



Detailed Notes

Surah Al-Najm

Insights . Linguistic Gems . Key Lessons

Professionally adapted from Bayyinah's Deeper Look
Series on Surah Al-Najm

Produced by QuranHive Research Dept.

Surah An-Najm – Deeper Look

Makkan Suwar background:

The Makkan Suwar follow certain constant strands:

- The signs of Allah – In creation (e.g. mountains or inside ourselves), history etc.
- Prophetic history – Interactions of the Prophets with Allah and angels etc.
- Judgement Day and the afterlife
- The fall of nations e.g. the fall of Fir'awn's nation, 'Aad and Thamud etc.
- Comforting the Prophet e.g., ignore overlook what they are saying, or be patient with it, Allah is with you etc.
- Spiritual morality – being kind to parents, being fair, honest and kind to others etc.
- The Qur'an or Revelation itself: Revelation comprises three things 1) The Angel delivering it, 2) The Message being delivered (i.e., the Book) and 3) The Messenger receiving it.

Surah An-Najm is from a grouping of Makkan Suwar 50-56. There is a continuity of strands which is mentioned in Surah 50, 51, 52 and also in Surah 53 (An-Najm). It is the strand related to the Qur'an. This strand relates to section one of this Surah which is about the Qur'an and revelation itself.

In Surah Qaaf Allah swears:

وَالْقُرْآنَ الْمَجِيدِ

By the Quran, full of Majesty

In Surah Adh-Dhariyat:

إِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ مِثْلٍ مَا أَنْتُمْ تَنْطِفُونَ

Indeed, it is truth - just as [sure as] it is that you are speaking (or, It is as true as your ability to speak).

Surah At-Tur contains all the allegations made against the Qur'an – That the Messenger ﷺ is a soothsayer, madman, poet or is crafting the Qur'an himself.

Surah Adh-Dhariyat and Surah At-Tur prove the Qur'an whilst Surah Qaf was just declaring that it is full of majesty. Surah An-Najm is like a Tafsir of the verse from Surah Qaf explaining what makes the Qur'an so majestic.

Surah overview/structure:

The structure can be divided into five sections:

- The Event of Final Revelation - the Prophet ﷺ meeting Jibreel (AS) and the two great meetings he ﷺ had with him – Once in this world and once in the heavens – the Mi'raaj (ascent) (1-18).
- False Salvation – Their belief that angels will speak on their behalf on Judgement Day, that they are the daughters of Allah etc. (19-28).
- True Salvation – Allah forgives sins directly and no intermediary is needed (29-35).
- Guidance and Tragedy Throughout History (36-56).
- The Final Day Has Just About Arrived (57-62).

- The Final Revelation and Final Day are at the beginning and end of the Surah highlighting a relationship.

- The False Salvation related to their false beliefs are contrasted with the correct beliefs that were sent down throughout history and all the nations that had false beliefs and were consequently destroyed. In the middle of that is the truth that will happen on Judgement Day and how we are supposed to have a relationship with Allah.

- In a thematic sense the Surah has a symmetry where everything converges.

Surah Background:

- It is not definite but most likely Surah An-Najm was revealed in the 5th year and by this time the Quraish had begun to become very hostile as the invitation had become more public and open from around the third year.
- One of the tactics of the Quraish was to ignore or cause noise when the Messenger ﷺ was reciting the Qur'an: وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ – “And those who disbelieve say, "Do not listen to this Qur'an and speak noisily during [the recitation of] it, so that you may win” (Fussilat: 26).
- When An-Najm was revealed and he ﷺ recited it a strange occurrence happened as everyone was silent and listened to it. He recited the whole Surah and was not interrupted. The following narration of Ibn 'Abbas spoke about this: It was related from Ibn 'Abbas: “That the Prophet ﷺ made the Sajdah (prostration) of An-Najm and the Muslims, Mushrikun (polytheists), the Jinn and Ins (humans) prostrated along with him”. In another narration from Abdullah: “That the Prophet ﷺ read Surah An-Najm and made prostration for it, and there was no one remaining from the Qawm (people) except that they prostrated. A man (the only one who did not prostrate) then took a handful of dust or small pebbles, raised it to his face and said: That is sufficient for me”.

- (Nak opinion) In an attempt to cover up for what the Quraish did which was catastrophic to their agenda and extremely embarrassing to them, they used the mention of their idols in the Surah as an excuse, falsely claiming that they were mentioned in a positive manner which provoked their prostration. They then propagandised that the Prophet ﷺ was compromising and accommodating their gods. The propaganda reached Muslims in Abyssinia who had previously migrated leading some to return, believing the situation had improved in Makkah.

#53:1

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ

Allah says: “I swear by the star as it falls”.

- Early commentaries (Tafasir) about this verse:

- Mujahid stated that it means: “By the Thurayyaa (referring to a specific cluster of stars known as the Pleiades) as they fall at the time of Fajr. The Arabs would call the Thurayyaa ‘Najm’ (a star) even in number they were Nujoom (stars)”.

- Mujahid also said that An-Najm refers to: “Al-Qur’an when it is revealed because it is revealed Nujooman (in parts or over stages)”.

- Language insight in support of Mujahid’s statement: نَجَّمَ (Najjama) means to give or pay something in instalments and نُجُوم (Nujoom) is used to refer to instalments.

- Al-Farraa’ stated that it refers: “To all the نُجُوم (Nujoom - Stars) of the sky when they disappear from the horizon”.

- Al-Hasan stated (it means): Allah swore by the stars as they disappear.

- Al-Hasan also stated: “The intended meaning of An-Najm is the نُجُوم (Nujoom - Stars) when they fall on Judgement Day”. This could be based on other verses stating that the stars will fall down, be dispersed and wiped out on the Day of Judgement.

- It has also been said to refer “to a specific star called Zahra which the Arabs used to worship”. In this case swearing by it indicates that it is not a god but rather it has a God.

- The weakest of the opinions which has been stated is: “That the Najm refers to the vegetation that does not have a stalk (like grass or low plants) and is made to go down (by the wind)”.

- Another rare opinion attributed to Ja’far bin Muhammad bin ‘Ali bin Al-Husain: “That the Najm (star) refers to Muhammad when he descended from the heavens on the night of Al-Mi’raaj (the ascension)”.

Insight:

- The stars held great significance to the Arabs and were used for navigation whilst travelling at night. The stars shift position through the seasons and the movement is one of rising and falling.

- The Anwaa’ referred to the use of poetry pre-Islam which was all about the stars. The word Najm (نَجْم) was used a lot, and it was used constantly to refer to Thurayyaa (Pleiades). They would refer to the Thurayyaa (Pleiades) because this constellation would inform them about the seasons and weather conditions. As such it would immediately come to their minds when the Qur’an mentioned النُّجْم (An-Najm).

- In the summer the Najm (or Thurayyaa) would rise and when the Arabs saw that they would know that the summer or hot season was coming. Conversely when it was falling, they would know that winter was coming. The poet would then say for example: I can see the Najm Hawaa (falling) and you should make preparations related to the coming of winter. They would therefore make seasonal preparations related to their lives based on: النُّجْمُ إِذَا هَوَىٰ “The star when it falls”.

- There is a connection here between how the stars in the sky were a sign that they needed to make preparations and the fact that the revelation descends from the sky and informs them that they need to prepare for the afterlife. The physical image of the star descending is therefore tied to the revelation that needs to be taken seriously.

- Separate point of reflection: Stars are the only light in the middle of darkness, whilst revelation is light in the middle of a world that is full of darkness.

- Linguistic points:

- The word هَوَى (Hawaa) includes the meaning of both rising and falling. Linguists argue that الهَوِيُّ (Al-Huwiyy) which stems from هَوَى (Hawaa) refers to something that descends and الهَوِيُّ (Al-Hawiyy) to something that is ascending. هَوَى (Hawaa) can therefore capture both meanings of rising and descending. هَوَى (Hawaa) is also used to refer to a fast descent or falling like when an eagle swoops down upon its prey.

#53:2

مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَى

“Your companion has not got lost and he has not deviated”

- Linguistic points:

- Arabic has main meanings for words and then it has secondary meanings. It is important to keep the secondary meanings in mind alongside the primary meaning to gain the full benefit. Translations of the Qur'an are normally restricted to the primary meanings.

- The primary meaning of the word ضَلَّ (Dalla) is: “To be lost”.

- The word ضَلَّ (Dalla): Also carries the primary meaning for something to be hidden (خَفِيَ) and disappear (غَابَ).

- ضَلَّ (Dalla) is used when water is added to milk and visually disappears and is hidden in the mix. It is said: ضَلَّ الْمَاءُ فِي اللَّبَنِ “The water has disappeared in the milk” when they mix together and appear as one.

- The form أَضْلَلْتُ is used in the statement: أَضْلَلْتُ الْمَيِّتَ “I made the dead body or carcass disappear” to mean “I buried it” i.e., hid, concealed and made it disappear.

- Water that runs behind a rock and is hidden or concealed from the sun is called ضَلَالٌ (Dalal). Rocks that never previously been seen in a valley are called ضَلَالٌ (Dalaadil).

- It is said: ضَلَلْتُ الدَّارَ “I lost the house” to refer to when you didn't know its location and couldn't find it. It is used to infer that you have made a mistake concerning its location and were unable to find it i.e., lost your way.

- It is also said: ضَلَّ الشَّيْءُ يَضِلُّ ضَلَالًا: That when you: “ضَلَّ (Dalla) something” it means for something to be lost or go to waste (ضَاعَ) or for something to die/perish/destroy (هَلَكَ). Example of the meaning of waste is found in the Aayah: أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ “Did He not make their plan go to waste” (Al-Fil: 2).

- And it is said: رَجُلٌ ضَالٌّ to refer to a man who is gullible and easy to mislead.

- Therefore, the primary meaning of ضَلَّ (Dalla) is to be lost in the case where it is hidden or disappears. The secondary meanings include: Two things appearing as one, to waste something, for something to be destroyed and for someone to be gullible and easily misled.

- Insights gained from secondary meanings in respect to this Aayah and the person of the Prophet ﷺ:

- Two things appearing as one: This can mean that your Prophet is not confusing truth with falsehood presenting them as one. And also, that his speech and speech of the Qur'an are not mixed but clearly separated.

- Waste: That he ﷺ is not a lost cause.

- Destruction: If he ﷺ keeps this up he is as good as dead or will be ruined and destroyed.

- Gullible: That he ﷺ is under the influence of somebody and been misled due to gullibility.

- All of these meanings are being denied in the Aayah:

مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ

“Your companion has not Dalla (ضَلَّ)”.

- The word: غَوَى (Ghawaa): Its primary meaning is to deviate and stray i.e., away from the path.

- Secondary meanings:

- الغَاوي (Al-Ghaawi) refers to locusts (الْجَرَادُ – Al-Jaraad)

- الغَوَى (Al-Ghawaa) is used to refer to اللَّبَنُ مِنَ اللَّبَنِ “Indigestion or to feel sick from milk” like when you have had too much for example or due to an intolerance to it.

- اَغْوَاء (Aghwaa') refers to مَا سَتَرَكَ مِنَ الظَّلَامِ "What covers you by its darkness"

- It is used in the expression تَعَاوُوا عَلَيْهِ which means that "they gathered against him from here and there (to kill him)" i.e., every direction like an ambush.

- الأَغْوِيَّة (Al-Ughwiyah) refers to a hole which is laid as a trap from a wolf by placing a goat in the hole.

- Ibn 'Aashour stated: الغَاوِيَةُ فَسَادُ الرَّأْيِ وَتَعَلُّقُهُ بِالْبَاطِلِ "Al-Ghaawiyah is the corruption of the opinion and its being attached to falsehood".

- From the above it can be seen that a common thread exists within these meanings around the meaning of being overwhelmed, overtaken or overcast.

Insights from these meanings:

- The meaning of being deviated or astray غَوَى (Ghawaa) can have the element of being overwhelmed attached to it i.e., a pressure to deviate from a path. The Prophet ﷺ faced many accusations of being overtaken by madness, Jinn, or that others were controlling him and dictating to him.

- In addition, the claims made against him of being a magician or poet can be connected to the meaning of setting a trap, in the sense that he is setting a trap for us to fall into i.e., by enchanting us with his magic speech. All these meanings can fall within the meaning of غَوَى (Ghawaa).

- The difference between the accusations of Quraish linked to ضَلَّ (Dalla) and those linked to غَوَى (Ghawaa) is that the former indicates to unintended misguidance (ضَلَال - Dalaal) where he ﷺ is portrayed as a victim, whilst the latter indicates to deliberate misguidance (غَوَايَة - Ghawaayah). Allah denies both of these: He ﷺ is not a lost cause and tragedy and he does not have a secret agenda. The fact is that the Makkans at that time, with the exclusion of the believers, fell into these two categories: Either of being lost and confused or had an agenda to oppose Islam.

The word صَاحِب (Saahib): - الصَّاحِب (The Saahib) is someone who is very close to you and knows you intimately.

- Secondary meanings:

- اَصْحَبَ الْمَاءِ is used to mean “The water has got moss or alga attached or stuck to its surface”.

- مَصْنُوبٌ وَمُصْنَبٌ (Mas’hoob and Mus’hib) is used to imply the meaning: He/it has hair, fur, wool attached or stuck to him.

- These two meanings imply something that is stuck and attached to you which is not your essence but is nevertheless attached to you.

- Insight:

- Allah says صَاحِبُكُمْ “Your Saahib” meaning that he is a person who has lived with you, laughed, cried, and worked with you, had family and married among you, done business with you, raised among you and you have seen him through his childhood, youth and adulthood i.e., you have witnessed and interacted with every part of his life. It implies that nobody knows the beauty of this human being and his character better than you and yet you are making all these accusations against him i.e., how is it possible out of all people that you are saying these things about him. If you needed advice, had a problem that needed to be solved, or needed somebody to trust with something, you would go to him and you are then going to attribute ضَلَّ and عَوَى to him!

#53:3

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ

“And he does not speak from desire”

- Linguistic background information:

- There are three kinds of speech discussed in Arabic Balaghah studies: 1) Speech to a neutral person, 2) Speech to a doubtful person and 3) Speech to an opponent.

- Speech to a neutral audience does not require extra emphasis. Speech to a doubtful audience requires an extra emphasis. Speech directed towards someone who is an opponent or disagrees requires more than one point or level of emphasis.

- This is connected here because the oath at the beginning (i.e., in Aayah 1- وَالنَّجْمِ) and the use of مَا (Maa) for negation represent a double emphasis which indicates from the style of the speech that Allah is addressing opponents with His speech. In addition, the repetition of the مَا (Maa) of negation (which is stronger in Arabic than لَمْ in terms of stress) twice in verse 2 and a third time in verse three is also an indication of greater emphasis.

- Word: يَنْطِقُ

- يَنْطِقُ is used to refer to eloquent speech. It comes from its secondary meaning of tightening something or gathering something together, like thoughts or words. When you coherently collect and gather your thoughts together it becomes نَطَقَ (Nutq – Coherent speech).

- Al-Imam Fakhrudin Ar-Razi, may Allah have mercy upon him, highlighted that ضَلَّ (Dalla) and غَوَى (Ghawaa) came in the past tense (الماضي) but here Allah did not state: نَطَقَ (he articulated/spoke/pronounced) but uses the present tense (الْمُضَارِع) of يَنْطِقُ. There is therefore a switch from the past tense to the present. Ar-Razi highlights that the use of the present/future form in the statement وَمَا يَنْطِقُ “And he does not speak” is extremely beautiful (as it highlights) that he (i.e., the Prophet ﷺ) was not lost (ضَلَّ - Dalla) when he isolated himself from you and what you worshiped when he was young. And he was not astray (غَوَى - Ghawaa) when he withdrew with himself and saw “What he saw” in his dream (i.e., in reference to when the revelation came to him). And “وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَى” “He does not speak from desire” now, in the case where he has been sent to you and been made a Messenger and witness over you. As such, he was not ضَلَّ (Daall - lost) to begin with nor غَاوٍ (Ghaawin), and has now become the saviour from misguidance, an instructor and guide (here ends the insight of Ar-Razi). It can be understood from this that his ﷺ past is proof of his present.

- Question regarding context of this verse: Is it talking about the Qur'an or the Qur'an and the Sunnah? That is because the Aayah states “وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَى” “And he does not speak from desire” whilst the following Aayah states: “إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى” “It is only an Inspiration that is inspired” i.e., it is only revelation. The question that arises is therefore: Is it only revelation when he is reciting the Qur'an or is everything that he says revelation?

- At-Tabari states: And Muhammad does not speak by this Qur'an from his desire: “إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى” “It is only an Inspiration that is inspired”. He is saying: This Qur'an is nothing other than وَحْيٍ (Wahy – Divine inspiration or revelation) from Allah that He has divinely inspired (or revealed) to him.

- Qatadah explains in relation to this verse the process of revelation in terms of Allah revealing to Jibreel (as) and then Jibreel (as) reveals to Muhammad who does not speak from a point of desire by his desire.

– This statement of Qatadah also gives the indication that it is in the context of the Qur'an.

- Ibn 'Ashour, may Allah have mercy upon him, a more contemporary scholar, the author of At-Tahrir Wa-t-Tanweer, explains that it means that Allah is denying any involvement of الهوى (desire) in the Qur'an or anything else in which the Prophet ﷺ is guiding people.

- It can be understood from Ibn 'Ashour that whatever is related to guidance and the right and wrong is never based upon الهوى (desire).

- Insight: It is important to distinguish between the role of the Qur'an and the role of the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ.

- (NAK opinion) There are instances in the Seerah of the Prophet ﷺ when he made decisions when no revelation had come. Examples include: Freeing captives after the battle of Badr after which revelation came asking why he had freed them. Before setting off to Tabuk some hypocrites came to the Prophet making excuses to not go to fight and he told them to stay home and then after Allah revealed: "May Allah pardon you, why did you give them permission?" i.e., to stay behind. When asked about the location for the military camp at the battle of Uhud, the companions asked him ﷺ: "Is this from revelation or is this your opinion?" to which he responded that it was his opinion. When he ﷺ came to Madinah he advised some people to change their approach in respect to pollinating date palms and after that their crop did not grow. He then said: "You are more aware of the affairs of your Dunya (worldly life)" i.e., what he had stated wasn't revelation.

- There are other interpretations for these examples contrasting with what is presented above. They include opinions that state that with the examples of Badr and Tabuk the Prophet ﷺ was acting in accordance with revelation but did not chose the best path. In respect to the location for the battle in Uhud and the method of farming date palms, these do not fall under the scope of revelation but rather areas where we have been left to make decisions by ourselves or Shuraa. This falls inline with the explanation of Ibn 'Ashour above which states that the Messenger ﷺ did not speak from his desire in matters related to guidance. That would then include both the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

- Linguistic points concerning the word: الْهَوَى (Al-Hawaa)

- The word الْهَوَى (Al-Hawaa) refers linguistically to an emptiness or space existing between two objects.

- A coward (الْجَبَان – Al-Jabaan) is also referred to as الْهَوَى (desire) because it is like he has no heart as if it is empty.

