms them, such as the management of their worldly portions and their whims. *This is the Inferno that you have been promised; Enter therein today because of what wherein you used to reject faith* (i.e., Enter and burn therein because of your unbelief and rejection of faith in it). *Today We seal your mouths* (i.e., We will prevent them from speaking). *Their hands shall speak to Us, and their feet shall bear testimony to what they used to earn*. It is related that they will reject faith and dispute, but their neighbors, families, and tribes will testify against them, and they will swear that they were not idolaters. At that moment, their mouths will be sealed, their hands and feet will speak. And in the hadith, “A person will say on the Day of Resurrection: “Verily, I allow as witness against myself only myself.” Then his mouth will be sealed. And it will be said to his limbs, “Speak!” Then they will speak of his deeds. Then he will be left alone with his speech, and he will say, “Get you away from me and stay far away! Are you the ones I stood up for and defended?”⁴²

Mystical Reflections:

All of those who prefer their worldly portions and wishes without being able to struggle against his self until he dies veiled from Allah, a portion of this rebuke applies to him. And *the straight path* is the path of spiritual guidance (tarbiya) which conveys to the divine presence (hadra) that the saintly knowers of God undertook the task of elucidating. And Satan has already dissuaded numerous people away from it. He induced them to seek the world, leadership, and status such that they were not able to find the free time for the remembrance of God. And they did not lower their heads to those who acquaint them with Allah. So it will be said to them, “This is the fire of severance that you were being promised. If you remain with *your* worldly portions and your leadership, enter therein today because of your unbelief in the path of spiritual formation (tarbiya). Today We seal their mouths such that there is no salvation between them and their beloved, and their hands will speak to Us, and their feet shall bear witness—with the state that speaks for itself or with speech—of what they used to earn of negligence.

Qushayri said,

“His saying: “And their hands will speak to Us...etc.” As for the unbelievers, the testimony of their body parts shall last for an eternity. As for the sinful among the believers, their body parts may testify against them of their sinfulness but other body parts will testify of their goodness. They used to sing:

Between me and you, O oppressive one, is the Station, the unbiased judge, and the impartial giver from bounty (bayni wa baynaka ya zalumu al-mawqifu wa al-hakim al-‘adl wa al-jawad al-munsifu).

And it has been transmitted in one report that a person’s extremities will testify against him of sin such that a hair from his eyelid flies out and testifies for him of the testimony [of faith] (shahada). Then the Ultimate Truth I will say, “O hair of my servant’s eye! Defend my servant!” And it will testify for him of his crying out of fear of Him, and then *Allah* will forgive him. A caller will then call out: “This is the one who Allah manumitted because of a hair.””

Then *Allah* threatened them in the Abode of the lower life saying, *And if We pleased, We would obliterate their eyes, while they vie for the path. So how will they see? And if We so pleased, We would transform them upon their location such that they are incapable of either advancing or returning. And whoever we grant extension to their lives, We invert in creation. Do they not use reason?*

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says, *And if We pleased, We would obliterate their eyes* on that day (i.e., We would blind them) removing their sight. “Obliteration” (tams) means to obstruct the slit of the eye until it becomes deformed. *while they vie for the path* i.e. they will race to the path which they were accustomed to

⁴² Muslim reported it in *Zuhd* 4/2880, hadith #2969) from the hadith of our master Anas b. Malik

traveling. And they will rush to it due to the fear that overtakes them. *Then how could they see?* at that moment from the direction they are traveling. So they stray on the path from reaching their hope.