- الْهَلَاوِيَّة (Al-Haawiyah) refers to an abyss, bottomless void or pit and is one of the Quranic names for hell.

- The verb هَوَى means to fall to a lower place.

- الْهَوَى is used to refer to “love” and something overpowering his heart. “Love” is a closer meaning for الْهَوَى than the word desire. It is however different from the word حُب (Hubb) in Arabic which also refers to “love”. الْهَوَى is used for lower forms of love like animal or empty loves, or whims (and desires) etc. Things that someone loves that have no substance and meaning to them i.e., they are loves which are empty within. It is a type of love that overtakes a person and empties a person from other considerations.

- Insight: In respect to this verse, it signifies that he ﷺ does not allow temporary feelings, moods or appetites to be the basis of any decision he makes. He ﷺ is not speaking from الْهَوَى (Al-Hawaa) but rather it is from Allah. It is Allah that is saying that he is not lost (ضَلَّ - Dalla) and has not deviated (غَوَى - Ghawaa).

- Opinions of the Scholars of Tafsir:

- Al-Imam Ar-Razi concerning الْهَوَى (Al-Hawaa): The best that can be said about الْهَوَى (Al-Hawaa) is that it refers to الْمَحَبَّة (Al-Mahabbah – love), originating from the inner self (Nafs) ... However, the root of هَوَى (Hawiya) also indicates to (the meaning of) falling and descending. If a person was lowly and has left the higher matters whilst being attached to inferior matters, then he has هَوَى (i.e., fallen down and descended to a lowly state). الْهَوَى (Al-Hawaa) is therefore specific to النَّفْسِ الْأَمَارَةِ بِالسُّوءِ “The Nafs that is commanded with evil or bad”.

- Insight from the Al-Imam Razi’s understanding of الْهَوَى (Al-Hawaa): It includes the meaning of distancing the attribute of lowliness from the Messenger ﷺ.

- Ibn 'Ashour concerning الهوى (Al-Hawaa): It is the inclination of the inner self (Nafs) towards that which it loves or loves to do in the absence of the dictates of the sound and wise mind (i.e., it is an irrational love that cannot be reasoned).

- Insight related to the understanding of Ibn 'Ashour: This understanding can indicate that the Messenger ﷺ never desired anything without meaning i.e., there was always a purpose behind the things he loves.

- Insights concerning the verse “And he does not speak (وَمَا يَنْطِقُ) from (عَنِ) Al-Hawaa (الهوى)”

- When someone is giving a speech it may include the desire to be heard, acknowledged, praised, respected, feared, loved and valued. Unlike poets, entertainers, philosophers and storytellers, the Prophet ﷺ does not have the desire to be heard, appreciated, praised, loved and acknowledged etc. Rather, his sole motivation is to fulfil the command of Allah and it is not to project an ego like it is with others. None of his conscious or subconscious ambitions are part of the equation. It reflects an ultimate pure sincerity where he delivers the speech of Allah exactly as it came to him and exactly as he was commanded. He does not change his speech or style of speech based on feedback or to pander to an audience to gain popularity:

قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تِلْقَاءِ نَفْسِي

Say, [O Muhammad]: It is not for me to change it on my own accord (Yunus: 15).

The Prophet ﷺ does not decide what words will come out.

- Not being based on الهوى (Al-Hawaa) means not being influenced by considerations of those being addressed. For example, reciting verses condemning the beliefs and practices of those before him without being swayed by their animosity. He ﷺ delivers the Qur'an without any concern for the viewership and following.

- Insight: The verb هوى (Hawaa) is found in the first Aayah of the Surah هوى إِذَا هَوَىٰ “وَاللَّجْمُ إِذَا هَوَىٰ” and here in the third verse the noun الهوى (Al-Hawaa) is found. There is a contrast in their use in the case where the star falls but, in this Aayah, it implies the meaning that the Prophet ﷺ does not fall or falter. Rather, he remains persistent and uninfluenced in reciting what Allah has revealed to him.

- General concepts that assist in the study of the Qur'an in general and contemplating it (At-Tadabbur):

1. Visual imagery for spiritual truths: In this Surah (An-Najm) the visual imagery is of the star or Pleiades as it falls. This image is tied to spiritual truths. In Surah Al-'Adiyaat the visual image of an early morning raid that suddenly comes is tied to the spiritual truth of the unannounced and shocking coming of judgement day.

2. Major strands in Makkan Qur'an – There are repeated strands or themes throughout the Makkan Surahs and each Surah may have different stresses upon these strands. Like for example, Surah Al-Insan primarily discusses Jannah whilst Surah Al-Qiyamah primarily discusses the horrors of the day of judgement and afterlife.

3. The continuity of strands between Surahs – Something that is mentioned in one Surah may have continuity in the following Surah building on what was mentioned in the previous Surah. For example, Surah An-Najm is preceded by Surah At-Tur. The last verse of At-Tur is:

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَإِدْبَارَ النُّجُومِ

“And in a part of the night declare His perfection and after [the setting of] the stars (An-Nujoom)”.

The first verse of An-Najm is:

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ

“I swear by the star (An-Najm) as it falls”.

There is therefore a continuity between the two Surahs in relation to the stars. For the purpose of At-Tadabbur (contemplating) upon the Qur'an it should be looked at as a Book and as a whole rather than a reference for individual proofs and evidences.

4. Neutral, unsure and opposing audiences: The stress or emphasis in speech differs according to the audience. A neutral audience does not require speech to be emphasised or stressed, an unsure audience requires at least one level of extra stress and an opposing audience requires more than one extra level of emphasis. The use of an oath represents a form of stress (or emphasis) and the use of مَا (Maa) for negation is a kind of stress. As such, the opening of Surah An-Najm indicates that it is addressing an opposing audience. Repetition like in

Surah Ar-Rahman is also a style of emphasis and stress. This informs us about who are being addressed by the Aayaat.

5. Coherence, structure and design of a Surah: This means to view a Surah as an integral unit, which is an expression of His wisdom and that everything is connected and ordered within a precise system and design i.e., there is no randomness involved. It makes clear that the Qur'an is not a product of human design and beyond human capability.

6. Primary and secondary meanings of words: For instance, in Surah An-Najm the word هَوَى means to fall as its primary meaning but also has a host of secondary meanings. These secondary meanings can allow us to understand the application of the verse in a fuller and more comprehensive manner. The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic and the Arabic language is richer than any translation. As such the richness of the language needs to be approached to understand the meanings of the Qur'an.

7. The taking of oaths: Oaths are sworn in many Aayaat of the Makkan Qur'an. There are two parts related to oaths: 1) The oath upon something and 2) The subject that the oath is connected to. In Arabic this is known as 1) Al-Qasm (الْقَسْمُ) and (2) Jawaab ul-Qasm (جَوَابُ الْقَسْمِ). It is important to discover the relationship between that which the oath is being taken upon and the subject of that oath, like the relationship between وَالْعَصْرِ "By time" and إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ "No doubt the human being is in loss". This requires Tadabbur (contemplation). Here, the oath (Qasm) is وَالْعَصْرِ (By time which is escaping or being squeezed out) and the Jawaab ul-Qasm is "No doubt the human being is in loss". The linkage is that "time" is the greatest thing that a human can lose from amongst many things. There is therefore deep connection between the two.

- Linguistic insights:

- In Surah An-Najm what is the relationship between the Qasm (الْقَسْمُ - oath) of: وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَى "By the star (or Pleiades) as it falls)" and the Jawaab ul-Qasm (جَوَابُ الْقَسْمِ - subject of the oath) مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَى "Your companion has not got lost and he has not deviated" and وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَى "And he does not speak from his Hawaa".

- There are seven insights that can be drawn from this relationship. Six are discussed now and the seventh is discussed separately later.

1. The stars falling on Judgement Day – One of the opinions regarding وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ “By the star (or Pleiades) as it falls)” is that it is referring to the stars falling on the Day of Judgement, the event of which is also mentioned in other Surahs. The connection that can be drawn here is that the man who is speaking to you right now is not lost nor deviated but is telling you about the most serious of events that is coming to you i.e., Judgement Day. He ﷺ is telling you something that is the most urgent and significant issue for you, that the stars are about fall, that Judgement Day is impending, that he is not making this up and it is not based on his own feelings or whims. This reflects one connection between the Qasm (oath) and the Jawaab ul-Qasm (The subject of the oath).

2. The piece-by-piece descent of the Qur’an – نَجْمٌ (Najm) comes from the verb نَجَّمَ (Najjama) which means to send down in instalments. It can be drawn from this that as these instalments keep coming down addressing each reality, occasion and question that is raised as they occur, it is clear evidence that he is not lost, deviated or making this up.

3. The arrival of changing realities – The falling of the star or Pleiades (constellation of stars) can be understood to refer to the changing of realities. The stars disappear when the sun rises which marks the beginning of a new reality following previous realities (exemplified by the night being full of stars) such as those related to the previous Prophets, Books and their followers. This new morning or day can be viewed to refer to the coming of the Qur’an, which is not the product of a man’s wishes and desires, but rather it represents the revelation that is the climax of all those realities that have passed by. It can also be drawn from this picturing that the light of the stars (as a metaphor for previous messages) contains some light (guidance) but not enough to illuminate the earth like the sun can. This can imply that there is no comparison between what is left in the previous messages with what has come now in the Qur’an. The stars have become irrelevant and are no longer needed as the ultimate light has now come.

4. The reliability of the stars for direction - The point drawn here is that they (i.e., the Arabs or Quraish) knew that the stars were reliable when they travelled at night. The stars are still used today for sea and air navigation and are recognised as a reliable source for finding guidance and direction in the darkness. The comparison that can be drawn here is that you think that the Prophet ﷺ is lost and misguided, however, in truth his role is much like the stars that you find so reliable that you rely upon them to navigate in the darkness. What he has come with has not made him lost nor will it make you get lost but rather it represents the only way to navigate in life.

5. The reliability of the stars for coming seasons – The Arabs gave a great deal of attention to the stars in relation to determining the seasons and were knowledgeable and completely in tune with the names and positioning of the stars. They were concerned with the issue of which star or stars and their positions were associated with which season. A similarity can be drawn to the Qur'an in terms of which Aayah is suitable for which occasion and which Surah should come down at what time. It also addresses the Question of when, where and why the final revelation should come, and why should it descend in parts or instalments and not all at once. None of these questions are raised in respect to the stars and just as you wait for them to appear in the right time for the right season, the Surahs and revelation are coming at their right time and place.

6. Star mythologies contrasted with the Qur'an – Stars have been part of the mythology of almost every religion outside of the revealed scriptures. Stars have also been attributed a close relationship with the Angels. Biblical references make a metaphorical connection between Angels and stars, and the Arabs considered stars to be Angels and also Gods. Many temples of ancient religions were directed to face towards stars in the sky. Here Allah is swearing by the stars that are falling as if to say that He is swearing by all the religions of the world based on Shirk and misguidance that are now falling (and disappearing) as a result of the coming of this revelation.

- General Observation: The Risaalah (revealed message) has three components: 1) The Angel 2) The Book or message and 3) The receiver of the message or Messenger. This passage of Surah An-Najm includes all three components.

- So far two have been highlighted:

1) That the Messenger ﷺ is not lost or deluded and that his character and the time that he has spent amongst them is proof enough of that.

2) That this speech is definitely not rooted in Hawaa' (i.e., self-desire, ambition etc.)

- Insight about the verse: وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ “And he does not speak from his Hawaa’

- This is an expression of a wider concept of the Deen of Islam not being based on Hawaa'. Other religions have been shaped to serve Hawaa' (desires and ambitions etc.) in the sense where their understanding of their relationship with their claimed God or Gods is based on the worldly harms that they avoid and the worldly benefits that they attain from that relationship. The relationship with

Allah is pure one that is not based on the notion of what a God can do for me or to satisfy my Hawaa' but rather on pure submission and subservience to the Creator as His slaves regardless of one's Hawaa'. The price that the Sahabah paid for accepting Islam in Makkah is a clear evidence that their Deen was not based on Hawaa'.

#53:4

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

“It is not except Wahy (revelation) that has been revealed”.

- Linguistic points:

- The **إِنْ** (In) here is **الْإِنْفِيَّةُ** (In An-Naafiyah) which is used for negation
- The meaning of **وَحْيٌ** (Wahy) is typically translated to refer to inspiration or revelation.
- **وَحْيٌ** (Wahy) has been used in the Arabic to mean “written” (**مَكْتُوبٌ** - Maktoob) like in the saying **وَحْيٌ فِي الْحَجَرِ** “Written in stone”.
- Its root is used in the Arabic word **وَحَاةٌ** (Wahaat) which refers to a sound that is barely heard and was used to refer to the barely audible sound of thunder from a distance or the faint tweeting of a bird.
- The verbs **وَحَىٰ إِلَيْهِ** (Wahaa Ilaihi) and **أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْهِ** (Awhaa Ilaahi) were used to mean “He spoke to him with speech that he concealed” i.e., to speak secretly or in a hidden in a way that nobody else knows what is said.
- **الْإِيْحَاءُ** (Al-Eehaa') which comes from **أَوْحَىٰ** (Awhaa) is used in Arab to mean: To place a meaning in the heart in a concealed or secretive manner. It is used to indicate to communication that is not obvious and undertaken by means of a gesture or whispering. An example of **أَوْحَىٰ** (Awhaa) is in the Aayah: **فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْ سَبِّحُوا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا** – “and he signalled (or gestured) to them to declare the perfection of Allah in the morning and afternoon” (Maryam:11). Here Zakariya (as) communicated to the people in an indirect manner as he was not permitted to speak.

- أَوْحَى (Awhaa) has also been used in Arabic to refer to a major transformation of circumstances. For example, the statement: أَوْحَى الْإِنْسَانُ (The person has Awhaa) which carries the meaning: “He has become like a king after being in poverty” i.e., a great transformation in fortunes.

- A summary of meanings for أَوْحَى (Awhaa) include: Putting something in the heart secretly, to hint or allude to something, to be written and to be transformed (i.e., from one circumstance to another).

- Insights from the language used in the Aayah:

- It is understood that Allah is revealing these words to the Prophet ﷺ but nobody else can hear the communication. The Sahabah would be with him and Jibreel would be speaking to him, but nobody would hear his voice and then the Prophet ﷺ would just start reciting. It therefore implies a secret or concealed communication.

- The statement إِنَّهُ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيِي يُوحَى “It is not except Wahy (revelation) that has been revealed” could be understood simply as “It is revelation” to follow up the statement: “He does not speak from his Hawaa” (desire)” i.e., rather “It is revelation” (هُوَ وَحْيِي). However, the additions to the speech here provide a deeper understanding than this simple understanding of what is intended.

- إِنَّهُ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيِي يُوحَى – The word وَحْيِي (Wahyun) has a Tanween ٌ (un) can be used in Arabic to demonstrate grandness when used in certain sentence structures. Here it would provide the meaning of something like: “It is nothing but a remarkable or incredible revelation”.

- The use of إِنْشَاءً (Itnaab) which refers to the practise of using extra words to convey a meaning adding emphasis to it. So instead of stating “It is not revelation” we have “It is nothing at all but revelation” i.e., it cannot be anything other than revelation.

- In addition, يُوحَى “That has been revealed” follows وَحْيِي (Wahyun) “Revelation”. The fact that it is revelation (Wahy) already implies that it has been revealed but the added mention of “That has been revealed” adds another dimension to the meaning which is that it keeps on being revealed at the right occasion or most fitting moments and that it will continue to be revealed.

- This can also add the meaning that “what you are listening to right now” of Surah An-Najm is nothing but revelation that is coming down as we speak.

- The statement **إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا** “It is nothing but” provides the meaning that “It is not possible to be anything other than divine revelation” i.e., contemplate this and you will come to the conclusion that this is not from a human source, it isn’t made up, nor is it poetry or like any other religion. Rather, this is nothing but revelation that is coming down and inspiration that is being communicated secretly to this Messenger ﷺ.

- The use of **إِنْ** (In) has greater emphasis in terms of negation than **مَا** (Maa). This verse is preceded by two verses which use **مَا** (Maa) for the purpose of negation: **مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ** “Your companion has not (مَا) got lost and he has not (مَا) deviated” and **الْهَوَىٰ** “And he does not (مَا) speak from his Hawaa” but switches here to use **إِنْ النَّافِيَةِ** (The ‘In’ of negation). This serves to make it the climax of the ultimate statement that is being made as if the whole point of everything that has been stated prior to it rests upon this final statement.

#53:5

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ

“The one intense in great powers taught him”.

- The one who is intense in great powers refers to Jibreel (as).

- Language points:

- The **هُ** (‘Hu’ - pronoun) in **عَلَّمَهُ** can refer to him (i.e., the Prophet ﷺ) or to it (i.e., Wahy or Qur’an). Both meanings are true. Both the Prophet ﷺ and the Qur’an (i.e., Wahy) were mentioned in the previous Aayaat and as such the **هُ** (‘Hu’ - pronoun) in **عَلَّمَهُ** can mean both “he taught him” and “he taught it”.

- The word **“الْقُوَىٰ”** (Al-Quwaa):

- It is the plural of the word **“قُوَّةٌ”** (Quwwah) which means “might, power, strength etc.”. It means that Jibreel (as) does not just have one kind of strength or power but rather has multiple strengths and powers and each one of those strengths or powers is intense. **شَدِيدٌ** (Shadeed) adds the meaning of intensity and **“الْقُوَىٰ”** (Al-

Quwaa) refers to the multiplicity of his strengths and powers, which include for example his ability to travel, to understand and to destroy amongst other abilities which are unlike the powers or strengths of anyone else.

- The word “شَدِيد” (Shadeed) and its being attached to the word “الْقُوَى” (Al-Quwaa – “Powers”):

- The mention of “شَدِيد” (Shadeed - Intense) in conjunction with powers “الْقُوَى” (Al-Quwaa) could imply a threat i.e., the one who is bringing me the revelation that you mock has intense and extreme (Shadeed) powers and strengths, so beware.

- “شَدِيد” (Shadeed - Intense) is connected to what he is teaching and its impact upon the one who is being taught i.e., if the one teaching is intense in powers then that makes that which he is teaching and the one being taught the recipient of intense and mighty in power. In the context of its revelation it may appear that the opponents of the Messenger ﷺ are in a position of strength and that he ﷺ and his companions are weak, however, this implication of “شَدِيد” (Shadeed - Intense) attached to the powers of the one teaching him implies that it is actually the Messenger ﷺ that is backed by great strength and might.

- Another implication is that all those that learn the Qur'an from the same original source, the source of intense powers (i.e., Jibreel (as)), starting from the Messenger ﷺ to those he taught it to, then to the next generation and then the next and so on continuously until the end of time, will be endowed with this strength and power. As such, it is the Qur'an that was taught to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ by شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى “The one possessing intense powers” that provides the Muslim with strength regardless of the circumstances.