“And if We pleased, We would transform them to apes, pigs, or stones upon their location” (i.e., upon their stations (manazil) and in their homes) where they find security from adversities. *Makana* is synonymous with *makan*, like *maqama* and *maqam*. [As for the statement] *such that they are unable of advancing nor can they return*. This means that they are neither able to go nor to come, nor to advance forward nor backwards. And the meaning is that they are because of their unbelief and their breach of the accord that was made with them they deserve to have that done to them. We however have not done so, since the mercy encompasses them and the demands of wisdom are that they be granted respite. *And whoever We grant an extension of life, We invert⁴³ in creation* that We invert him in. ‘Asim and Hamza read [the word “invert” (tankis) with full emphatic form (tashdid). Both *naks* and *tankis* mean to make the top of something its bottom. Its meaning is “Whoever’s life We prolong, We will reverse his creation.” And it is a form of mutation (maskh). So instead of becoming stronger one becomes weaker, and instead of young, one becomes decrepit. And that is because We created him upon weakness in his body and void of intelligence and knowledge, and then We made him grow in size until he reaches his full maturity and perfects his strength, and employs reason and knows what rights and obligations he has. Then once he reaches the apex, we reverse him in creation making him shrink back until he returns to a state that resembles the state of an infant child with respect to the weakness of his body, the slightness of his intellect, and his lack of knowledge; just as an arrow is inverted and its top is made its bottom. Allah I says, *And among you are those who are returned to the most dejected of age such that one knows nothing after having known. Verily Allah is Knowing, Able.*⁴⁴ Ibn ‘Abbas said, “Whoever reads the Qur’an (i.e., acts upon it) will not be returned to the most dejected of age.” “Do they, then, not comprehend that the one who is capable of transferring them from youth to decrepit age, from strength to weakness, from the equanimity of reason to senility and slightness of discrimination is capable of obliterating their eyes, mutating them in their stations, and resurrecting them after death?”

Mystical Reflections:

And if We so pleased, We would obliterate their eyes. Then they will not find direction to the path of right behavior (suluk) nor would they embark upon it such that they would remain under the veil [of misguidance] permanently. And if We so pleased, We would transform their hearts in their locations from the equanimity of reason and understanding. So they reflect only upon perceptible matters.

So they are unable to advance in the lands of meanings nor return from perceptible matters. And whoever’s life We extend, We reverse in creation such that senility and weakness overcome him. As for the one who is guided to the path of forward movement (sayr) and follows the lands of meanings, the extension of life only increases him in equanimity in reason, strength in knowledge, and consolidation in the meanings and of gnosis (ma’rifa). Qushayri said,

“And whoever’s life we extend, We reverse him in creation” (i.e., We turn him in the opposite direction). So just as he used to grow in strength, he will diminish until he reaches the most dejected of age. Then he will return to a state similar to that of infancy with respect to weakness, and then, after this diminishment nothing will remain. In this context, they used to sing:

tawa al-‘asran ma nasharahu minni—fa-abla jiddati nashrun wa tayy—a rani kulla yawmin fi intiqasin wa la yabqa ma’a al-nuqsani shay⁴⁵

⁴³ ‘Asim and Hamza read “nunakkishu” with *damma* on the ‘first [nun], a *fatha* on the second [nun], with *shadda* on the third [letter] with a *kasra*; the imperfect form of “nakkasa” with the meaning of “multiplication” (takthir). The others, though, read it with *fatha* on the first [letter], *sukun* on the second [letter], *damma* on the third [letter] without *shadda*, the imperfect form of the verb “nakasahu” like “nasarahu”. See *Al-Ithaf* 20/404.

⁴⁴ Surat al-Nahl: 70

⁴⁵ The two verses have been attributed to Muhammad b. Ya’qub b. Isma’il as is in *Kitab al-Wafi bi al-Wafayat* 5/222. They have also been attributed to Abu Bakr b. Abi al-Dunya as is in *Tarikh Baghdad* 14/311.

The morn and eve have folded what they spread out of me—So spreading and folding
have withered my seriousness

I see myself each day in diminution—And nothing remains along with diminution

And this relates to the corpse and constructs; not states and meanings. For very states—with respect to the corpse—is in increase until it reaches the limit of senility such that one's opinion and intelligence is disturbed and disordered. And verily the locks of the companions of the realities turn grey. But the objects of their love and their meanings are in the vitality of youth and the freshness of their newness.”

[Yasin 36: 69-70]

And We have not taught him poetry nor does it suit him. It is merely a reminder and a manifest recitation; in order to warn whoever is alive and for the decree to prove true against the rejecters of faith.

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says, *And We have not taught him poetry* (i.e., We have not taught Our prophet Muhammad P poetry) such that he is capable of saying poetry thereby being accused of [concocting] the Qur'an. Or, “We have not taught him poetry through learning the Qur'an (i.e., that the Qur'an is not poetry). For verily it is rhymed but not scaled (mawzun). And it does not mean the enticing and aversive dramatizations that poets are wary of. So where is the scale in it? And where is the rhymed verse? So there is no relationship between it and the speech of the poets. *Nor does it suit him* (i.e., it is not fitting his state), nor does it come easy for him were he to seek to do so – (i.e., We made him in such a manner that if he wanted to compose poetry it would not come easily for him); just as We made him illiterate, lacking guidance in writing so that the proof would be firmer and the doubt [raised against him] more invalid.

As for *the Prophet's* saying “I am the Prophet, no lie. I am the son of ‘Abd al-Muttalib”⁴⁶ (ana al-nabiyu la kadhib, ana Ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib) and his saying “Are you anything more than a finger that has bled, and in the way of Allah is what you have encountered” (hal anta illa isba'un damita, wa fi sabilillah ma laqita)⁴⁷, there are merely statements whose scales coincide with one another [in rhythm] inadvertently, similar to what happens in the various addresses of people, their letters, and dialogues. And only when it is one's intention to form congruent scales is it called poetry.

And once the Qur'an denied that it is a type of poetry, it said, *It is merely a reminder* (i.e., that which he teaches and speaks of is only a reminder from Allah) by which men and jinn are adjured. *And a recitation (Qur'an)* (i.e., a heavenly book), read in prayer niches, and recited in places of worship, and by its recitation and through acting upon it the highest of stations are reached. So how far a distance is there between that and poetry, which is among the goads of Satan!

“We revealed it to you in order that you warn thereby⁴⁸, O Muhammad P!” Or “so that the Qur'an warns those who are alive by faith or alert and heedful. For surely the heedless one is like the dead.” Or “[to warn] those who in Allah's foreknowledge would be alive. For verily eternal life is achieved through faith.” And addressing such a person with the warning is because it is he who benefits from it. *And for the decree to prove true* (i.e., the decree of punishment is compulsory upon the rejecters of faith who persist upon their unbelief). And placing them in juxtaposition to those who are alive is to give notice that they are given the

⁴⁶ Bukhari reported it in *Al-Jihad*: Bab man qada dabbata ghayrihi fi al-harb, hadith # 2864, and Muslim in *Al-Jihad*: Bab fi ghazwati Hunayn 3/1400, hadith 1776 from the hadith of al-Bara' b. 'Azib.

⁴⁷ Bukhari reported it in *Al-Jihad*: Bab man yankabbu fi sabilillah, hadith 2802 and in *Al-Adab*: Bab ma yajuzu mn al-sh'ir wa al-zajr) and Muslim in *Al-Jihad*: Bab “laqiya al-nabi (pbuh) min adha al-mushrikin wa al-munafiqin 3/1421 hadith 1796 from the hadith of Jundub b. Sufyan.

⁴⁸ Nafi', 'Amir, Abu Ja'far, and Ya'qub read it as “so that you would warn” in the second person voice. The others read it as “so that it (or he) warns” in the third person voice. Have a look at *Al-Ithaf* 2/404.

ruling of being dead in light of their rejection of faith, like His saying, *And you will not make those in the graves hear.*⁴⁹

Mystical Reflections:

As for the Prophet, Allah negated from him the ability to compose poetry in order that a false allegation not be launched against what he says. As for the saints, many of them have the ability to do so and expend that in the praise of the pre-eternal drunkenness (khamra azaliya), the divine presence (hadra qudsiya) or of the prophetic presence (hadra nabawiya), and achieve thereby approximation and a great rank. As for *the Prophet's* saying, "For the interior of one of you to be filled with pus until he sees it is better than for him to be filled with poetry"⁵⁰. It is a reference to the whimsical poetry (shi'r al-hawa) that distracts from the remembrance of Allah or deters the heart from the presence of Allah. It was said to 'Aisha r, "Did the Messenger of Allah adopt any similitude from poetry? She said, "He did not adopt a similitude from any poetry except for the verse of Tarfa, brother of Banu Qays:

"The days will reveal to you what you lacked knowledge of; and one who you have never supplied with provisions will bring you news."

sa tubdi lakal-ayyamu ma kunta jahilan, wa ya'tika bil-akhbari man lam tuzawwidi

He would at times invert it, saying, "And he who you have not supplied with provisions will bring you news" (wa ya'tika man lam tuzawwid bil-akhbar)⁵¹

And through Allah comes success.