- A further implication of شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى “Intense in powers” implies that the Qur'an is so mighty that it couldn't be delivered except by the mightiest of Angels who is intense in his powers. The Qur'an itself is the manifestation of might and does not succumb to attacks or surrender to criticisms, whims or mockery etc. The mightiest of Allah's angels is being given the heaviest task. Allah describes weight of the Qur'an saying:

إِنَّا سَنُلْقِي عَلَيْكَ قَوْلًا ثَقِيلًا

“No doubt, We will cast upon you a heavy word” (Al-Muzzammil: 5)

And:

لَوْ أَنزَلْنَاهُ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَّرَأَيْنَهُ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ

“If We had sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and coming apart from the fear of Allah” (Al-Hashr: 21).

- Insights drawn from the language:

- شَدِيد (Shadeed) comes from the root verb شَدَّ (Shadda) which was used in Arabic to refer to tying up knots and ropes and making them tight. قُوَّة (Quwwah) has also been used in the Arabic language to refer to a rope (and can refer to the individual strands or "plies" that are twisted together to form a rope, making it stronger). Both words in the secondary meanings have a connection to a rope. The next Aayah states ذُو مِرَّةٍ and the word مِرَّة (Mirrah) comes from a root which was used by the Arabs also as one of the words to refer to a rope. All three words are therefore associated with a rope حَبْل (Habl) whilst Allah describes the Qur'an as a rope when He said: "وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ" "And hold fast to the rope (Habl) of Allah" (Aali 'Imran: 103). In a Hadith he ﷺ said: "كِتَابُ اللَّهِ حَبْلٌ مَمْدُودٌ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ" "The Book of Allah is a rope (Habl) extended from the sky to the earth". When we are holding on to the Qur'an, we are holding on to a rope that has come from Allah 'Azza Wa Jalla through Jibreel (as), to the Messenger ﷺ and then to us. These verses therefore provide the image of the complete chain (in the form of a rope) for revelation from Allah, via His Angel (Jibreel) to the Messenger ﷺ. This can all be drawn from the language and secondary meanings of the words in عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى "The one intense in great powers is the one who taught him".

- The Aayah عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى "The one intense in great powers is the one who taught him" has no extra stresses or points of emphasis which indicates that this verse is addressing a neutral audience in contrast to the first four verses which have multiple points of emphasis indicating that they are addressing an opposing audience. It is however known that it is still addressing opponents to the message which raises the question regarding why the neutral style is being used here. An explanation for this is that by the time Allah tells us where the Qur'an came from, there is no longer any need to stress the strength or power of Jibreel (as), to prove the strength of the power of the Qur'an or the empowerment of His Messenger ﷺ. It is just normal (neutral) speech, in the case where the point has already been established that: "You have no power against this". Sometimes stress and emphasis make the language amazing and other times removing that makes it amazing.

#53:6

ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ

"The possessor of Mirrah. And he rose to [his] true form".

- The linguistic meaning(s) of مِرَّةٍ (Mirrah):

- المَرَّ (Al-Marr) was used to mean a rope (حَبْل - Hahl). المَرِير (Al-Mareer) was used to refer to a long slender twisted rope.

- أَمَرَّ (Amarra) is used to refer to skilfulness in tying something up i.e., it is completely well executed. It is used to express the meaning of doing an excellent job and finishing it to perfection. From this meaning when Jibreel (as) is described as ذُو مِرَّةٍ (Dhu Mirratin) it means that everything he does, he does it to perfection and sees it through to its end with excellence.

- In origin مِرَّةٍ (Mirrah) comes from the verb مَرَّ (Marra) and verbal noun مُرُور (Muroor) which means to come and go (or to pass by or through). This meaning can be linked to the fact that Jibreel (as) has the power to come and go, travelling from the seventh heaven to earth and back again continuously delivering each part of revelation at its right time.

- اِسْتَمَرَّ (Istamarra) means for something to continue upon the same course or path i.e., the notion of continuity (اِسْتِمْرَار - Istimraar). This meaning points to consistency and reliability in respect to Jibreel (as). That he is continuous in his relationship and connection to the Messenger ﷺ.

- The meaning of مِرَّةٍ (Mirrah) from Tafsir sources:

- Ibn 'Abbas and Qatadah: "The possessor of a tall and beautiful creation (i.e., form)". And it is said: "The possessor of a healthy body and free of any defects".

- Ar-Razi: "The first (meaning): The possessor of power. The second: The possessor of perfection in the mind (A'ql) and Deen. The third: The possessor of a great sight and inspiring awe. The fourth: The possessor of a beautiful character".

- Al-Alousiy: "It is like in the first (i.e., verse: شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى) he is described with the power of action whilst this (ذُو مِرَّةٍ) describes him with the power of Nazhar (discernment or insight) and 'Aql (mind or intellect). The Arabs used to call anyone who had a strong intellect and opinion: ذُو مِرَّةٍ "The possessor of Mirrah". It (i.e., the word) is used in the statement أَمَرَّتِ الْحَبْلُ (Umrirat-il-Habl (rope)) when its (i.e., the ropes) threads are perfectly tied and twisted. That is because in origin it indicates to something that is done one time (المَرَّة - Al-Marrah) after another time (المَرَّة - Al-Marrah) which indicates to an increase in strength that is not heedless". (Note: This understanding is being used to discuss the mind and how it is strengthened and made resilient).

- Insight: Jibreel (as) was not just charged with the task of delivery but was also a teacher: عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى “The one intense in great powers taught him”. This task of teaching requires a great level of intelligence: ذُو مِرَّةٍ “The possessor of Mirrah”. The Messenger ﷺ was both receiving the Qur’an and being taught it. Additionally, the use of Tanween ٍ in مِرَّةٍ (Mirratin) can linguistically indicate to the fact that this intellect is an “incredible” intellect.

- The meaning of: فَاسْتَوَى “He rose or stood up”.

- فَاسْتَوَى means: He stood up straight upon his true (or original) form which Allah تَعَالَى created him upon, referring to Hiraa’ at the early stages of the Prophethood when he (the Prophet) ﷺ was before him. This is mentioned in the Hadith recorded by Al-Imam Ahmad, ‘Abd bin Humaid and the Jama’ah, from Ibn Mas’ud: “Six hundred wings, each wing of which filled (or blocked) the horizon”. اِسْتَوَى (Istawaa) therefore means here something levelling out and becoming complete in itself, like Ar-Raghib stated. This is the intended meaning of Istiqaamah (standing up straight) and not the opposite of crookedness. And example of its usage is: اِسْتَوَى الثَّمَرُ (The fruit Istawaa) which means that it became ripe (i.e., according to the meaning of becoming complete in itself).

#53:7

وَهُوَ بِالْأَفْقِ الْأَعْلَى

“Whilst he was in the highest horizon or sky above”

- This has been said to refer to the sky which is above your head i.e., the part of the sky which is most visible. As such, it depicts Jibreel (as) filling the sky right above and before the Messenger ﷺ. It is also said that it refers to the horizon where the sun rises from.

#53:8

ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى

“Then he drew near (i.e., to descend closer from above) and he hung (i.e., in the air)”

- Language points:

- The word: دَنَا (Danaa)

- دَنَا (Danaa) carries the meaning of approaching and drawing near to something and here it implies descending from up high to draw close and near.

- The word: تَدَلَّى (Tadallaa)

- تَدَلَّى (Tadallaa) comes from the Arabic word دَلَّى (Dalw) which refers to a bucket which is lowered in a well. It means to hang like a bucket. It means that Jibreel (as) is hanging and suspended in the sky. The scholar Amin Ahsan Islahi said in his “Tadabbur ul-Qur’an” that it is like the image of a teacher lovingly leaning over a student to see his work, teach him or tell him something that will benefit him. In this way تَدَلَّى (Tadallaa) provides the image of Jibreel (as) hovering over the Messenger ﷺ and closeness is being described by these words: ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى “Then he drew (or descended) close and hovered”.

#53:9

فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ

“Then he was the distance of two bow lengths or (even) closer”.

- Language points:

- قَوْسَ (Qaws) is a bow (i.e., the curved frame that has string attached to shoot arrows).

- قَابَ (Qaab) refers to the short gap between the middle and end of a bow or the short distance between the middle of the bow and its string.

- قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ (Qaaba Qawsaini) is also understood to mean the length of two bows and it is an expression which is used to mean extremely close.

- Statements of the early scholars of Tafsir:

- Mujahid and Al-Hasan said: قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ (Qaaba Qawsaini) refers to a practice of the Arabs in the period of Jahiliyah (pre-Islam) when they would make a pact or alliance. They would take out two bows (from each tribe) and stick one of them to the other where the arch (قَابَ – Qaab) of the bows would be attached to each other as if it was one arch (قَابَ – Qaab. They would then pull them together and shoot one arrow. It would be a sign that the happiness of one would be the happiness of the other, and the anger of one would be the anger of the other,

which cannot be opposed (i.e., that they have now become one and are inseparable).

#53:10

فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ

“Then He revealed to His slave whatever He inspired”.

- Language insights:

- مَا أَوْحَىٰ “Whatever He inspired or revealed”. It is left general and is not specific. This inspires curiosity to know and discover what it is that He inspired to His ‘Abd مَّا (Maa) unlike الَّذِي (Alladhee) is alludes to إِبْهَام (Ibhaam – obscurity or ambiguity) in Arabic in the case where the thing the مَّا (Maa) is attached to is not explicitly clear or specified leaving more to be discovered. An implication here is that the Qur’an will keep on giving more and more, and that there will never be a time when we have exhausted the Qur’an or gained from it everything that it has to offer.

- فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ “Then He revealed to His slave whatever He inspired”. The language here can leave an element of ambiguity in respect to whom the pronouns are attributed to. Is it directly to Allah or is it to Jibreel (as). This ambiguity in language captures the continuous chain that is highlighted in this Surah between Allah, Jibreel (as) and His Messenger ﷺ in respect to the revelation.

#53:11

مَا كَذَّبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ

“The heart did not lie about what it saw”.

- Language points:

- The primary meaning of كَذَّبَ (Kadhaba) is “to lie”. It also has secondary meanings that include:

- Secondary meanings include:

- The Arabs would say: كَذَبَ الْحَرُّ (Kadhaba l-Harr – Literally: The temperature or heat has lied) to refer to when the heat (Al-Harr) breaks and the temperature cools.

- كَذَبَ الْعَيْنُ (Kadhaba l-‘Ain – Literally: The eye has lied) was used to refer to when the sense of sight betrays it (i.e., the eye), for example with a mirage.

- كَذَبَ السَّيْرُ (Kadhaba s-Sair – Literally: The walking has lied” was used to refer to when someone is stumbling and not walking effectively.

- كَذَبَ الْوَحْشِيُّ (Kadhaba l-Wahshiy – Literally: The wild animal has lied) was used to refer to when the animal runs for a stretch and then stops to look behind it i.e., cautionary movement.

- كَذَبَ الْقَوْمُ السُّرَى (Kadhaba l-Qawmu s-Suraa – Literally: The people lied against the travel) which was used to refer to when they were unable to travel i.e., because they did not have the means to travel.

- مَا كَذَّبَ (Maa Kadhdhaba) concerning a person means: He did not give up, he was not cowardly and he fulfilled his job i.e., he was true to his task. كَذَّبَ (Kadhdhaba) without negation would there imply cowardice, giving up on something and not fulfilling it properly or giving it its due right.

- The summary of these meanings is reflected in a deficiency of strength and intensity that exists in something i.e., when it weakens, breaks or doesn't work or fulfil its function as it should.

- In summary the secondary meanings of كَذَّبَ (Kadhaba) therefore include:

- A decline in intensity or sharpness.
- Inability.
- Losing toughness or stamina i.e., becoming weak.
- Cowardice.
- Misconception/underestimation.
- Convenience.

- All of these meanings reflect the opposite of what the Arabs viewed something should be or representative of its truth or true reality for them. As such they attached the meaning of lying to these realities.

- Insight concerning the verse:

مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى

“The heart did not lie about what it saw”:

- The seen reality vs the unseen reality and two kinds of seeing:

- Allah describes humans as being composed of two parts: One part that is seen and another which is unseen. The physical aspect of the human is seen but the Ruh (رُوح) is the unseen aspect. The former contains the physical heart whilst the latter contains a spiritual unseen heart. Similarly, there are seen physical eyes and ears and unseen spiritual eyes and ears. On many occasions the Qur'an is addressing the unseen spiritual aspects attached to these organs and not their physical realities:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً

Then after that your hearts became hardened, like stones or even harder (Al-Baqarah: 74).

لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا

They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear (Al-A'raf: 179).

- The unseen spiritual eyes and ears are connected to the unseen heart because when the heart is sealed, the eyes cannot see and the ears cannot hear (i.e., the truth):

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ

Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their vision is a veil (Al-Baqarah: 7).

- The Prophet ﷺ here is experiencing the seen and unseen world at the same time which we cannot do. He was granted access to some of the unseen which allowed him to see the Angels. When Allah states: كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى “The heart did not lie about what it saw” He combines in this statement the unseen and the seen, because it his spiritual experience that is seeing something physical. The Messenger ﷺ accepted what he saw because his heart was already spiritually conditioned.

- The flip side of this is the case of the disbeliever who cannot accept the reality before him because his heart has not been spiritually conditioned is found in the Aayaat:

وَلَوْ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فَظَلُّوا فِيهِ يَعْرُجُونَ (14) لَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا سُكِّرَتْ أَبْصَارُنَا بَلْ نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مَّسْحُورُونَ

And [even] if We opened to them a gate from the heaven and they continued therein to ascend, (14) They would say: “Our eyes have only been dazzled. Rather, we are a people affected by magic” (Al-Hijr: 14-15).

i.e., even if they were shown the unseen, they would reject it.

And Allah said:

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قِرْطَاسٍ فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

And even if We had sent down to you, [O Muhammad], a written scripture on pages and they touched it with their (own) hands, the disbelievers would surely say: “This is nothing but obvious magic” (Al-An’am: 7).

- Language insights:

- الْفُؤَادُ (Al-Fu’aad) – Allah didn’t say “His heart” but rather “The heart” with ال (Alif Laam). The Laam here is “لَامُ الْكَمَالِ” - Laam Al-Kamaal” the “Laam or perfection” which implies the meaning here that the Prophet’s heart was so perfect, that only his heart could have seen what it saw. Other hearts would not be capable of withstanding the experience of looking at Jibreel (as).

- رَأَى (Ra’aa) in the statement مَا رَأَى “What he saw”: رَأَى (Ra’aa) “To see or he saw” in Arabic can refer to two meanings: 1) To see (physically) and 2) To understand, internalise, take into consideration or grasp something. It is the same in English, when after hearing a statement or argument that is presented you would say: “I see”. An example is found in His speech:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْفِيلِ

Have you not seen (i.e., considered or understood), [O Muhammad], how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? (Feel: 1).

- This implies that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not just physically see something but rather also grasped, understood and took it in. This understanding encompasses the realisation of what it signified and the burden that he would have to carry.

- As such: مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى “The heart did not lie about what it saw” implies that his heart was able to bear the burden and weight that a mountain wasn’t capable

of, the burden that he fully grasped the consequences of reflected in the words رَأَى “What he saw”. His heart did not shy or cower from it but rather accepted it and what is signified fully.

#53:12

أَفْتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَى مَا يَرَى

“Are you going to doubt (or dispute with) him about what he sees”.

- Language points:

- Words that imply the meaning of doubt in the Qur'an:

1. شَكَّ (Shakka) - شَكٌّ (Shakk).
2. شَبَّهَ (Shabbaha) - شُبْهَةً (Shubhah).
3. مَرَجَّ (Maraja) - مَرَجٌ (Maraj).
4. لَبَسَ (Labasa) - لِبْسٌ (Libs).
5. رَابَ (Raaba) - رَايَ (Raib).
6. لَمْتَرَى (Imtaraa) - مِرْيَةً (Miryah).

- These words can all be translated as “doubt” however the unique differences in the meanings of these words will be found mainly in their secondary meanings.

- Insights from the verse:

- أَفْتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَى مَا يَرَى “Are you going to doubt (or dispute with) him about what he sees” therefore means “Are you going to cast doubt and throw conjecture into what he sees” and not just “what he sees” but also “what he understands” i.e., not only are you going to cast doubt upon what he sees in terms of the Angel delivering him revelation but also cast doubt and conjecture upon the way he sees reality, life and the truth, and the way he sees your false religion, practises and excuses and cuts right through them. Nobody sees the truth as he does and his arguments are crystal clear and yet you are going to cast doubt on him?! What position and truth are you standing upon to cast doubt upon the Messenger ﷺ?! The view of the world that the Qur'an is providing is so powerful how are you capable of casting doubt in it!?

- It from the scheming of the opponents of Islam and their disbelieving propaganda from the time of the Messenger ﷺ until our present time to attempt

to take one issue, cast conjecture and doubt in it, twist it and make it confusing and then attempt to negate the whole of Islam by it. A contemporary example is that of the age of 'Aa'ishah, the Mother of the believers, may Allah be pleased with her, at the time of her marriage to the Prophet ﷺ. It is as if the whole truth concerning Islam that someone came to understand can just be made to disappear and washed away due to one allegation that doesn't even stand up to scrutiny. Another example is found in the background of the revelation of this Surah discussed earlier when the Quraish twisted the mention of their idols of Lat and 'Uzza in Surah An-Najm to serve their agenda and propaganda against Islam. Another example is the issue of Al-Israa and Al-Mi'raj (The night journey and ascension) which was targeted by the Quraish in order to cast doubt on the Prophet ﷺ and the message that he brought.

- The language in these verses is literal in the sense that the Angel was physically manifested in the horizon, that he came down and was dangling, that the Messenger ﷺ "saw" him just like the revelation concerning the Al-Israa and Al-Mi'raj (The night journey and ascension) describe real (literal and physical) events. The propaganda of the disbelievers seeks to pressure the believer to reinterpret these realities to fit with contemporary material and scientific concepts, so that they say for example: "That they are describing spiritual experiences or those that happened in dreams" and were not "real or actual events".

- Those who are affected by these propaganda attempts in our contemporary time where a single issue is falsely raised in an attempt to disprove the entirety of Islam are usually those who have a weak relationship with the Qur'an. It is through being deeply grounded in the Qur'an that these weak attempts have no effect on the believer because the Qur'an is the source of the believer's strength. The Qur'an crushes these doubts and allegations that are made, making them trivial and laughable.

#53:13

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ

"And he certainly saw him in another descent",

Background to verses 13-18 – These relate to another occasion of the Prophet ﷺ seeing Jibreel (as) which did not take place on earth but when he ﷺ was taken on a heavenly journey above to a place where even the angels were not permitted. These verses describe what he ﷺ saw and experienced.

- Language points:

- The word نَزْلَةٌ (Nazlah) comes from نُزُول (Nuzool) which means to descend or lower down. (NAK opinion): نَزْلَةٌ (Nazlah) refers to a low position which is in contrast to the earlier verse that describes Jibreel (as) in a high position: وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَى “Whilst he was in the highest horizon or sky above” (An-Najm: 7). The majority have stated that نَزْلَةٌ (Nazlah) refers to the act of the descent which infers that he came from a higher place.

- Al-Imam Al-Alousiy raises the question of why نَزْلَةً (Nazlatan) was used instead of مَرَّةً (Marratan) where it would be said: “He saw him another Marrah (i.e., time)”. Allah didn’t just say he saw him at another time but rather, that he saw him at a descent at another time.