Then He reminded them of the favors to them, so that they might comply because of the gentle treatment of goodwill. He said, [in 36: 71-73]

And have they not seen that We have created for them, from what Our hands have done, livestock. Then they of them do possess. And We made them servile to them. So from them they take their ride and from them they eat. And for them there are therein benefits and drink. Will they then not be grateful?

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says, *And have they not seen*, i.e., "have they known—and they have not known—that We have created for them from what Our hands have done", i.e., "[what] our power has manifested: something that only We have been able to introduce?" And the mention of "hands" and the ascription of the "doing" to them is a metaphor which aims to exaggerate the distinct characterization and uniqueness of the act of creation (ijad). *Livestock* (an'am): He made specific mention of them due to the marvels of wisdom and extensive benefits they have. *Then they of them do possess*, i.e., "We created them because of them, and then We gave them possession of them, such that they behave with them the way that an owner behaves with his own property with distinct and special use being made from them." Or "Then they to them are guarding and controlling (qahirun)." "And We made them servile to them and altered them to be corrigible to them" Otherwise who would have not had power over them were it not for Him making them servile and serviceable? For this reason, He ordered the rider to thank this favor and declare His glory by saying: *Glory to Him who has made this serviceable for us while we had no power over it.*⁵² *So from them they take their ride* i.e. their mount (markub), and it is what among them is ridden. It (rukub) has been read with *damma* on the *ra*, i.e., "the facilitator of their ride" (dhu rukubihim). Or "Then from its uses is their riding." "And from them they eat what they eat of their flesh", i.e., We made them serviceable for them so that they would ride their backs and eat their flesh. "And for them there are therein benefits from

⁴⁹ Surat Fatir: 22

⁵⁰ Bukhari reported it in *Al-Adab*: Bab ma yakrahu an yakuna al-ghalib 'ala al-insan al-shi'ru hatta yasuddahu 'an dhikrillah, hadith 6155 and Muslim in *Kitab al-Sh'ir*: 4/1769 hadith 2257

⁵¹ Tabari reported the like of it without mention of the verse of poetry in his exegesis (tafsir) 23/27 and Suyuti ascribed it in *Al-Durr* 5/505 to 'Abd b. Hamid, Ibn al-Mundhir, and Ibn Abi Hatim. Have a look at the *Tafsir al-Baghawi* 7/27 and the *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* 3/579.

⁵² Sura al-Zukhruf: 13

the skins, furs, wool, and other things; as well as drinks of milk” according to its different forms and other things. And it (masharib) is the plural of the word ‘mashrab’ which means ‘the place of drink’ or the noun (masdar) ‘drink’ (shurb). “Will they not then be grateful for the favors of Allah in that? Since, was it not for His creation of those things for those uses it would have not been possible to take benefit from them.

Mystical Reflections:

A people looked at what Allah conferred upon them of charity and good treatment, so they complied with Him by way of the kind touch of goodwill. Then they knew conferrer of favor and thanked the One, The Conferrer of favor. He then made the cosmos and all therein serviceable to them. Another group of people were brought no benefit from the abundant favors, so He laid upon them afflictions and misfortunes, and then they complied to Him forcefully by way of the chains of trial. “Your Lord is amazed by a people who are steered to Paradise with chains.”⁵³ And each of these people have been afforded prior care from Allah. Another people, neither the favors nor the misfortunes brought them benefit: [people] to whom abandonment is their predetermined lot. So they persisted upon disobedience, and they did not thank Allah for the abundant goodwill He conferred upon them. And to these the following address is directed [in 36: 74-76],

They took gods instead of Allah in order that they may be aided. They are unable to aid them, and they are for them a force brought forth. So let not their words sadden you. Verily We know what they keep private and what they announce.