- Al-Imam Ar-Razi focuses on this specific word to draw its significance. He states: “The Nazlah (descent) in this occurrence can refer to Muhammad ﷺ as we have previously mentioned. That is because the Prophet ﷺ in accordance with what came recorded in some of the reports related about the night of Al-Mi’raaj (ascent to the heavens) went past Jibreel (as) and Jibreel (as) said to him: “If I was to get closer by even a fingertip I would be burnt or combust”. He then returned to him and so that was a Nazlah (descent)” (End of Ar-Razi’s speech).

- This implies that the Prophet ﷺ during the night of Al-Mi’raaj (ascent to the heavens) ascended beyond a point that even Jibreel (as) was able to go. Accordingly, this Nazlah (descent) can refer to the Prophet ﷺ descending down to Jibreel (as). This imagery depicted in this verse is therefore describing the ascending of the Prophet ﷺ in the heavens and how high he went.

#53:14

عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى

“At the Lote tree of the utmost boundary”.

- Language points:

- The word: سِدْرَةٌ (Sidrah). It refers to a Lote tree.

- Insight: Imagery of paradise and hellfire draws upon language that we are familiar with in the life of this world, yet at the same time it is acknowledged that

the things in paradise or hellfire are unlike what we have in this world. For example, a tree in Jannah is not like a tree in the life of this world, a fruit or drink in Jannah is not like a fruit or drink in this life, in the case where they surpass anything that we may have witnessed or experienced in this worldly life. The same applies in relation to this Lote tree (Sidrah) mentioned in this verse.

- Secondary meanings related to the word سِدْرَة (Sidrah) from the root letters س د ر.

- سِدَار (Sidaar) refers to drape or curtain draped down in a tent or to any widespread cover.

- سَدَرَ الرَّجُلُ الشَّعْرَ وَالسِّتْرَ وَالثَّوبَ – It is said that the man سَدَرَ (Sadara) the hair, curtain or garment when he lets it hang down loose without constraint. سَدَرَ (Sadara) therefore can mean to let something hang down loose.

- تَسَدَّرُ is used to mean to cover oneself with clothing.

- سَدَرَ بَصَرُهُ is an expression that means he was barely able to see because his eyes were dazzled (سَدَرَ). When somebody is unable to see clearly the vision is experiencing سَدَرَ (Sadr).

- These words share a theme of covering, draping and creating a barrier. It is as if Allah is describing a tree that is massive and casts a shadow.

- الْمُنْتَهَى (Al-Muntahaa) which means the final or the end (i.e., point of something). It can refer to the limit or final border that can't be gone beyond.

- عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى – Therefore means the Lote tree that is at the very end. (NAK opinion) This can provide the image of Jibreel (as) being at a place that was at the very end of what can be seen which provides the picture of him being far away and small, like a star in the sky, which is in contrast to the Prophet's ﷺ first vision of Jibreel (as) when he filled the horizon.

- سِدْرَة (Sidrah) has also been used in Arabic to refer to the “climax” of something and then by adding الْمُنْتَهَى (Al-Muntahaa) to it, it implies “the ultimate climax of climaxes”. Ar-Razi stated: “That is an explanation of the arrival of the Muhammad ﷺ to the Sidrah (climax or final point) of Al-Yaqeen (certainty) concerning which there is no Yaqeen (certainty) above (or beyond that)” i.e., he reached a level of conviction that there is no conviction above that.

#53:15

عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ

“And right by it (i.e., the tree “Sidrah” or low position “Nazlah”) is the Jannah (garden) of (ultimate) refuge”

- Language points:

- مَأْوَى (Ma'waa) comes from أَوَى - يَأْوِي which means to seek or have refuge.
مَأْوَى (Ma'waa) means the place of refuge.

- Opinions of scholars regarding the “Garden of refuge”:

- Al-Imam Al-Alousiy stated: “This is used as evidence to state that Jannah is in the Samaa’ (heaven/sky)”. Qatadah stated: It is a Jannah (garden) that the souls of the martyrs are given refuge in and not the same as the one promised to the Muttaqeen. It has also been said: It is a Jannah (garden) that the Angels (peace be upon them) have as a refuge. But the first opinion is more apparent. There is also another reading (Qiraa’ah) which Al-Alousiy mentions which is: جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى (Jannahu l-Ma'waa) (i.e., instead of the ة “Taa’ Marbootah”, it is a ه “Haa” which means he was covered by the refuge).

- Further insights: The significance of the Jannah (garden) being described as جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى (Jannat ul-Ma'waa) “The garden of (ultimate) refuge”.

- The origin of جَنَّة (Jannah) refers to lush greenery that covers. It is something that people desire to have in the life of this world. It is possible to have a Jannah in this life but it will never be a refuge (مَأْوَى - Ma'waa). Humans can have beautiful things in this world like a beautiful house and family but whatever they may have it is never secure and permanently safe. People develop and seek refuges in life to make them feel secure and safe. Humans are always pursuing that which will provide them with a (مَأْوَى - Ma'waa) i.e., a refuge that will offer them security and safety. The language construct of the statement: عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى “And at its location there is Jannat ul-Ma'waa” implies that only there is the garden of refuge. This means that ultimate refuge cannot be found in any other garden or thing that is beautiful. Regardless of how many material acquisitions are made in the life of this world and regardless of how beautiful they are (or however many beautiful gardens are acquired), they will never have الْمَأْوَى “The refuge” and the realisation of permanent safety and security. Jannah is the first time that humans will accomplish the real and ultimate refuge where they are safeguarded from all their fears.

#53:16

إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَى

“When (all of a sudden) the Lote tree was being covered by that which covers it”.

- Language insights:

- When إِذْ (Idh) is used with the present tense it implies the past tense. إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ “When (all of a sudden) the Lote tree was being covered” therefore implies the past tense whilst مَا يَغْشَى “What covers it” is in the present tense. This implies that this reality of the tree being covered which happened in the past continues to be recalled and felt later by the Messenger ﷺ who witnessed it.

- Here, Allah uses the word يَغْشَى which means “to cover” and one of the meanings of غَاشِيَةٌ (Ghaashiyah) which is derived from يَغْشَى is “a low tree”. It can depict the image of this thing that covers in terms of the Sidrah (Lote tree) being overtaken by something else i.e., this thing that covers was covered by something else even more.

- Statements of the scholars of Tafsir:

- Ath-Tha’aalibi in his Tafsir “Jawaahir Al-Hisaan”: “The scholars of Tafsir have mentioned various opinions however that represents a forced or unwarranted interpretation of the verse because Allah left it ambiguous (i.e., a mystery). They are seeking its explanation whilst he (i.e., the Prophet ﷺ) stated: “It was covered by colours which I don’t know what they are”.

#53:17

مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى

“The eye (or sight) did not turn away or deviate nor did it transgress beyond the limit”.

- Language points:

- الزَّائِغُ (At-Tazaayugh) which comes from زَاغَ (Zaagha) means to be crooked or bent away from being straight and is used to refer to crooked teeth or a bent spear.

- زَاغَ (Zaagha) means to turn away, depart or deviate “from” (something).

Examples of this turning away, deviation or departure include: وَمَنْ يَزِغْ مِنْهُمْ عَنْ أَمْرِنَا

“And whoever turned away from our command” (Saba’: 12). فَلَمَّا زَاغُوا أَزَاغَ اللَّهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ

“Then, when they turned away, Allah turned away their hearts” (As-Saff: 5). An

example of its use is: زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ (Zaagha l-Basar) which means the Basar (sight)

turned away from its place just like what happens to the person at the time of

fear. وَإِذْ زَاغَتِ الْأَبْصَارُ “And when the eyes shifted in fear” (Al-Ahzab: 10).

- طَغَى “Taghaa” means to exceed the limits of something. وَمَا طَغَى “And he did not

Taghaa” can mean that his sight did not go beyond what he was seeing in line

with the first statement مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ “And his sight did not deviate (i.e., from what

he saw)” i.e., that his eyes were completely transfixed upon this sight.

- Another possible meaning is that when someone exceeds limits it brings harm (like looking at the sun for too long for example) and from this the understanding can be that the Messenger ﷺ was not harmed by what he saw and was able to withstand the vision before him.

- وَمَا طَغَى “And he did not Taghaa” can also carry the meaning of “he was not rebellious” in the case where طَغَى implies the meaning of being rebellious and exceeding the limits. Here, the meaning of the verse would imply that he ﷺ did not turn his sight away (مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ) from what he saw and he was not rebellious in the manner that he was looking nor disrespectful but rather looked in humility, love, awe and respect. This is because staring intensely at something or someone can often be disrespectful and hateful. An example of that is the way that the disbelievers used to stare at the Messenger ﷺ with hatred:

وَإِنْ يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ

And verily, those who disbelieve would almost make you slip with their eyes (through hatred) when they hear the Reminder (the Qur'an) (Al-Qalam: 51).

- Statements of scholars of Tafsir:

- Al-Biqaa'iy: It (i.e., وَمَا طَغَى) means it (i.e., الْبَصَرُ – Al-Basar – “Sight”) did not exceed the limit of what had been permitted for it even though that world was strange for a human being and contains wondrous sights that bewilder the one looking at them.

- Insight into the above statement: Even though the Messenger ﷺ was in this strange and unfamiliar world surrounding by amazing and wondrous sights his sight nevertheless remained fixed on the Lote tree that was

being covered and did not exceed that to look anywhere else. Even though he is in this new incredibly wondrous and shocking world, something overtook this Lote tree (Sidrah) that was so overpowering and captivating that he was unable to look anywhere else.

- Ar-Razi had an insight concerning the significance of the use of language in this Aayah. مَالَ (Maala) has the same meaning of “to deviate or incline/move away) as زَاغَ (Zaagha) and تَجَاوَزَ (Tajaawaza) means to “exceed the limits” like طَغَى (Taghaa). The significance of using زَاغَ (Zaagha) and طَغَى (Taghaa) is that they both also carry spiritual meanings whilst مَالَ (Maala) and تَجَاوَزَ (Tajaawaza). An example of the use of زَاغَ (Zaagha) with its spiritual meaning connected to the heart can be found in the Aayah:

رَبَّنَا لَا تُرِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا

Our Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us (Aali ‘Imran: 8).

As such the meaning of مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ “The eye (or sight) did not turn away or deviate” can also carry the spiritual meaning of “His heart did not deviate”. And the meaning of وَمَا طَغَى “And he did not transgress the limits” can also carry the spiritual meaning of “and his heart did not rebel”. This is the world where the spiritual and physical meet together and here the wording used combines the spiritual and physical.

#53:18

لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى

“He certainly saw of the greatest signs of his Lord”

- Insights:

- There are various opinions about what the Messenger ﷺ actually saw in this instance. However, this Aayah states that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw from the great signs of Allah without mentioning exactly what those signs were here in this instance. It can be deduced from this that there were some things that the Prophet ﷺ was provided with so that he could deliver it to humanity, but the Prophet had such a special status with Allah, that somethings that he gave His Prophet were only for his Prophet and a secret between them, and that we should be aware of that.

- Ar-Razi extrapolates: Finally, the Prophet ﷺ was therefore able to see, internalize and understand (All meaning of رَأَى) something no other human could.
- You (i.e., the Arabs and those being addressed by the Qur'an) in no way could compare to the power of vision endowed to him ﷺ and yet ironically with your limited sight you:

أَفْتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ

“Are you going to doubt (or dispute with) him about what he sees?”

- No! Rather it is he who sees like no other human can!
- The grandest thing you can see are the stars and rising sun and that was used as a miniscule illustration to describe something so much grander, which your companion (صَاحِب) saw!
- The stars were closely connected to and intertwined with the lives of the Arabs. The language used in these Aayaat from Surah An-Najm (1-18) makes the connection between the stars which were integral to their lives to the mission and Prophethood of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ so that they would never be able to see or think about the stars again without automatically being made to think about the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.
- Overview of the structure of the Aayaat 1-18:
 - First section: Aayaat 1-4 inform that he ﷺ was not lost nor led by whim. And that what came to him was a mighty revelation.
 - Second section: Aayaat 5-10 informs that the mighty one (Jibreel (as)) came down to him and approached close to him on earth. It was he (Jibreel) who taught him (Muhammad ﷺ).
 - Third section: Aayaat 11-12 inform that his heart did not lie and asks: “Are you doubting him (about what he saw)?
 - Fourth section: Aayaat 13-16 inform about his ﷺ seeing Jibreel (as) for a second time descending in the heavens.
 - Fifth section: Aayaat 17-18 inform that his ﷺ eye did not deviate and that he saw one of Allah's greatest signs.

- Insights from this structure: There is a correlation between the beginning of this section of Aayaat and the end. It begins with a negation of two things in relation to the Messenger ﷺ: “Your companion has not got lost and he has not deviated” and ends with two negations: “The eye (or sight) did not turn away or deviate nor did it transgress beyond the limit”. The first negation is followed by the affirmation that Allah provided him with a mighty revelation: “It is not except Wahy (revelation) that has been revealed”, in the case where the “Tanween” on the word وَحْيٍ (Wahy – revelation) implies greatness or mightiness (عُظْمَة – ‘Uzhmah). The second negation is followed by the affirmation that Allah showed him of the greatest signs “He certainly saw of the greatest signs of his Lord”. As such, the first four Aayat (1-4) have a close connection to the last two Aayaat (17-18). The third section (11-12) also contains a negation “The heart did not lie about what it saw. Are you going to doubt (or dispute with) him about what he sees?” As such the first, third and fifth sections contains all the negations. The missing sections are the second and fourth: The second informs about the Messenger’s ﷺ first seeing of Jibreel (as) and the fourth informs about his second seeing. As such the 18 Aayaat have a beautiful architecture, where 1,3 and 5 are connected and 2 and 4 are connected.

#53:19 and #53:20

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ (19) وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَىٰ

“Have you seen (i.e., considered the case of) Al-Laat and Al-‘Uzzaa. And Manaat, the third, the other”.

- Background points:

- The first section of Surah An-Najm (Aayaat 1-18) focuses upon what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw and understood when he ascended to the heavens. The next section beginning with Aayah 19 moves to the discussion of: “O, you doubt what he saw, what do you see?”. “If what he is calling to is false, then tell us about what you follow, believe in and call to” ... “Have you considered Al-Laat

and Al-'Uzzaa ... And Al-Manaat the third other ... Do you have males (or sons) whilst He has females (or daughters)?

- The ancient Arab tradition was heavily focused on stars, many believed that Angels were stars themselves which was shared by other ancient traditions in the world which depicted stars as Angels. The belief also existed amongst Arabs that Angels were the daughters of Allah. Although mankind started upon the basis of Islam (i.e., with Adam (as)), over the generations the teachings became corrupted. Two kinds of Shirk emerged. One was that anything that was perceived to bring benefit or cause harm came to be depicted to be a God like some natural phenomena like the sun, winds and mountains, or even animals which were dangerous or beneficial, like snakes and cows. Another type of shirk that developed over time was when the focus shifted from Allah to those who were close to Allah like Prophets, Angels and saints. The reason they worshipped Angels is because they believed that they are close to Allah and that Angels control lots of things. The fundamental cause of Shirk (associating partners to Allah) comes down to one matter alone and that is that people want something from the religion. It's not what the God wants but rather what the people want. The only motivating factor for them to go to a God was because they wanted something i.e., it is consumer driven. They then shape a God that is fitting to their wants. Wants related to wealth, rain, fertility, health generated Gods that would meet their desire for these wants. Religions became designed to fit the wants of the people and as such the real Gods were what the people's wants were and not that which they invented as Gods to meet their wants i.e., their real and actual God was their حَوَى (Hawaa – "Desires and wants"). This is a constant phenomenon whereby every religion modifies itself to fit the new audience. This can be seen today in the attempt to reinterpret Islam to fit with wants or desires that are prevalent in today's world. It attempts to make Allah and His guidance subject to the Hawaa (desires and wants) of people, thus making the Hawaa the real God and making an Islam that fits with these Hawaa.

- Background to sons and daughters from the Arab tribal perspective: Sons carry the name and become part of the tribe's manpower. Daughters move to other families. Daughters are raised, taken care of, fed and clothed and after that she will leave and give sons to another family. Daughters were therefore regarded to be a liability. Daughters of people in high positions were also seen to be a liability in the sense that the family she married into could exert leverage upon her influential or powerful father through the daughter. The Arabs did not want daughters because they were viewed to be a liability but by giving Allah daughters in Angels, they held the corrupt logic that they would be gaining leverage over Allah through His Angels which would be His liability or weak spot.

- Insight for us: This is a manifestation of giving to Allah that which we wouldn't want for ourselves. For example, we want to give Allah the time that we couldn't spare anywhere else or we want to give something for the sake of Allah that we don't need or want. This reflects the secret code behind Shirk (associating with Allah) where we base our relationship with Allah based on our own wants and desires (Hawaa).

- Background information regarding Al-Laat, Al-'Uzzaa and Al-Manaat:

- There is little information regarding the idols amongst the Arabs prior to Islam however there is a well-known classical book written by Hisham Al-Kalbi (DoD: 204 AH) called "Kitab ul-Asnaam" (The Book of Idols) that provides some information:

- The Ka'bah was the most prominent temple for idols but the Arabs had temples all across Arabia. Idols would usually be kept in or in front of temples. The idols could be figures or large stones. If they were stones, they were referred to as "Ansaab" and if they were shaped to resemble living things they were referred to as "Awthaan" or "Asnaam". They would make Tawaaf (circumambulate) the temples in imitation to the practise established in Makkah. They would also imitate rituals and acts of sacrifice undertaken at the Ka'bah in the other temples.

- Al-Laat (اللات) was located in Ta'if in the form of a cubic rock. It was primarily identified as being female. It was worshipped by Quraish and Arabs broadly. They named their children with its name e.g. Zaid Al-Laat or Taim Al-Laat. The Prophet ﷺ commanded Al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah to destroy it and he burned its temple down.

- The origin of the word Laat (لات) in Arabic has been said to come from the root verb of لوى (Lawaa) which means to face toward something or gather around something, in the case where the Arabs would devote themselves to it in worship and make Tawaaf (circumambulation) of it. Another view is that a man would sit at a rock and make a mix (like porridge) to feed those making pilgrimage and the verb for doing that mixing was لَتَّ (Latta) and the one who does that is called "Laatt". When he died, they took the stone and gave it the name of "Laatt". It was said: He has not died but rather he has entered the rock and so they worshipped it and built a temple upon it.

- Al-‘Uzzaa (الْعُزَّى) was more recent than Laat and Manaata. It appears in names of people in more recent generations, like for example Abdul ‘Uzzaa. Linguistically it is the feminine superlative form from the root of عَزَّ (‘Izzah) implying might and power. الْعُزَّى (Al-‘Uzzaa) linguistically implies the “the most mighty or powerful one”. It was regarded as the greatest goddess of Quraish. They dedicated a ravine to her in Hurad valley called Suqam in addition to a place known as Ghabghab. It was destroyed by Khalid bin Al-Waleed.