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says, *They took instead of Allah gods* (i.e., they associated them with Him in worship) after they saw from Him that splendid power and openly demonstrative favors, and ascertained that He was the sole discloser of them. But they worshipped the idols [instead] *in order that they would be aided* by them whenever a serious concern arises, even though it is proper to do otherwise (i.e. turn to Allah). *They are unable to aid them* at all. *And they are for them* (i.e. those who reject faith are for the idols) a force (i.e., supporters) and a faction *brought forth*. They serve them, defend them, and remain devoted to their worship. Or “they took them in order to aid them with Allah and to intercede for them even though the situation is contrary to how they imagine it to be. So they will be on the Day of Resurrection a force prepared for them, brought forth for their punishment because they will be made fuel for the fire by which they will be burned.

Then He consoled His Prophet P from the [hurtful] things he hears from them by saying, *So let not their words sadden you*. So let not their belying of you, their abuse, and the idolatry and faithlessness you hear from them concern you. *Verily, We know what they keep private* of enmity and unbelief *and what they announce*. So, He will recompense them for it. Therefore, it is befitting the like of you to take solace from this threat, and call to mind the image of one’s own state and of theirs in the Hereafter until concern about them is dissolved and sadness does not overwhelm him. And this [notification of Allah’s awareness] clarifies [the reason for] the prohibition [against being saddened stated] in the form of a clause of resumption (‘ala tariq al-isti’naf). For that reason, if it had been read as “That We” [instead of “Verily We”] with omission of the particle of purpose (lam al-ta’lil), it would have been permissible to do so; contrary to those who rejected that and invalidated the Salat of those who pray while reciting this rendition [with the particle of purpose]. Have a look at *Al-Nasafti*.

Mystical Reflections:

Everything that one relies upon other than Allah becomes an idol, whether it is knowledge, a spiritual state, or anything else. Because of that, Ibn Mashish, the spiritual axis of his time (Qutb), said to Abu Hasan al-Shadhili τ when he said, “With what will you meet Allah, O Abu al-Hasan?” He replied to him, “With my neediness” (faqri). He said: “Then. You will meet Him with the greatest idol.” In other words, Allah is to be met only with Allah. And one is to make himself absent from anything beside Him.

⁵³ The wording of the hadith has been reported by Bukhari in *Al-Jihad*: Bab al-Asara fy al-Salasil, hadith 3010 from the hadith of our master, Abu Hurayra.

As for *Allah's* saying *I And let not their words sadden you*, therein is consolation for anyone who has been harmed for the sake of Allah. Qushayri said,

“When the slave knows that he is in view of the Truth, whatever He is suffering becomes insignificant; especially if it is for Allah’s sake.”

Then, *Allah* invalidated the claim of those who deny the resurrection: a part of their statement from which He ordered His Prophet P to take solace. He said [in 36: 77-83],

Has man not seen that We created him from a sperm drop, and yet he is an open opponent. And he struck for us a similitude and forgot his creation. He said: “Who will give life to the bones when they are decayed?” Say: “He who raised them up the first time will give them life. And He is Knowing of every creation. He who made for you from the green tree a fire after which you now use to kindle.” And is He who created the heavens and earth not capable of creating their like? Yes indeed! And He is The Creator, The Knowing. His command whenever He wants something is nothing more than to say, “Be”, and it shall be. So glory to Him in whose hand is the dominion of everything, and unto Him shall you return.

[Allah] The Ultimate Truth says, “Has man not seen that We created him from a putrid sperm drop exiting from the urethra (ihlil) which is the channel of filth, and yet he is an open opponent of clear opposition” (i.e., He, despite the despicableness of his origin and the lowliness of his beginning, betakes himself to be in contestation with his Lord), and he denies His ability to enliven the dead after his bones have become rotten. And *this* is a second consolation for the *Prophet*, and weakening of their argument against the [conceivability of the] Gathering. And it is an eloquent rebuke whereas He expresses amazement at it, and deems it an excess and manifest [proof] of disputation.

It has been related that Ubayy b. Khalaf came to the Prophet with a decayed bone in his hand, and then said, “O Muhammad! Do you believe Allah can revive this after it has decayed?” So he said, “Yes! And He will resurrect you and place you into the Inferno.”⁵⁴ Then the verse was revealed.