- Al-Manaat (الْمَنَاة) is related linguistically to the root مَنِيَ which is linked to the meanings of hopes, good fortune and even fertility (in the case where مَنِيَ (Maniy) can refer to a fluid or seminal discharge). She was believed to have the power to make women menstruate. It was an idol worshipped in Yathrib and they believed that the Hajj was only completed by visiting this idol afterwards.

- Insight concerning the use of أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ “Have you seen?” in this Aayah: وَالْعُزَّى وَالْمَنَاةَ أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّى “Have you seen (i.e., considered the case of) Al-Laat and Al-‘Uzzaa”:

- The previous verses of Surah An-Najm place a lot of emphasis upon seeing and were about what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saw which they mocked. Now the focus is shifted and Allah is bringing attention to what they (the Quraish) see: “Have you seen Al-Laat, and Al-‘Uzzaa ... And Al-Manaat, the third, the other?” Seeing in Arabic (رَأَى) carries two meanings: The seeing of the eyes and the seeing of understanding. It implies: “Have you ever actually even looked at this piece of stone?” The seeing here implies seeing to believe or to come to understand. Have they even thought about why they worship these idols? Did evidence and proof lead to their worshipping of them? Or do they just follow in blind imitation of their forefathers? These are questions that actually apply to most followers of religions across time and includes Muslims as well who have inherited Islam. The question here: أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ “Have you seen?” therefore carries the meaning of: “Have you applied thought, analysed and looked at the evidence for them?”

- Today Muslims are subjected to questioning by atheists in respect to what they believe in. Those who have inherited Islam and imitate the practises of their forefathers can fall into problems as a result of these questions. These types of probing questions related to belief are being raised by atheists today but it was Allah that was raising such questions when the Qur’an was revealed. Allah commanded that we look, investigate and travel through the earth to examine the signs:

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ

Say, [O Muhammad]: Travel through the land and observe how He began the creation (Al-'Ankabut: 20).

This is a Deen like no other. The religions of Arabia and others around the world tell you to be quiet and follow whilst Islam says: Have you looked at what you are following? It demands that you follow with your eyes open and not closed:

قُلْ هَذِهِ سَبِيلِي أَدْعُو إِلَى اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ بَصِيرَةٍ أَنَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِي

Say: This is my way; I invite to Allah with Baseerah (clear sight), I and those who follow me (Yusuf: 108).

The Qur'an demanded evidence for beliefs which were held and repeatedly demanded that evidence be provided:

قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

Say: Bring your Burhan (proof) if you are truthful (2: 111).

This Aayah therefore responds to their questioning of what the Messenger ﷺ saw and by implication what is revealed to him via Jibreel (as) by making them question the Shirk (polytheism) that they are upon.

#53:21

الْأُنثَىٰ

“Is the male (or sons) for you and for Him the female (or daughters)?”

- Insights:

- There are multiple verses which address this point exposing the contradiction of their false beliefs and reflects a Quranic strand:

أَفَأَصْفَاكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِالْبَنِينَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنَاثًا ۚ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا

Then, has your Lord chosen you for [having] sons and taken from among the angels, daughters? Indeed, you are saying a grave saying (Al-Israa': 40).

أَمْ لَهُ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَكُمْ الْبُنُونَ

Or has He daughters while you have sons? (At-Tur: 39).

- The Quraish perceived daughters to be weak and a liability whilst sons were regarded to be a source of strength and benefit. By making the Angels female and daughters, they associated weakness to the Angels, which is in direct contrast to Allah's statement in Aayah 5 of this Surah concerning Jibreel (as):

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى

“The one of intense powers taught him”.

#53:22

تِلْكَ إِذَا قَسَمَةٌ ضِيرَى

“That, in that case is a division that is Deezaa”.

Language points:

- ضِيرَى (Deezaa) is a heavy word in Arabic to pronounce because the ضَاد (Daad) and the زَاي (Zaay) are close together in terms of where they exit from the tongue.

- فَصَاحَةٌ (Fasaahah) in Arabic relates to the clarity of the speech. The scholars of language have categories related to what makes speech clear. One of the matters that takes clarity away from speech is when one uses letters in a word that are too close to each other. As such they do not like to say words when the way one's mouth is going to move is going to be close i.e., where the origins of making the sounds of the letters are close. For example, قَاف (Qaaf) and كَاف (Daal) and ضَاد (Daad) are preferred to be kept away from each other. As such, by Fasaahah standards ضِيرَى (Deezaa) is an ugly word. The scholars state that the ugliness of the word corresponds to the ugliness of the belief it is referring to i.e., the allocation of females (or daughters) to Allah and the allocation of males (or sons) to themselves.

- The meanings stemming from the same root as ضِيرَى (Deezaa):

- ضَاَزَ (Daaza) is used to mean “to chew” or “eat something whilst his mouth was full”. In respect to a date, it means “to move it around in the mouth”. The word ضُوَاَزَة (Duwaazah) is used to refer to a splinter or chip of wood that separates

from the Siwak due to the intensity of pressure being applied. ضَوْزَة (Douzah) is used to refer to a certain type of man who is lowly and contemptible, as if he has been compressed in body or value. ضَاَزَ (Daaza) in respect to wrong someone in respect to a “Haqq” (right) by giving less than due, scamming or defrauding someone. These meanings carry the meanings of ugliness, contemptibility, fraudulence and being extremely unjust. The use of ضَيْرَى (Deezaa) can capture all these meanings.

- Views of the scholars of Tafsir:

- Al-Alousiy when commenting on this word ضَيْرَى (Deezaa) stated: It means “deficient” and “unbalanced”. He added that ضَيْرَى (Deezaa): Could be upon the مَصْدَر (Masdar) pattern form of فَعْلَى (Fi’laa) like ذَكَّرَى (Dhikraa). They are words used for ideas that are meant to refer to an extreme. This form is known as: صِيغَةُ الْمُبَالَغَةِ (Seeghat ul-Mubaalaghah Lil-Masaadir). It implies hyperbole (i.e., exaggeration and emphasis for dramatic effect).

- Insight based on the speech of Al-Alousiy: Based on the above ضَيْرَى (Deezaa) can imply the meaning of being “extremely” ugly, “extremely” fraudulent and “extremely” contemptible. In addition, if ضَيْرَى (Deezaa) is understood to be a مَصْدَر (Masdar) it implies greater emphasis. Instead of the meaning being “ugly” it implies the meaning of being “ugliness itself”. In this case ضَيْرَى (Deezaa) is not an adjective but rather an idea about a reality, in this case it encapsulates “ugliness” in its entirety.

- Ibn Kathir read it as ضَيْرَى (Di’zaa) with a Hamzah instead of a يَاء (Yaa) like in ضَيْرَى (Deezaa). A possible insight from this is: Just as this word has a choppy and disjointed sound in this form, it reflects the disjointedness of their ideas and inconsistencies they contain.

#53:23

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ۚ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمُ الْهُدَىٰ

“They are nothing but names you named (i.e., came up with), you and your forefathers - for which Allah has sent down no authority. They follow not except assumption and what [the] selves desire, and (even though) the (ultimate) guidance has come to them from their Rabb (Lord or Master)”

- Concerning: **إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا** “They are nothing but names you named (i.e., came up with)”. Names are allocated to things that exist in the case where the existence of something precedes the name that it is given. Here, they are just names that have been provided from something that does not have a reality preceding it. They are just names that have been made up for a reality that has been made up that has nothing to substantiate it. You (i.e., the Arab polytheists) say the names of Al-Laat, Al-‘Uzzaa and Al-Manaat but these are figments of your imagination, have no reality, have been made up by you (and your forefathers) and are purely invented. The true name of what they have called Al-Laat is “a rock”.

- Language point:

- **سَمَّى** (Sammaa) means to name but is also used in Arabic to mean “to invoke or call upon someone by their name” and has come mentioned in Ahadeeth by the statement: **سَمِّ اللَّهَ** “Invoke Allah’s name”. As such the Aayah can carry the meaning of: “They are nothing but names that you invoke”.

- Concerning: **أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ** “You and your forefathers (or ancestors)”. Here emphasis is placed upon “you” first and then “your forefathers” even though it was the forefathers who actually invented these names for these imaginary things whilst the Arab polytheists of that time were following that. The censuring is directed to “you” because you (i.e., Arab idol worshippers) blindly followed and adopted these made-up names for these made-up realities and did not use your minds and reason to recognise the falsehood of these beliefs. Allah began this section of verses with His speech: **أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ** “Have you not seen?” is an invitation to use one’s mind and reason to understand the truth of something. You continued to invoke these names without thinking and questioning them and are perpetuating these hideous beliefs from your forefathers to pass them on to the next generation. You are reviving and giving life to this Shirk and that is why you are responsible for it and not just your forefathers.

- Insights concerning **أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ** “You and your forefathers (or ancestors)”:

- Blame and censure are for everyone who engages in the Shirk, sin or crime, regardless of which generation began it. Blame cannot be passed to previous generations for crimes or evils that take place in later generations. Every generation has its own responsibilities that it will be held responsible for. Allah says:

تِلْكَ أُمَمٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۖ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ ۖ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

That was a nation which has passed on. It will have [the consequence of] what it earned, and you will have what you have earned. And you will not be asked about what they used to do (Al-Baqarah: 134).

- That every new generation needs to think about and question what was handed down to them from the previous generation and not just accept, follow and commit to it blindly. If Muslims become like this and accept Islam from their fathers without applying thought, the person's Deen will become easy to corrupt. Ibrahim (as) built the Ka'bah and established the beliefs and practices but at some point, the Deen in those generations people began to be passed down the Deen without thought i.e., knowledge and understanding was not passed down to the point that they lost the most fundamental understandings of why they followed the Deen and what being a Muslim and someone who submits themselves to Allah alone meant. They followed based on what they saw others doing as norms and then someone added something, then another and another and so on, until they had completely mutilated the Deen and transformed it into pure Shirk. The result was that all of the Shirk that existed in Arabia became manifested by the lost children of Ibrahim (as). As such, it is essential that we do not pass Islam down to our next generations without making them thinkers who accept beliefs based upon proof and evidence.

- Concerning: مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ "Allah did not send down any Sultan with them".

- The word سُلْطَانٍ (Sultan) is used in Arabic to refer to an "authority" and "proof". Authority refers to that which that can be connected to the highest level of authority or source authority. When Allah states: سُلْطَانٍ (Sultan) it implies an authority or proof that comes from a higher source and is connected to it. Here the matter being raised is: "Upon what authority did you name these names?" If you trace these names back, then on what authority did you base these names? The fact is that they are unable to trace it back to any authority (Sultan) and can provide no proof or evidence to substantiate these names and these idols that they have taken as Gods. In contrast, this chain of authority in respect to Islam is made clear in this Surah (An-Najm): The Sultan (authority) that the Messenger ﷺ has is passed to him by Jibreel (as) who has Sultan (authority) provided to him from Allah who is the ultimate authority. The Messenger's ﷺ authority is derived from the authority that Allah has provided to him:

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah (An-Nisa': 80).

- If the Sultan (authority) did not come from Allah, then what authority did the Arab idol worshippers get these beliefs from and on what proof or evidence are they established? The Arab idol worshippers and indeed most people who follow a religion in this world only have two answers to the question of why they follow their particular religion. The first, is this is what has been passed down through generations and is our heritage. There are Christians who identify as civilisational Christians which means that they are Christian because they are part of the Christian civilisation and not because they believe in Christianity. Or you have those who identify as ethnic Jews which means that they are Jews because they are part of the Jewish heritage and not because they believe in Judaism and as such it is not uncommon to find themselves who identify to being atheist and Jewish at the same time. In this way the religion has become an identity of a people based on a cultural, historical or ethnic heritage rather than a set of beliefs and practises that are believed in.

The second answer is that they are following what the majority follow. This is based on the comfort of being amongst the masses as opposed to the discomfort of standing against the majority. If everybody is doing something or believing in something, how can they all be wrong? How can the majority be wrong?

- Insight concerning the use of بَاء (Baa' – ب) in His statement مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ "Allah did not send down any Sultan with them". Most translations translate the ب in this verse as "for" i.e., Allah did not send any authority "for" them. However, ب implies the meaning of "with" and implies here the meaning of "attachment". It is known as الباءُ للإصاق (Al-Baa'u lil-Ilsaaq – The Baa' of attachment). It therefore means that: "As these names came, they were not attached to any authority" i.e., they don't come with any authority. In contrast, when the Prophet ﷺ speaks he comes with the authority of Jibreel (as) because he is fused with him and attached to him (قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى) "The distance of two bow lengths or (even) closer" (An-Najm: 9)).

- There is a similar Aayah in Surah Aa'raaf in relation to Hud (as) when addressing Qawm 'Aad:

قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ رِجْسٌ وَغَضَبٌ أَجْعَلُونِي فِي أَسْمَاءٍ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ۖ فَانْتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ

[Hud] said: "Already have defilement and anger fallen upon you from your Lord.

Are you arguing with me about names that you have named (i.e., made up yourselves), you and your fathers. Allah has not sent down any authority with them. Then wait; indeed, I am with you among those who wait" (Al-Aa'raaf: 71).

This indicates that this is a recurring problem in the case where the same was said to people thousands of years before the coming of Prophet ﷺ. It is in fact a problem that continues to this day i.e., these are things that you made up, have no authority and proof to back them up, you and your fathers.

- Concerning **إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ** “They do not follow anything apart from assumption (or speculation)”.

- There is a switch here in the Aayah which began with the “you” second person form and has now switched to the “they” third person form. “You have named these names, you and your forefathers” is followed by “They follow nothing but assumptions”. This implies a distancing from those being addressed, where instead of talking to you, I am now talking about you. It implies abandonment which is done in speech when you believe that somebody is no long worth addressing directly. It is like: You believe in worthless ideas and follow an ancestry which has no worth. In other words, you are not worthy of being addressed directly anymore. This switch also indicates that he is now addressing the Messenger ﷺ and the believers, saying that they should know about these people that: “They do not follow anything apart from assumption (or speculation)”. There are therefore two audiences addressed within this one Aayah.

- Concerning **وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ** “And what their selves fall in love with (i.e., desire)”.

- This is the second part of the statement: **إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ** “They do not follow anything apart from assumption (or speculation) and what their selves fall in love with (i.e., desire)”. The first part mentions “assumption” which is an intellectual matter related to thought whereas the second part mentions “love” which relates to feelings and emotions. One part of the criticism is therefore about their thoughts whilst the other is about their emotions. The **وَ** (Waw – و) connecting the statements can also be understood to be an explanatory connection known as **عَطْفُ الْبَيَانِ** (‘Atf ul-Bayaan) where the second part is an explanation for the first. This would mean that these assumptions or thoughts are coming from or as a result of these emotions, or that the emotions are dictating the thoughts. Emotions such as greed and ego can corrupt or prevent the thought process leading to the adoption of thoughts that conform to one’s own loves or desires.

- Insight: In contrast to the reality of Arabia when Islam came, we are currently living in a reality where we are exposed to a near infinite number of idols. There is

an explosion of ideas and philosophies. New thoughts related to how justice, gender, family, how right and wrong, freedom and even how reality itself should be defined amongst multitudes of other subjects. Everything is being questioned and all these ideas are colliding with each other. The reality in the past was that Shirk number one was confined to one continent and Shirk number two was confined to another continent and so on i.e., a much simpler reality in terms of beliefs and thoughts which existed. There are an innumerable number of assumptions ظَنُّ (Zhann) existing but all that stems from and is rooted in what the selves fall in love with: مَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ i.e., when what you love and desire dictates your thought process. The ideas and beliefs adopted by religions and ideologies (like the left and right, or conservative and liberal) are not the result of the pursuit for the truth but are rather the pursuit of wants with an agenda behind them all.

- هَوَى (Hawaa) means to fall down and implies a kind of love for lowly things. The word is attached to the love of higher ideals such as truth and justice but rather a love of what pleases the self. This is in fact their ultimate god and not the idols, their ultimate god is what the self wants. The idols in their multitudes are just a projection of what the self wants.

- Insight: Muslims sometimes react strongly when some aspects of the Deen are attacked or abandoned but do not react with outrage or at all when other aspects of the Deen are attacked or abandoned. This is a manifestation of وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ “And what their selves fall in love with (i.e., desire) in the sense where they are selective based upon what their own selves feel or desire i.e., their emotions and wants dictate their Deen, rather than the Deen dictating their emotions.

- Insight: Because assumptions are connected to emotions which are the driving factor of the assumptions, it is not possible to change somebody’s assumptions by just addressing their thoughts with knowledge and evidence, but rather the emotions needs to be addressed as well.

- This wording is used in other Aayaat in the Qur’an in respect to when Messengers came to them, highlighting their rejection of that which goes against ones loves and wants:

أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِقْنَا كَذِبْتُمْ وَفَرِقْنَا تَفْتُلُونَ

Is it [not] that every time a Messenger came to you, with what your selves did not love (or desire), you became arrogant? Then a party [of messengers] you denied and another party you killed (Al-Baqarah: 87).

- Concerning His statement: وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنَ رَبِّهِمْ الْهُدَىٰ “And (even though) the (ultimate) guidance has come to them from their Rabb (Lord or Master)”.

- This implies that Allah has been sending guidance all along and is now sending the ultimate guidance الْهُدَى (Al-Hudaa). The guidance before may have been less apparent but now the guidance has come to you plainly like a new sun, so how can you (O Arab idol worshippers) still remain upon Zhann (assumption and speculation) and Hawaa (following the dictates of wants and desires)?

- The fact that this was placed in the same Aayah in which Allah criticises them and states “They do not follow anything apart from assumption (or speculation) and what their selves fall in love with (i.e., desire)” instead of a separate Aayah, indicates that the contrast is being highlighted: “You are doing this (i.e., following speculations and desires) whilst Allah has provided you with this (i.e., Al-Hudaa – The ultimate guidance). There is no excuse left to continue following that which has no evidence, proof or basis and is based merely on conjecture and whims.

#53:24

أَمْ لِلْإِنْسَانِ مَا تَمَنَّى

“Or is it that the human being will have whatever he wishes?”.

- Allah now poses some rhetorical questions. Questions can have a literal purpose and a rhetorical purpose. In the Arabic language science عِلْمُ الْمَعَانِي (The science or knowledge of meanings) the subject of secondary meanings behind questions is studied. Sometimes questions are asked not for the purpose of obtaining a direct or literal answer to that question but rather to make a point or for another purpose.

- The purpose of the question here: “Or is it that the human being will have whatever he wishes?”, is for the purpose of what is known as إِنْكَار (Inkaar - Denial) which implies here the negation of the idea that the human will attain everything that he wishes for merely because he wants it. It is a Qur’anic style used to prove the invalidity of false conceptions. Allah is saying that this life is not about our wishes.

- Language points:

- تَمَنَّى (Tamannaa) Its primary meaning is – To have a strong wish or desire for something that you want to happen whilst continuing to talk to yourself about whether it will happen or not. One way to translate التَّمَنَّى (At-Tamanniy) is “wishful

thinking”. It implies having wishes about the attainment or occurrence of something that is not likely and detached from reality.

- Secondary meanings and applications from its roots include:

- الأمانى (Al-Amaaniy – wishes) is used to mean: Reading without understanding i.e., he just read or recited something without understanding.

- التَّمَنَّى (At-Tamanniy) is also used to convey the meaning of “lying”.

- التَّمَنَّى (At-Tamanniy) is used to imply the meaning of “drinking of alcohol”.

- مَنَا (Manaa) means: To put to the test, put on trial or afflict.

- مَنِيَّة (Maniyah) is used to mean “Death”.

- Insight into these meanings: All of these meanings are implications or manifestations of wishful thinking. When you are reading without understanding you are reading what you wish it says i.e., imposing your wishes upon what you are reading which is التَّمَنَّى (At-Tamanniy). Wishful thinking also makes you lie to yourself and lie to others i.e., your wishes and desires dictate what you say rather than the truth. التَّمَنَّى (At-Tamanniy) is also like an intoxication and drug because your wishful thinking can detach you from reality and you can become lost in wishful thoughts. Wishful thinking in its most dangerous manifestation can also lead someone to death. The secondary meanings of the word التَّمَنَّى (At-Tamanniy) therefore captures the Arab imagination about this deadly thing, this wishful thinking that can ruin a person. According to this secondary meaning: أَمْ لِلْإِنْسَانِ مَا تَمَنَّى can imply: “Does the human being really want something that can lead to his ruin and death?!” “Does the human being really just want to lie to himself, to be drunk, self-deluded and detached from reality?!”

- Insights taken from the Aayah:

- It is like Allah is saying: You have constructed this entire religion and these names all because you have these wishful thoughts. Do you really think that what you have constructed will realise your wishes?

- The life of this world is not for the purpose of everyone having what they wish for. People make the achievement of their wishes or attainment of their “happiness” their goal and main pursuit in life, something that they forever fail in. Islam regards “happiness” as a by-product and not the goal. If you live a life

based on true purpose you will attain more manifestations of happiness or instances of joy and tranquillity as a by-product, but you will not be devastated by the absence of those instances. Depression and teenage suicide have spiked in western societies in the last twenty years corresponding to the rise in social media and focus upon people wishing to obtain and attain what they see i.e., the increase in التَّمَنِّي (At-Tamanniy).

#53:25

فَلِلَّهِ الْآخِرَةُ وَالْأُولَى

“Rather, to Allah belongs the hereafter and the first (life)”.

- This Aayah means: “Allah alone owns the final end and the ultimate beginning”.

- Insights:

- The connection between this Aayah and the Aayah that preceded it: أَمْ لِلْإِنْسَانِ مَا تَمَنَّى “Or is it that the human being will have whatever he wishes?” is as follows: All the wishes, desires and self-delusions of human beings are related to right now and because they are so absorbed into the right now, they don’t contemplate what happened in the very beginning not do they contemplate what will happen in the hereafter and after their lives. They don’t look back or look forward but are consumed by the here and now and their wishes and wants in it. If people don’t know where they came from and where they are headed, it means that you are lost and have no sense of purpose. They act and think as if they have amnesia about where they came from and have no sanity in respect to where they are going. They ignore both whilst preceding in life consumed by their wants and desires related to the here and now or what they can attain for themselves from their worldly life. This is a reminder of the ultimate truth that however you precede in this life and however much you allow your thoughts and actions to be dictated by your wishes and whims; you will inevitably be returning to your Creator:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدًّا فَمُلَاقِيهِ

O human being, you are heading (with all your toils and actions) to your Rabb and you will meet him (Al-Inshiqaq: 6).

- Knowing that Allah owns the Akhirah (hereafter) helps the believer in respect to not getting his التَّمَنِّي (At-Tamanniy - wishes) in his life. There are things that we

wish for in this life but we can't have them. The purpose of this life is not to fulfil all of one's desires and wishes however the hereafter for the one that bases his life upon the knowledge that Allah owns the beginning and the end is where the person's wishes are all met. This is the جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى (Jannat ul-Ma'waa) "Garden of (ultimate) refuge" mentioned in Aayah 15 of this Surah. The only garden where a person will actually have refuge from the deprivation of his wishes is with Allah.

#53:26

وَكَمْ مِنْ مَلَكٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ لَا تُغْنِي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ أَنْ يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَرْضَى

"And how many angels there are in the heavens whose intercession will not avail at all except [only] after Allah has permitted [it] to whom He wills and approves"

- The evidences in the Kitab and Sunnah indicate to the fact that the number of Angels is immense far outnumbering the number of humans. Here, Allah is saying that the Shafaa'ah (intercession) of all these Angels, regardless of their huge number, will be of no benefit at all. The Angels that were taken by the polytheists as the daughters of Allah in order to gain favour with Allah have no power to do anything on their behalf. The original position is that even if all the Angels begged Allah to pardon them, they would not be able to benefit them, just as the urging of any of Allah's creations to intercede on one's behalf on the Day of Judgement will not benefit the person in the least.

- Language points:

- شَفَاعَةٌ (Shafaa'ah) means to put in a good word for somebody, to plead their case or intercede on their behalf, to prevent them from getting into trouble.

- شَفَعَ (Shaf') means to double up, pair or subjoin in Arabic. شَفَاعَةٌ (Shafaa'ah) is like when you have someone who pairs up with someone and joins with him to intercede for him.

- يَأْذَنَ (Ya'dhan) from the verb أَذِنَ (Adhina - to permit) and the noun إِذْنٌ (Idhn - Permission) also means to listen and that's why the word for an ear is أُذُنٌ (Udhun). Its central meaning is when something passes through something in a light (or imperceptible) manner but has a strong effect, like the passage of sounds through the ear.

- A person is described as being أُذُنٌ (an ear) when he listens to everything that is said to him i.e., someone who eagerly listens to something. The disbelievers used this description as an attack against the Messenger ﷺ:

وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ أُنْثَىٰ ذُنٌّ قُلْ أَذُنٌ خَيْرٌ

And they say, “He is an ear (Udhun)”. Say, “[It is] an ear of goodness ...” (At-Taubah: 60).

- يَرْضَى (Yardaa) comes from رَضِيَ (Radiya) and رِضَاء (Ridaa'). Its primary meaning is to be pleased, content and satisfied and is the opposite of the word سَخَط (Sakhat) which means to be discontented, annoyed or displeased. It also implies the meaning of having tenderness towards something.

- Insights:

- Allah is telling us in this Aayah that intermediaries who intercede on your behalf will not benefit you at all until He will it and is pleased. Before Islam the polytheists had a transactional religion where they were told what they had to do and what they would receive i.e., make a sacrifice and get something in return. This now makes the pleasure of Allah the condition for acceptance. Their path to Allah was always through intermediaries but now they are confronted with the problem of how do they attain Allah's pleasure directly? In this way the foundations of their religious worldview are being broken by this Aayah.

#53:27

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ لَيَسْمُؤْنَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةً الْأُنثَى

“No doubt, those who do not believe in the hereafter name the Angels with feminine (or female) names”.

- Insight:

- It is argued that the difference between this verse and the previous verse: إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا “They are nothing but names that you have made up” is that the previous was general in relation to the origin of the Shirk (i.e., the association with Allah and invention of their Gods and names), whilst this Aayah is about an action that is continuing to be undertaken and specifically refers to those who perpetuate it i.e., the religious leaders who lead the people to follow these matters such as naming the Angels with female names. The statement that they don't believe in the hereafter is to discredit them and reveal that they are really conmen who have no real belief.

- It is also a strong rebuke for their naming Angels with female names implying: How can you dare to invent matters about the Angels (the very Angels whose great power has already been mentioned in the Makkan verses).

#53:28

وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا

“And they have no knowledge about it. They follow nothing apart from assumption (or conjecture) (Zhann), and no doubt, assumption avails nothing at all against the truth”.

- Break down of the meaning of the verse:

- مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ “They have no knowledge of it whatsoever” implies that those people who invent other religions and sell them have absolutely no knowledge when it comes to Allah, His Angels and the truth.

- مِنْ عِلْمٍ – The purpose of the use of مِنْ (Min) here instead of just saying “They do not have knowledge” emphasises that they have absolutely no knowledge at all i.e., when it comes to these matters related to belief. Consequently, those who have invented these claims and promote or sell them are no more than charlatans and imposters.

- إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ “They follow nothing but assumption” i.e., they build their entire religion on nothing but assumption that has no evidence or proof to support it. ظَنٌّ (Zhann – Assumption) is the basis of their religion. When that assumption is challenged and disproved, their whole religion falls apart. (Note: ظَنٌّ (Zhann) is a difficult word to translate directly into English and words such as assumption, presumption, supposition and conjecture are often used to convey the meaning. It refers to the thought or a conclusion that has been arrived at that has nothing solid to back it up. It represents the opposing side to Yaqeen (certainty)). Islam stresses as a fundamental principle that everything that is believed in and followed should be backed up by proofs and evidence. Muslims can also fall into the error of following assumption by following what they see around them and assuming that it is ok and good because everyone does it or because this is what we have always done for example. No aspect of the Deen that we follow can be based on assumptions (Azh-Zhann). Rather, it must be rooted and firmly established by clear proofs.

- يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ “They follow nothing but assumption” is in the present case (المضارع – Al-Mudaari’) and this indicates that this is a continuous reality and error that people fall into across time.

- وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا “And no doubt Azh-Zhann (assumptions) cannot help you against truth at all”. Following Zhann is closely linked to speaking, passing judgments and making conclusions without knowledge, or based on a small

amount of knowledge that cannot lead to the correct conclusions and judgements, where much is left to assumptions or presumptions. The Haqq (الْحَقُّ) is the “truth” and has to be established to be so whilst assumptions, presumptions and conjecture can never be a substitute for it or stand up against it. Muslims must ask questions and seek conviction for everything related to their Deen.

- The Haqq (الْحَقُّ – The truth) in this Aayah means three things: It means reality in the case that assumptions cannot make you escape the reality. It means the truth and it also means purpose. This means that people who follow assumptions can never fulfil purpose and live in line with a purpose. Another meaning for Al-Haqq (الْحَقُّ – The truth) in the Arabic language which is not intended here is the meaning of “right” i.e., a person has a Haqq (a right). The above three meanings are fused to produce the meaning: You develop and invent these religions which have no truth, no reality and no purpose. In contrast, the Qur’an is the truth, it describes the reality as it is and provides purpose for life.

- There is an idea that is propagated in recent times that everyone has their own truth which they speak or believe in. This in effect means to describe a reality or pass judgement and conclusions upon it based on one’s own feelings. Reality is therefore being determined by feelings and is called “speaking one’s truth”. This idea completely demolishes the whole concept of there being a reality and a truth. Allah however states: وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا: “And no doubt Azh-Zhann (assumptions) cannot help you against truth at all”. These truths of yours based on Zhann (assumption and conjecture) cannot change the reality or the truth nor stand up against it.

- Structure of the second section of Surah An-Najm Aayaat 19-28:

1) It began with the mention of Al-Laah, Al-‘Uzzaa and Al-Manaa, how they attributed daughters to Allah and invented names.

2) Then Allah states that he sent no authority for their claimed beliefs and names, that they only follow assumptions and that which they love i.e., what their loves and wishes dictate.

3) Allah then mentions that He owns the end and the beginning.

4) Angels cannot speak or intercede on your behalf on Judgement Day, in this life or the hereafter. And that those who do not believe in the hereafter name the Angels with female names.

5) Allah then mentions that they have no knowledge at all of these matters, they only follow conjecture and assumption and these assumptions cannot help or benefit them against the truth and reality.

- A pattern can be seen in this structure where there is a connection between the first and second, and the fourth and fifth. The first and fourth deal with their false and invented names and beliefs, whilst the second and fifth deals with what's behind those false and invented beliefs and names in terms of following nothing but assumptions, loves and wishes, having no Sultan (authority and proof) and no knowledge and that assumption cannot benefit against the truth and reality, change or stand up to it. The first therefore corresponds to the fourth and the second corresponds to the fifth, whilst at the centre of it all is the ultimate reality and truth which is that Allah owns the end and the beginning (or the hereafter and the first (world)).

#53:29

فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا

“Therefore, turn away from (or ignore) whoever turns away from Our remembrance and wanted nothing but the life of this world”.

- Background to the third section of this Surah:

- Like the fourth section of this Surah it begins with the Prophet ﷺ being addressed directly.

Language points:

- The فَاء (Faa') at the beginning in the statement فَأَعْرِضْ is فَاء السَّبَبِيَّة (Faa'u s-Sababiyah) which is used to mean: “As the result of all of that” i.e., what was previously mentioned. As such the statement: فَأَعْرِضْ at the beginning of the Aayah means: “As such (or therefore), ignore or turn away (أَعْرِضْ)”.

- Meanings associated with the word أَعْرِضْ:

- The word عَرْض (‘Ard) was used in Arabic to depict a wide mountain, a large army that appears stretching out wide, and for something stretched wide across the sky obstructing the view like clouds or a swarm of locusts. It is used to describe someone who has become wide due to excess fat.

- One of the main original meanings of the verb عَرَضَ ('Arada) is passing something in front of the eyes or making it available with the intention of being looked at i.e., to show something, put in on display and make it available before others to be seen. An example of this is His statement:

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ

And He taught Adam all the names (of everything), then He showed (عَرَضَ – 'Arada)) them to the angels ... (Al-Baqarah: 31).

- There is a connection between the meaning of width and the meaning of displaying. An example provided is that of a book. If it is closed and held towards someone showing just the spine of the book, the person's view of the book is very limited, if it is turned to its front then the view is wider and more can be seen, but if it is opened to its full width the whole book can be seen as is fully on display. عَرَضَ ('Ard) is that presentation in which you obtain the full view of something which is being displayed before you.

- There are words in Arabic which if you add a letter like a هَمْزَة (أ - Hamzah) at its beginning or an أَلِف (ا - Alif) after the first letter changes the meaning of the word to an opposite meaning. For example, the word شَكَى (Shakaa) in Arabic means to complain, however, the word أَشَكَى (Ashkaa) with the added هَمْزَة (أ - Hamzah) means to address the complaint or resolve it. Another example is that of the verbs قَسَطَ (Qasata) and أَقْسَطَ (Aqsata) in the case where the former means to be unjust whilst the second means to remove the injustice i.e., to be just and fair. Likewise, عَرَضَ ('Arada) means to present before one's face whilst أَعْرَضَ (Aa'rada) means to turn away from presenting i.e., to ignore and turn away from something which you were already facing.

- Here Allah is instructing his Prophet ﷺ to turn away from someone who himself who has turned away: فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّى: فَأَعْرِضْ (Aa'rada) in respect to the instruction given to the Prophet ﷺ and تَوَلَّى (Tawallaa) is used for the one who turns away from the ذِكْر (remembrance/reminder). There's a principle in the Arab language that states: إِذَا اجْتَمَعَا تَفَرَّقَا which literal means: "If two things come together, they are to be separated" which in turn means that if two similar words come mentioned closely together, the difference in their meanings is sought.

- Meanings associated with the word تَوَلَّى:

- وَلِيَّةَ (Waliyyah) refers to anything that is close to, adjoins to or is adjacent to the back of a camel like a saddle or something that is placed underneath the saddle to offer protection or padding to the camel from the saddle. It comes from the meaning of وَلِيَ (Waliya) which means to be close to something where it is almost inseparable.

- The main meaning of وَلِيَ (Waliya) is for something to stick to something and follow it to the point that the two things are almost incorporated into each other.

- If someone وَلِيَ (Waliya) another person, it means that he followed him without a divider or separator. Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ يَلُونَكُمْ مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ

O you who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are close to you (At-Tawbah: 123).

- Included in the meanings of sticking to something and incorporation it is said: وَلِيَ الشَّيْءَ which means “He assumed (or took possession over) a matter and undertook it”. From this وَلِيَ (Waliy) is used to refer to a “guardian, governor or ruler” i.e., someone who assumes the guardianship over someone or a matter and sees it through. تَوَلَّى الأَمْرَ (Tawallaa l-Amr) means to take charge of a matter, which means to have become stuck to it where the charge has become inseparable from the person.

- When Allah states:

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

Allah is the Waliy of those who have believed. He brings them out of the darknesses into the light (Al-Baqarah: 257)

The meaning of Waliy here incorporates the meaning of Allah making Himself connected closely to us.

- Another meaning of وَلِيَ (Waliya) is connected to the meaning of “facing” something and being “adjacent to it” similar to عَرَضَ (‘Arada). تَوَلَّى (Tawallaa) can be used to mean to face towards something or to face (or turn) away from something. تَوَلَّى (Tawallaa) when used with إِلَى (Ilaa – To/towards) means to turn towards or to face something whilst when used with عَنْ (‘An – From) the meaning is to turn away from something. Example of تَوَلَّى إِلَى:

فَسَقَىٰهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّىٰ إِلَى الظِّلِّ

So, he (Musa (as) watered (their flocks) for them, then he turned back to the shade (i.e., tree) (Al-Qasas: 24).

And in this verse تَوَلَّىٰ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا the meaning of تَوَلَّى (Tawallaa) is to turn away: “The one who turns away from our Dhikr (remembrance/reminder)”.

- The meaning of تَوَلَّى (Tawallaa) implies that you turn away from someone or something to stick to someone or something else.

- Concerning the use of أَعْرَضَ and تَوَلَّى in the Aayah: فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا “Therefore, turn away from (or ignore) whoever turns away from Our remembrance and wanted nothing but the life of this world”:

- A كِنَايَة (Kinaayah) in the Arabic language is the use of an expression or wording that indicates to an additional indirect meaning other than the explicit meaning stated. The simplest understanding of كِنَايَة (Kinaayah) is “To say something (extra) within a statement without explicitly stating it”. When the Prophet ﷺ is being told to do إِعْرَاض (I’raad – Turn away) from these polytheists being addressed in this Aayah, the Kinaayah (i.e., meaning that can be understood without explicitly being stated) is that prior to that he was doing a lot of عَرْض (‘Ard - presentation) to them in terms of facing them, being focused upon them and giving them a lot of attention.

- The Prophet being told to turn away (أَعْرَضَ) from those who have turned away (تَوَلَّى) indicates that he was still paying attention and turning towards those being addressed from the polytheists even though they had turned away. It is like the example of a mother that has medicine for her child, but the child turns away and rejects it, yet the mother persists because of her concern for her child and because she knows that the child really needs the medicine. As such, even though these polytheists had turned away from the reminder that he had brought to them and were hostile to him in rejection, he nevertheless persisted to show them the message of Islam. He ﷺ persisted in facing them whilst they turned their back to him, however, here in this Aayah, Allah is saying to him to stop that i.e., to not give attention to those being addressed in this Aayah who have turned away from Dhikr. This can also be a message to these polytheists that they are not worthy of being addressed any longer.