And he struck for Us a similitude an amazing affair by making Us like the impotent creation such that We are deemed incapable of doing the like of what they lack the power to do of giving life to the dead. *And he forgot his creation* from the despicable sperm which is even stranger than giving life to the rotten bone. And *his creation* is a noun attached to a direct object (masdar mudaf lil-maf’ul), i.e., “our creation of him”. *He said: “Who will give life to the bones when they are decayed, rotten, and crumbled.”* *Ramim* is a noun meaning “decayed bones,” not an adjective [meaning “decayed”]. For that reason, it does not modify [“bones”] in the feminine gender. It, rather, has occurred as a predicate (khabar) for a feminine word (‘izam’). It has also been said that it is an adjective carrying the meaning of a passive participle (maf’ul); taken from [the verbal phrase] *rammamtuhu*. In such a case, it is similar to [the word] ‘qatil’ and ‘jarih.’ And therein is evidence that life inheres in bones, and when it dies it becomes filth. Such is the view of Malik and Shafi’i. Abu Hanifa said, though, that life does not inhere within *bones*, so they are pure (tahir), just like hair and sinew (‘asab).

Say: “He who raised them up in its creation the first time will give them life, i.e., [the one who raised them up] initially. *And He is of every creation created knowing*. Its individual parts are not hidden from Him even if they were to be dispersed throughout the land and sea. He will unite them and restore them to the way they were. Then, He mentioned the proof of His giving life to the dead by saying, *He who made for you from the green tree* like the ‘markh’ and the ‘affar’, a fire after which you now use to strike a fire, and you have no doubt that a flame has come from it. So whoever is capable of producing fire from the green (or moist) tree despite what it possesses of moisture that is in opposition to fire, is even more capable of

⁵⁴ Tabari reported it 23/30 and Wahidi in *Asbab al-Nuzul* p. 379 on the authority of Qatada. And Suyuti ascribed it in *Al-Durr* 5/508 to Sa’id b. Mansur. And Ibn Mundhir and Al-Bayhaqi relate it in *Al-Ba’th* on the authority of Abu Malik. And Hakim reported it 2/429 while declaring it to be sound and was corroborated by Dhahabi on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas that the verse was revealed with respect to Al-‘As b. Wa’il. And the verse is general. The definite article (A-L) in His saying I: *Has ‘the’ man not seen* is for the general category [of human persons]. And it is inclusive of every person who denies the resurrection.

bringing about life and freshness to what was whole [and/or fresh] and become dry [and brittle]. These [combustible forms of lumber] are the upper sticks of the flint according to the Arabs, the majority of which come from the *markh* (cynanchum vinimate) and 'afar (two Arab flint wood trees). One of their proverbs reads: "In every tree there is a fire—May the *Markh* and the 'Afar yield more of themselves." (fi kulli shajarin naru—wa istamjada al-markhu wa al-afaru), i.e., "seek plenty of these two types [of tree]." A person would cut off from them two twigs the size of two toothbrush sticks (siwak) which are moist from which water would drip. He would then rub the *Markh*, the male form, against the 'Afar, the female [twig], and a fire would start by Allah permission I. And it is related that Ibn 'Abbas τ said, "There is not one kind of tree that does not have within it fire, except for the jujube tree ('unnab) out of interest of piercing garments (duqb lil-thiyab)."

The *Markh*, pronounced like the word *kaf* (shoulder) is a tree that is highly combustible (sari' al-wara). The author of *Al-Sihah* said it. We refer to it as the *Khalkh* (the giant fennel). The author of *Al-Qamus* says:

"'Afar, [pronounced] like *sahab* (clouds), is a tree from which flints are taken. Ibn 'Atiya said, "Fire is found in every wood except that it is found more in the porous (mutahalhil).' Similar is the case of the *Markh* and the 'Afar."