- The use of مَنْ “Man” in His statement فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّى “And turn away from who has turned away”:

- مَنْ “Man – “Who” is from the words in Arabic that imply “generality” (التعميم - At-Ta'meem). Therefore, in His statement: فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّى “And turn away from who has turned away” indicates “whomever” has turned away. The word الَّذِي (Alladhee – “Who”) is used when specific people are being referred to in Arabic, whilst مَنْ (Man – “Who”) is used to imply generality. It is understood however, that the address here is addressing the leaders of the Quraish in Makkah and not all the people in general. The use of مَنْ (Man “who”) to address these specific leaders of Quraish can imply that they are not worthy of being specified. Not being specified is something these people hate because one of greatest desires of worldly life is to be recognised. Allah instructed His Prophet ﷺ to ignore them but in the word He used مَنْ (Man “who”), He is ignoring them.

- Concerning تَوَلَّى عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا “They turned away from our Dhikr (remembrance)”:

- The Dhikr here can refer to the Dhikr (reminder) of Allah, the Qur'an. i.e., the Prophet ﷺ is commanded to turn away from those who have turned away from the Qur'an and stuck to their Shirk and misguidance.

- The Dhikr here can also refer to the remembrance of Allah that was created inside of humans as part of their Fitrah (created nature). As such, it is describing those who have turned away from what conforms to their nature.

- The Dhikr can also refer to the earliest historical covenant humans made with Allah when He asked them: Am I not your Rabb?

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ ۖ شَهِدْنَا ۚ أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ

And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed and made them testify as to themselves (saying): "Am I not your Lord" They said: "Yes! We testify," lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: "Verily, we were unaware of this" (Al-Aa'raaf: 172).

- A possible insight that can be drawn is that it can be understood that they are turning away from both the first reminder and the final reminder, bringing to our minds the previous verse of this Surah: فَلِلَّهِ الْآخِرَةُ وَالْأُولَى “But to Allah belongs the last and the first”.

- Concerning: **وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا** “And did not want anything but the life of this world”:

- The Surah has previously mentioned the following of **ظَنَ (Zhann)** and **هَوَى (desires)**. The first reflects and intellectual problem and the second an emotional one. The first relates to the mind and the second to the heart. The **ذِكْر (Dhikr – remembrance)** of Allah is in the heart. Allah says:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرٍ لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ

Verily, therein is indeed a reminder for him who has a heart (Qaf: 37).

And:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

Those who believed and whose hearts find tranquillity in the remembrance of Allah. Verily, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find tranquillity (Ar-Ra’d: 28).

- The mention of Dhikr here is returning us to the emotional aspect. Then Allah states: **وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا** “And did not want anything but the life of this world”. The word **يُرِد** is from **إِرَادَة – أَرَادَ (Iraadah)** which means to want, intend, plan, aspire or have goals for. It means that all their wants, intentions, plans and aspirations were tied to the worldly life alone. This is all related to the heart and is an explanation of the meaning of **هَوَى (Hawaa)**: The explanation of: **مَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ**: “What their inner selves love/desire/want” is that: **لَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا** “They did not want anything but the life of this world”. These people turn away from the word of Allah because they are clinging on to something else.

- **الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (Al-Hayaat ad-Dunyaa)** is translated to refer to this worldly life. The word **الدُّنْيَا (Ad-Dunyaa)** is the feminine form of the word **الْأَدْنَى (Al-Adnaa)**. It is the superlative form (known in Arabic as **إِسْمُ التَّفْضِيلِ – Ism ut-Tafdeel**) of the word **دَنِي (Daniy)** which carries the meanings of being low, near and inferior. **الدُّنْيَا (Ad-Dunyaa)** can therefore mean “The lowest”, “Closest” or “Most inferior”. Life being described as being the closest means that it is the life that is most closely experienced by us now whilst there is another life that is further away awaiting us. This idea of the Dunyaa, is a life where everything you want is close where everything one wants to hold onto is close. Humans want things to be at a close proximity and when they are too far away they lose patience for them and the word Dunyaa captures this focus upon the here and now and satisfying one’s wants quickly. They chase their worldly wants in this life whilst being heedless of the hereafter which is where all wants and desires can be fulfilled. Allah is saying here is that these people do not want anything else apart from worldly life. That’s

why they turn away from you. When they look to the message, they see that it does not conform to anything that they want in the case that the only thing that they are concerned about is what they can get from the life in terms of worldly desires.

- The use of لَمْ (Lam of negation) and إِلَّا (Illaa - Except) denotes an exclusive structure. Instead of just stating: "They wanted worldly life" which leaves open the possibility of them also having other wants such as spiritual wants, this statement لَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا "They did not (لَمْ) want except (إِلَّا) the worldly life" indicates that this was their sole and exclusive desire and that they had nothing else at all that they wanted.

- As the turning away from the Dhikr (remembrance) of Allah and wanting the life of this world are matters related to the heart, and none but Allah knows what is in the hearts of the people, the instruction given to the Prophet ﷺ to turn away from them can be understood to mean: Those people who are turning away from you and our Dhikr (remembrance), don't chase after them and focus your attention on them. And among them are those who want nothing but the life of this world, which Allah will deal with i.e., their hearts are for Allah to deal with. This informs us that regardless of the effectiveness of the Prophet ﷺ in inviting the people, the strength of what he is inviting them to and his emotional attachment to those being invited, he was unable to force the changing of their hearts.

#53:30

ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اهْتَدَى

"That is their extent of knowledge. No doubt, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who has followed guidance".

- Language points:

- مَبْلَغُ (Mablagh) comes from the verb بَلَغَ (Balagha) which primarily means to reach or arrive at.

- In Arabic it is said: بَلَغْتَ الْمَكَانَ (Balaghta l-Makaan) to mean "You have arrived at (or reached) the place". التَّبْلِغَةُ (At-Tablighah) refers to a rope that extends the original rope attached to a bucket being lowered down into a well to make sure it reaches the bottom. The statement بَلَغَ النَّبْتُ (Balagha n-Nabt) is used to mean: "The vegetation has completed its growth". بَالِغٌ (Baaligh) is used to refer to when a young person reaches the age of puberty. It carries the meaning of something

reaching its final end. بَلَغَ (Bilgh) carries a negative connotation. It is said: رَجُلٌ بَلِغٌ (Rajul Bilgh) to refer to an underhanded and devious person who will do anything and use any means, whether acceptable or not, to “reach” his goals or attain his wants i.e., the one for whom the ends justify the means.

- The word مَبْلَغٌ (Mablagh) is a ظَرْفٌ (Zharf – Adverb) and refers to the final place that can be reached i.e., its extent.

- The use of ذَلِكَ (Dhaalika – “That”) which is masculine in His statement: ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا “That is their extent of knowledge” indicates that it is not referring to الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا (Al-Hayaat Ad-Dunyaa) mentioned just before it in the previous verse because that is feminine and would warrant the use of تِلْكَ (Tilka – “That”). This indicates that it is referring to another word. That word could be يُرِيدُ (Yurid) which means “They want”, in the case where what they want represents their مُرَادٌ (Muraad i.e., object of their wants) which is masculine. This would indicate that the meaning of ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمُ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ “That is their extent of knowledge” is that: Their “want” is the extent of their knowledge.

- Insight into their wants being the extent of their knowledge: “Wants” relate to the heart whilst عِلْمٌ (‘Ilm – “Knowledge”). The connection between what is in the heart and the mind has already been made in this Surah: إِنَّ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ “They follow not except assumption and what [the] selves desire” i.e., They only follow Zhann (assumptions) which are located in their mind based upon what their hearts desire. Here Allah is saying here that their thought process has a limit which was determined by their intention to only desire this worldly life. This highlights that the thoughts and agendas of human beings are influenced by their emotions.

- ذَلِكَ (Dhaalika – “That”) can also refer to a word that is omitted but can be implied in relation to الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا (Al-Hayaat Ad-Dunyaa) which is the “affair or matter (أَمْرٌ - Amr) of the life of this world”. The meaning would then be “That (i.e., the “affair” of the worldly life) is their extent of knowledge”.

- It has also been said that ذَلِكَ (Dhaalika – “That”) refers back to the ظَنٌّ (Zhann – assumption and conjecture) that they follow.

- The use of مَبْلَغُهُمُ “Their extent” can imply that this is a collective or societal limiting where the society has set the desiring of the worldly life as the standard. It is such societal limitations that place pressure on individuals for them to conform to.

- The implications of the use of the expression العلم (Al-'Ilm – The knowledge): The لام (Laam) used here as part of the Alif Laam (ال – Definite article “The”) attached to the noun علم (“Ilm “knowledge”) is known as لام الاستغراق (The Laam of Al-Istighraaq - Universality). Its use denotes total inclusion or comprehensive meaning. It is attached to nouns to indicate that every single instance of that noun is being referred to, leaving nothing out. The complete and all-inclusive knowledge referred to here can be understood to imply that knowledge which encompasses both the seen and unseen, or material and immaterial knowledge.

- An insight that can be drawn here is that knowledge related to the apparent worldly life which is not combined with knowledge of the unseen is knowledge that is deficient and can lead to negative and dangerous results. When worldly knowledge is guided by true spiritual knowledge it becomes and qualifies as العلم (Al-'Ilm i.e., complete knowledge).

- Additional Insight: This Aayah states ذَلِكَ مَبْلُغُهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ “That is their extent of knowledge” whilst a preceding Aayah stated: وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ “And they have no knowledge of it whatsoever”. There is a contrast between having “no knowledge” which was mentioned previously and having “limited knowledge” implied in this Aayah. There are times when some knowledge is equal to having no knowledge at all, in the case where that limited knowledge yields no benefit in a given reality:

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ غَافِلُونَ

They know only the outer appearance of the life of the world, and they are unmindful of the Hereafter (Ar-Rum: 30).

- Concerning His statement: إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن اهْتَدَىٰ “No doubt, it is your Rabb, He (in fact) knows better who is lost from His path and He knows better who is committed to guidance”.

- Here Allah is making clear to his Prophet ﷺ that He knows better who is lost and misguided, and who is guided. The determination of guidance and misguidance is not restricted to ideas but also relates to what is in the hearts, a matter which only Allah is aware of. The extent of their knowledge (ذَلِكَ مَبْلُغُهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ) mentioned at the beginning of this Aayah relates to those beliefs, thoughts and beliefs which are observable and can be directly critiqued, but misguidance and guidance relates to ideas and expressed beliefs in addition to what is in the heart in terms of sincerity and intentions.

- Secondary meanings of ضَلَّ (Dalla – “To be lost”) summarised:

- When two things appear as one i.e., when truth and falsehood are conflated to be the same. A contemporary example is when all religions are studied by academics as cultural historical phenomena. This act or process of mixing and conflating where the right and wrong are viewed to be the same is one of the meanings of ضَلَّ (Dalaal).

- Another meaning is to be “wasted”. An example of this is to waste the intellect which is diverted from pursuing the truth.

- Another meaning is “to be destroyed, brought to ruin or to be brought to nothing i.e., to be nullified, thwarted and made to be lost”. Example:

أَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ كَيْدَهُمْ فِي تَضْلِيلٍ

Did He not make their plot come to nothing (Al-Feel: 2).

- Another meaning is to be gullible, easily convinced of anything and devoid of critical thinking.

- These meanings imply the lack of direction and clarity of following a path, describing them as being lost and misled from His path.

- Ibn ‘Aashour discusses the use of إِنَّ (Inna – “No doubt/indeed”) and the (repeated) use of the separate pronoun هُوَ (Huwa – “He”) in His statement: إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ: “No doubt, it is your Rabb, He (in fact) knows better who is lost from His path and He knows better who is committed to guidance”. The use of إِنَّ (Inna – “No doubt/Indeed”) is for the purpose of emphasis just as the repeat of هُوَ (Huwa – “He”) adds further emphasis, whilst the one being addressed, the Prophet ﷺ, is in no need of this emphasis in respect to Allah knowing better. This indicates that there is a Kinaayah at play here where an additional meaning for the speech other than the explicit meaning can be understood from this wording. Ibn ‘Aashour states: “The meaning is: He is more knowledgeable about their condition or state than you. You do not know what is inside of them, so do not be distressed (or in a state of grief) over them”.

#53:31

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنَى

“And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth – that He may recompense those who have done evil with what they have done and recompense those who have done good with the best [reward]”.

- There is a continuity between this Aayah and the previous one in respect to discussing two groups. The previous Aayah mentioned those who have strayed from Allah’s path and those who have been guided, and this verse mentions those who have acted badly (i.e., by sins) and those who have acted well.

- The previous verse used مَنْ (Man “Who”) to refer to the one who has gone astray from His path and the one who is guided. Here, Allah uses the plural form of الَّذِينَ (Alladheena – “Who”) instead of مَنْ to refer to those who have done bad (or acted in a sinful way) and those who have acted in a good way. There is a shift from the singular in the previous Aayah to the plural here. It is like Allah is describing that you can all be individuals right now but you will be grouped up on Judgement Day according to your deeds.

- Concerning the connection between the first statement in this Aayah “And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth” and the second part “that He may recompense those who have done evil with what they have done and recompense those who have done good with the best [reward]”. Two possible explanations have been provided for the connection between the two statements:

- The first possible understanding is based on what Ibn ‘Aashour stated in that the statement وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ “And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth” is a Kinayah (metaphor) for Allah’s creation of the heavens and the earth i.e., ownership here means creation.

- Based on this understanding it can be inferred that because Allah created everything, and everything He created was created with a purpose, then humans were created with a purpose and will be held responsible and accountable for how they fulfilled that purpose. In this way it connects to the statement: لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنَى “That He may recompense those who have done evil with what they have done and recompense those who have done good with the best [reward]”

- A second understanding was provided by Abu As-Sa’oud in his Tafsir “Irshaad Al-‘Aql As-Saleem”. He states that وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ “And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth” is an إغتراض (I’tiraad) which means that it has come inserted between two parts of a connected statement like something that is inserted between brackets. As such the statement in the prior verse: إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اهْتَدَى: “No

doubt, it is your Rabb, He (in fact) knows better who is lost from His path and He knows better who is committed to guidance” connects to Allah’s statement in this verse: لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنَى “That He may recompense those who have done evil with what they have done and recompense those who have done good with the best [reward]” whilst His statement: وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ “And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth” is an إِعْتِرَاض (I’tiraad i.e., interjection) that has been inserted in the middle between these two parts of a connected statement.

- Based on this structure of the two verses being brought together an amazing design structure can be observed: 1) It can be seen that “those who have been guided” is placed nearest to the mention of “the skies”. People who are guided have a stronger connection to the skies and more concerned with them. That is because revelation, Angels, the journey of the Prophet is connected to the skies and Allah is above them. 2) The mention of “the earth” is then placed nearest to the statement: “So that He can recompense those who have been bad for what they have done”. The focus of those who do bad, evil and commit sins is upon the earth and the worldly life. In addition all the sins are perpetrated on the earth. In this way the interjection of وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ “And to Allah belongs what is in the heavens and what is in the earth” has a powerful connection with the two statements it is inserted between.

- Ownership of something dictates that the owner has full rights over what he owns. The owner decides guidelines, sets boundaries and has the right to reward and punish. The owner has the full right of disposal over what he owns, full control over it and can act in an arbitrary manner in respect to it. Allah is the greatest owner of everything and can do whatever He wishes with what He owns however despite that absolute control and power He has revealed a system to humans whereby He states that He will reward those who do good and will punish those who do bad (i.e., evil and sinful acts), whilst also making clear what those good and bad deeds are. Allah’s ownership of the heavens and the earth establishes that He has the right to dictate the rules and guidelines for what he owns and to determine the reward and punishment. In addition, because Allah is the owner of everything, He is the only One who can reward or punish you. There is therefore a direct correlation between Allah’s ownership and reward and punishment.

- Language insights:

- لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنَى “That He may recompense those who have done evil with what they have done and recompense those who have

done good with the best [reward]”. It can be observed that Allah uses the particle بَاء (ب - Baa’) twice in this statement: بِالْحُسْنَىٰ and بِمَا عَمِلُوا. The first use of بَاء (ب - Baa’) carries the meaning of “because” or “for” i.e., to recompense those who have done bad “because of” or “for” what they did (i.e., their sins). The second use of بَاء (ب - Baa’) however carries the meaning of “with” i.e., He will recompense those who did good “with” (that which is) the most excellent (الْحُسْنَىٰ – Al-Husnaa). The meaning of the بَاء (ب - Baa’) is therefore changed from its first use to its second.

- سَوَاءٌ the plural of the verb أَسَاءَ (Asaa’a) is connected to the word سَيِّئَةٌ (Sayyi’ah) which comes from the word سَوَاءٌ (Saw’ah) and the verb سَاءَ (Saa’a) and these words are connected to the meanings of ugliness and repulsiveness. سَوَاءٌ (Saw’ah) is used in Arabic to refer to a corpse. The words سُوءٌ (Soo’) and سَيِّئَةٌ (Sayyi’ah) are used to refer to deeds that are ugly. There are different words for sinful acts used in the Islamic texts and سَيِّئَةٌ (Sayyi’ah) implies that the sinful act was an ugly act. Allah is saying here that He will compensate those who did ugly deeds based upon what they did. Allah used the word عَمِلُوا (‘Amiloo – “They did”) which unlike the word فَعَلُوا (Fa’aloo – “They did”) always denotes “intention and deliberateness”. There is therefore a connection between the ugly deeds and the intention behind them i.e., they intentionally did ugly deeds. This also indicates that Allah recompenses the ugly deeds in connection with the intention.

- أَحْسَنُوا is the plural of the verb أَحْسَنَ (Ahsana) is related to the word حَسَنَةٌ (Hasanah) which refers to “a good deed”. It is also related to الحُسْنُ (Al-Husn) which refers to internal and external beauty. As such أَحْسَنُوا captures the meaning of deeds that are not just apparently good but also based on good intentions i.e., beautiful on both the inside and outside. إِحْسَانٌ (Ihsaan) also means “to do something well or in the best manner”.

- Allah is stating here that he will repay those who have done bad based on what they did but does not say that he will reward those who have done good according to the good that they have done. Rather, He states that he will recompense them with Al-Husnaa (الْحُسْنَىٰ). Allah mentions according to what those who have done bad will be recompensed but does not state what they will be recompensed with. In contrast, He mentions what those who have done good will be recompensed with but not the basis upon which they will be recompensed. This highlights that the focus of those who sin is upon their deeds and not the punishment for their deeds. This allows opportunity for those who are sinful to focus on their deeds and change them. However, for the believer who does good deeds the focus is upon the reward and not the deeds. This could be so that the believer does not get impressed by his deeds. Al-Husnaa (الْحُسْنَىٰ) is

the superlative form and means “the ultimate or absolute best”. Nothing can be more beautiful inside and out than Al-Husnaa (الْحُسْنَى). Those who أَحْسَنُوا “Act well” implies that they act well but not perfectly, yet the recompense is Al-Husnaa (الْحُسْنَى) “The ultimate best”. This can also indicate that recompense for bad is commensurate and proportionate to what has been done whilst recompense for doing good is greater than what has been done i.e., if you “do good” then Allah will grant you Al-Husnaa which is beauty in the outside and inside. The outside can refer to the beauty of Jannah whilst the inner beauty can refer to that which one feels inside when experiencing the reward of Paradise.