And is He who created the heavens and earth in all of their greatness and magnificence incapable of (re)creating their likeness, which is small and abysmal in relation to the heavens and earth? Or "[is it not possible for Him] to restore them to their original forms in both their essence and features, since the restoration of something [to its original condition] is akin to its initial formation? Nay! It's even easier. *Yes indeed!*, i.e., "Say: Yes Indeed! He is capable of doing that." "*And He is The Creator*, who is abundant in His creation and invention" "*The Knowing* of the conditions of His creation"; or [alternatively] "The One Abundant in His creations (kathir al-makhlūqat) and in the details of His knowledge (ma'lumat)." *His command*, i.e., His case (sha'n) *whenever He wants something* that He is generating *is nothing more than to say, "Be", and it shall be and then occur*, i.e., its existence is inevitable (ka'in mawjud). This is a portrayal of the efficacy of His power upon things, by the command of one who is obeyed for the benefit of the one who obeys, [to aid] in fulfilling what has been ordered without resistance and hesitation, without having need for [expressing] the *kaf* or the *nun* [of "kun"). *The pronouncement* is merely to elucidate the immediacy of His creation. It is as if He says, "Just as saying, "Be", is not difficult for you; likewise, it is not difficult for Allah to raise you up and to restore you." Kawashi said,

"Then He hinted at how He creates different things *exo-temporally* (zaman muttahid). And that is impossible for others to do. So He said, "Only His case...etc." So it happens without delay."

As for those who place the verb "yakun" in the nominative case, it is because it is [presumed to be] a noun sentence, i.e., [it is as if it says] "Then it shall be." As for those who place it (yakun) in the accusative case, it is because of it being connected by the conjunction ['fa'] to [the verb to] "say" (yaqul). What it means is that He is not among those who are affected by fatigue and hardship, and no matter is too great for Him. Rather, bringing the non-existent into being and taking the existent into non-being are for Him swifter than the blink of the eye."

So glory, i.e., "Purity and exoneration be for Him from all by which the idolaters have described Him, and may there be wonderment from all they have said." ...*to Him in whose hand are the dominions...*, i.e., the dominion of everything and the absolute control (tasarruf) in it. And the addition of the 'waw' and 'ta' [in "malakut" (dominions)] is for exaggeration (mubalagha), i.e., "master of every thing." *and unto Him shall all of you return* by the resurrection for the recompense and reckoning.

Mystical Reflections:

"Has man not seen that We created him from a contemptible sperm drop, and yet he is an opponent to Us in our management and preference. And He contends with Us in what We desire for Our creation, and Our intent from them is what they are upon. So have shame, O man, to oppose Allah in His decree or contend

with Him in His determination and plan. And surrender all affairs to Him in whose hand is the creation and command.

One of the righteous folk cried for forty years over a sin he committed. It was said to him: And what is it? He said: "I said of something that had happened: "I wish it had not happened." So be pleased with what the Truth chooses for you; be it a manifestation of splendor (jalali) or of beauty (jamali). And do not choose from your affair a thing. Allah knows while you know not. And every one who is worried by his affair and is preoccupied with managing their affairs, Allah has stricken a similitude for such people as one in which he associates himself with *Allah* and forgets his creation. But if he was to think about the feebleness of his origin and his state, he would feel ashamed to plan for himself together with His Lord. And in *Al-Isharat* [it is related] about Allah [that He says}, "O my slave! If I was to permit for you to plan for yourself, you would feel shame towards Me for planning for it. So how [not] when I have forbade you from calling out [to others for aid] (nadiya)?"

Just as He is able to give life to rotten bones, He is able to give life to dead hearts. And whoever is able to extract fire from the place where water is found is able to extract knowledge from ignorance, and wakefulness from heedlessness. And whoever's command is between the *kaf* and *nun*—Nay! Even faster than the glance of an eye, it is fitting that He be referred to in all matters. Qushayri said,

"So glory be to He in whose hand are the dominions of every thing! So nothing occurs—small or large—without His fashioning and production. And nothing of it lasts without His granting of permanence. So from Him all that occurs appears, and to Him all that is created returns."

Nasafi says, "*The Prophet* said: "Whoever reads *Yasin* seeking by it the face of Allah, Allah will forgive him, and reward him like the one who reads the Qur'an twenty two times." From Allah comes success, and there is neither might nor power except by Allah, the Great. And blessings be upon our master, Muhammad, his family and companions, and grant them all peace.