#53:32

الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ إِلَّا اللَّمَمَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ ۖ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ أَنْتُمْ أَجْنَةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ ۖ فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۖ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ

Those who avoid the major sins and immoralities (indecent and ugliness), except (occasional) slip ups. Indeed, your Lord is very vast in forgiveness. He is most knowing of you when He produced you from the earth and when you were foetuses in the wombs of your mothers. So do not claim (or consider) yourselves to be pure; He is most knowing of who has Taqwaa.

- Introduction to the Aayah:

- This Aayah follows from the previous Aayah and begins with a description of those who أَحْسَنُوا “Do good” and will attain the reward of Al-Husnaa (الْحُسْنَى) “The ultimate best”. However, instead of listing the best deeds Allah is describing them here as those who do not slip up in a major way by not committing major sins (كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ) or indecent immoralities (الْفَوَاحِشَ) even if they do slip up sometimes. This highlights that Islam does not permanently condemn those who commit sins and leaves hope for them despite slipping up. This is then immediately followed up by His statement: إِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ “Indeed (or no doubt), your Rabb is vast in forgiveness”.

- Insights: We live in a reality where it has become a dominant culture to condemn people in a manner that it sticks to them in a permanent manner (i.e., cancelling culture). In the eyes of people such people cannot be redeemed. This is contrary to Islam which leaves the door continuously open through seeking forgiveness and making repentance and does not impose a permanent label of condemnation upon someone for the perpetration of a sinful act or an act or statement that is contrary to the prevailing view at a given time or place. Western propaganda often attempts to label religion to be something that is harsh and unforgiving, but the opposite is actually the true reality: إِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ “Indeed,

your Lord is very vast in forgiveness”. There are examples of great Sahabah whom committed great crimes against Muslims prior to embracing Islam but after they became Muslims, the Muslims did not hold that against them.

- Two extremes exist: 1) That everyone is sinful and going to hell and 2) Islam is mercy and everyone is going to heaven. Both these positions in origin are based on ظَنٌّ (Zhann – conjecture) and the هَوَاءُ النَّفْسِ (Hawaa’ un-Nafs – the wishing and desires of the inner self). It is no longer the Qur’an speaking but rather what one wants the Qur’an to say i.e., imposing what one feels or wants to shape the Deen rather than shaping one’s feelings and wants by what the Deen states.

- The description of those who أَحْسَنُوا “Do good” who will be rewarded with Al-Husnaa (الْحُسْنَى – “The very best”) here counters a misconception or misperception that إِحْسَان (Ihsaan) is defined by perfection or an outward image attached to it i.e. someone who looks or talks in a particular way, have a certain amount of knowledge and deeds that are practised. Here, the description provided for those characterised by Ihsaan is that they avoid the major sins and indecent immoralities, but also may slip up from time to time.

- Concerning His statement in this Aayah: إِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعٌ الْمَغْفِرَةِ ۖ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ أَنْتُمْ أَجِنَّةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ “Indeed, your Lord is very vast in forgiveness. He is most knowing of you when He produced you from the earth and when you were foetuses in the wombs of your mothers”: The connection between “Your Lord” (Allah) being vast in forgiveness and the fact that He is the most knowledgeable about us from the time that we were in the wombs of our mothers, counters the notion of seeking intermediaries to reach Allah, like the Angels mentioned previously in the Surah. It therefore demolishes the notion that gives rise to Shirk by stating that it is Allah that is vast in forgiveness and that it is He who knows you best who alone can forgive you.

- كَبَائِرُ الْإِثْمِ (Kabaa’ir al-Ithm) literally means “The majors of sin” and is understood to mean “the major sins”. This usage indicates that there are categories or grades of sin. كَبَائِرُ (Kabaa’ir) is the plural of كَبِيرَةٌ (Kabeerah) refers to those sins which are major and implies that there are sins which are not as big.

- Insight: A lack of sense of proportion between big and small or major and lesser sins where for example major things become diminished and lesser things become magnified can lead to:

- 1) An extreme perfectionism that leads to tunnel vision: Examples of this is where recommended actions and acts where the ruling is disagreed upon become the focus of someone’s Islam and anger. For example,

issues such as where the hands are placed during the prayer, the length of someone's trousers or beard can become the major issues which become the focus of condemnation whilst little or no attention is given to agreed upon major sins that often take place.

- 2) Lots of small deeds used to mask the seriousness of major bad deeds: Examples of this could be undertaking many recommended acts such as attending the Masjid, giving Sadaqah, going to 'Umrah frequently and fasting Mondays and Thursdays, whilst at the same time owning Haram businesses or engaging in Ribaa (usury). A misconception exists that people believe that by doing many good deeds it will counter the major sins they are engaged in. This is an assumption without evidence regarding how accountability works: *إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ* "They are not following anything apart from Zannah (assumption and conjecture)". Also, there is a love attached to doing these good deeds accompanied by a love to continue engaging in major sins, thus making their Deen comply to their comfort zone and what they want and love: They are only following *مَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ* "What their inner selves love".

- 3) The redefining of the essence of Islam: By doing the above you are redefining Islam. Our Deen is defined by what its texts dictate to be the priority and the grades of actions which it has determined. When lesser things become the priority over the major things the Deen is being redefined.

- 4) Opening the flood gates when all sins are deemed equal: A lack of sense of proportion between big and small or major and lesser sins where they are equalised can lead to a downward spiralling effect. This happens when lesser sins or even actions that are disagreed upon are equalised with agreed upon major sins which can lead someone to believe that his sins have condemned him to the point that it doesn't matter which sins he undertakes. The transition from lesser sins to major ones then becomes easier and more fair seeming for such a person.

- Language points:

- The previous Aayah stated *أَحْسَنُوا* "They excelled or did well" which is in the past tense and is followed here by *يَجْتَنِبُونَ* (Yajtaniboona) – "They avoid" which is in the present tense. There is therefore a shift in tenses. One of the reasons such a shift occurs in the Arabic language from the past tense to the present is to illustrate continuity. It is like it is saying that "they need to continue to avoid the major

sins” because they are continuously being exposed to them. It illustrates that avoiding the major sins is a continuous work that requires continuous effort and application. The present tense of the verb form **اِجْتَنَبَ** (Ijtanaba) is always used in the Qur'an in connection with the **كَبَائِرَ** (Kabaa'ir – “Major sins”) and indicates that avoiding and getting away from the major sins is a continuous struggle.

- **يَجْتَنِبُونَ** (Yajtaniboona) is related to the word **جَانِب** (Jaanib) which refers to “a side” and **جُنُب** (Janb) which means to be “close, near or besides something”. The verbs **جَانَبَ** (Jaanaba) and **جَنَّبَ** (Jannaba) carrying the meaning of getting rid of that closeness i.e., to push away in the distance, to avoid and ward off. **يَجْتَنِبُونَ** (Yajtaniboona) comes from the verb form **اِجْتَنَبَ** (Ijtanaba) and carries the meaning of trying to get far away from something that is trying to get close to you. The use of **يَجْتَنِبُونَ** (Yajtaniboona) in: **الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ** “Those who keep far away from the major sins and indecent immoralities” therefore implies that exposure to major sins and immoralities is constant and requires continuously making distance away from them and repelling them.

- **الْإِثْمَ** (Al-Ithm) is one of the Quranic words used to refer to “the sin”. In Arabic **آثِم** (Aathim) was used to describe a camel (**نَاقَةُ آثِمَةٍ** – Naaqah Aathimah) when it became slow due to being overburdened or fatigued. It used generally to refer to something that slows down because there is too much load on it. **الْإِثْمَ** (Al-Ithm) was used to refer to alcohol where it would be said: “I drank **الْإِثْمَ** (Al-Ithm) to the point that I lost my mind”. That is because its consumption slows down the mind. **الْإِثْمَ** (Al-Ithm) also refers to a weight (**الْوِزْرَ** – Al-Wizr) i.e., something that burdens and weighs you down. From this understanding of a weight and burden that slows you down, comes the meaning of “a sin” because sins are a heavy burden and weight upon their perpetrator. They are a burden that one will be held accountable for.

- **الْمُتَفَحِّشِ** (Al-Mutafahhish) is the plural of **الْفَاحِشَةُ** (Al-Faahishah). **الْمُتَفَحِّشِ** (Al-Mutafahhish) refers to someone who purposefully goes about insulting people. **الْفُحْشِ** (Al-Fuhsh) refers to obscene language or making atrocious insults where someone goes too far or beyond the acceptable boundaries in his speech or in his responses i.e., **الْفُحْشِ** (Al-Fuhsh) refers to obscenity and indecency. **فَاحِشٍ** (Faahish) would be used to describe the bite of a flea to downplay it. It would be said that the bite is not **فَاحِشٍ** (Faahish) meaning that it's not extreme or its effects are not major. In contrast, if a bite of an insect did have a major effect or extreme impact, it would be described as being **فَاحِشٍ** (Faahish). It was therefore used to describe something that had an extreme or ugly effect. The verb **فَحَشَ** would be used to describe a woman to mean that she had become old and ugly. **الْفَاحِشَةُ** (Al-Faahishah) and its plural **الْفَوَاحِشَ** (Al-Fawaahish) were used to refer to that which

was commonly deemed to be ugly and is associated with greed. It was used as a كِنَايَة (Kinaayah) to refer to Zinaa (fornication and adultery) i.e., instead of using the term الزَّنا (Az-Zinaa), الْفَاحِشَةُ (Al-Faahishah) was used instead to refer to it. It can be observed from these meanings that the word الْفَاحِشَةُ (Al-Faahishah) is used to refer to something that is extreme, going beyond boundaries and associated with ugliness, encompassing all indecent and obscene speech and acts. For example, His speech:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

“Verily those who love that Al-Faahishah be spread among those who have believed ... (An-Nur: 19).

Here الْفَاحِشَةُ (Al-Faahishah) is being used to refer to rumours, slander and calumny which is spread amongst the people regarding ugly deeds.

- There is a contrast between the mention of الْفَوَاحِش (Al-Fawaahish) here which indicates to something that is characterised by “ugliness” and the use of أَحْسَنُوا (Ahsanaoo) which means to “do good or one’s best” and contains the meaning of “beauty”. Those who do إِحْسَان (Ihsaan) i.e., “those who do good” (أَحْسَنُوا الَّذِينَ) create beauty in their life and society by avoiding the الْكَبَائِر (Al-Kabaa’ir – “Major sins”) الْفَوَاحِش (Al-Fawaahish – “indecent immoralities) which create ugliness in life and the society.

- الْكَبَائِر (Al-Kabaa’ir – “Major sins”) will always be tempting and to avoid them the path that leads to them and not just the sin itself needs to be avoided. The major sins have steps that lead to them which need to be avoided. An example in our present day is that of marriage and fornication. Marriage is the Islamic solution and the guard against fornication, however contemporary western societies promote sexual relations to the point that its has become normal outside of marriage just as this culture is thrust upon teenagers and has spread to the Muslim world. At the same time Muslims are not encouraged to marry young and they are often much more immature as compared to previous generations, just as other obstacles are placed in the way of marriage. As such the paths to fornication are many and promoted whilst there are obstacles in the way of marriage. To avoid the كَبِيرَة (Kabeerah – “Major sin”) of Zina (fornication), it is not sufficient to state that it is prohibited but rather all the paths and factors that lead to it need to be addressed and treated.

- إِلَّا اللَّمَمَ “Except for Al-Lamam”. لَمَم (Lamam) was previously translated to refer to “(minor) slip-ups”. لِمَّة (Limmah) was used to describe hair that went past the

earlobes and gathered on the shoulders. The verb لَمَّ (Lamma) is used to mean “to gather” something together. The verb form أَلَمَّ (Alamma) is used with a place to mean “to stay in a place for a short period of time” – أَلَمَّ بِالْمَكَانِ (Alamma Bi-l-Makaan) means: “He stayed in the place for a short time”. It carries the meaning of something happening briefly. The particle لَمَّا (Lammaa) indicates to an exception like in His statement:

إِنَّ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ

There is no soul or person لَمَّا (but/except) it has a protector over it (At-Tariq: 4).

This provides us with the idea that لَمَّ (Lamam) includes things which are exceptional or brief instances. The Arabs would say: “Such and such a person would not visit us except لِمَامًا (Limaaman)” which means “except exceptionally or briefly”. The word لَمَّ (Lamam) is therefore associated with small mistakes or slip ups and lapses.

- Insights related to “Those who avoid the major sins and immoralities (indecent and ugliness), except (occasional) slip ups”: Allah says:

إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلَكُمْ مُدْخَلَ كَرِيمٍ

If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden from doing, We will remove from you your lesser sins and admit you to a noble entrance [into Paradise] (An-Nisa': 31).

This Aayah also recognises the distinction between the major sins (كَبَائِرُ – Kabaa'ir) and lesser sins (سَيِّئَاتٍ – Sayyi'aat). It reinforces the understanding that if we stay away from the major sins, those other sins which we may commit, will be covered by Allah. The same way, those who do good (الْحُسْنَى) will attain (الْحُسْنَى) – “The very best” i.e., reward in Paradise) if they avoid the major sins and indecent immoralities, even if they slip up from time to time i.e., commit other sins. These verses highlight that great focus and care should be invested towards avoiding the major sins. If we do that, then Allah will take care of the rest. Allah also says:

إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ

Indeed, good deeds (Al-Hasanaat) do away with misdeeds (As-Sayyi'aat) (Hud: 114).

Allah has provided us with a simple way to deal with our everyday sins so that we do not become over obsessive with them whilst at the same time making us focus on avoiding the major sins.

- Insights concerning this issue of Allah overlooking lesser sins:

- There can be some logical fallacies connected to the statement that: “Some sins are smaller than others according to Allah”. These may include responses such as: “So are you saying that it is ok to do whatever you want as long as it’s not a major sin like robbery or murder?” or “This is incorrect, you are diminishing the weight of committing sins, making the Haram sound like it is Halal or no big deal, whilst all sins can lead to hellfire”. On the other side you may hear statements such as: “Yes, this is right and people who focus on all these small things or sins just want to make the Deen difficult for others!” This happens when you hear or understand what you “want” to hear: مَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ “What their inner selves love”. These matters need to be understood without internal biases that shape the conclusions we arrive to.

- Balance can be found within other Aayaat:

بَلَىٰ مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

Yes, whoever earns a bad deed and his sin has encompassed him, those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally (Al-Baqarah: 81).

This indicates that those who become addicted to a sin will be from the people of hellfire. In this case the sin will no longer be a لَمَم (Lamam) i.e., a slip up. Rather, it will be persistent and continuous sinfulness.

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ الْآنَ

But repentance is not for those who [continue to] do evil deeds up until, when death comes to one of them, he says, “Indeed, I have repented now” An-Nisa’: 18).

Again, this points to the persistence upon committing sins until death comes in which case it cannot be considered as لَمَم (Lamam) i.e., a slip up.

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرِ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَهُمْ يُصِرُّونَ عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

And those who, when they commit a Faahishah (indecent immoral act) or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah? - and did not persist in what they have done while they know (Aali 'Imran: 135).

And again, this verse highlights that forgiveness is conditional upon those who perpetrate the sins not knowingly persist upon doing them.

- لَمْ (Lamam) refers to slip-ups which are exceptional cases and not the norm. If it's a habit, regular practise and persisted upon it is not لَمْ (Lamam). If it encompasses and overtakes you it is not لَمْ (Lamam). This Aayah cannot be used to justify the perpetration of a sin just as you cannot ignore this Aayah and state that there is no forgiveness for committing these kinds of slip ups and that they are beyond redemption.

- Explanations of the Scholars of Tafsir:

- Ibn Jarir stated after mentioning a chain: That Ibn Mas'ud said: The Zinaa of the two eyes in the look and the Zinaa of the two lips is the kiss and the Zinaa of the two hands is Al-Batsh (oppressive violence) and the Zinaa of the two legs is walking (i.e., towards it). The private parts affirm or deny it. If he proceeds with his private parts he would be a Zaaniy (fornicator or adulterer), otherwise it would be Lamam". This was also stated by Masrooq and Ash-Sha'biy. Note: This means that all these acts apart from where the private parts are involved falls under Lamam.

- Muqatil mentioned in his Tafsir from Ibn 'Abbas that a man named Nabhan At-Tammar touched a woman inappropriately and went to the Messenger ﷺ in remorse. After some days the following was revealed:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ دَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرِ اللَّهُ لَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

And those who, when they commit a Faahishah (indecent immoral act) or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah? - and did not persist in what they have done while they know (Aali 'Imran: 135).

The same incident has also been stated in the Tafsir of Al-Qurtubi but linked to the revelation of this Aayah:

الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ إِلَّا اللَّمَمَ

Those who avoid the major sins and immoralities (indecenty and ugliness), except (occasional) slip ups.

- Concerning: **وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعٌ الْمَغْفِرَةِ**: “Indeed, your Lord is very vast in forgiveness”.

- Insight into the “vast forgiveness” of Allah from Surah At-Taubah:

كَيْفَ وَإِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْفُقُوا فِيكُمْ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةَ يُرْضُونَكُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتَأْبَىٰ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ فَاسِقُونَ (8) اشْتَرَوْا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ إِنَّهُمْ سَاءَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (9) لَا يَرْفُقُونَ فِي مُؤْمِنٍ إِلَّا وَلَا ذِمَّةَ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُعْتَدُونَ (10) فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَانُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَنُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

How [can there be a treaty] while, if they gain dominance over you, they do not observe concerning you any pact of kinship or covenant of protection? They please you with their mouths, but their hearts refuse [compliance], and most of them are defiantly disobedient. (8) They have exchanged the signs of Allah for a small price and averted [people] from His way. Indeed, it was evil that they were doing. (9) They do not observe toward a believer any pact of kinship or covenant of protection. And it is they who are the transgressors. (10) But if they repent, establish prayer, and give Zakah, then they are your brothers in the Deen; and We detail the verses for a people who know (At-Taubah: 8-11).

Here, the disbelievers of Arab polytheists are being described and condemned in the strongest manner for their conduct and characteristics depicting them as the enemies of the believers in a manner that would leave someone believing that they are beyond redemption. However, after listing their ugly descriptions and qualities Allah states: “But if they repent, establish prayer, and give Zakah, then they are your brothers in the Deen”. As such, after numerous Aayaat mentioning how bad their condition is and how great enemies they are to the believers, Allah states that they will be your brothers in the Deen if they were to do three things: Make Taubah (i.e., accept Islam), establish the Salah and give the Zakah. This is a manifestation of Allah’s speech: **وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعٌ الْمَغْفِرَةِ**: “Indeed, your Lord is very vast in forgiveness”.

- It has been said that the attachment of رَبِّ (Rabb) to the pronoun of the Prophet ﷺ in the statement: رَبَّكَ (Rabbaka) “Your Lord” and not the pronoun of the plural like in رَبَّكُمْ (i.e., your (pl) Lord) indicates that this care provided to those who do good from his Ummah has occurred for them by his blessing i.e., Allah gave this special forgiveness to the Ummah through the blessings afforded to the Prophet ﷺ. It can also indicate reassurance being provided to the Messenger ﷺ who fears

for his Ummah day and night, that “Your Rabb” is vast in forgiveness. It is like it is being said to the Prophet ﷺ: All your followers have to do to attain my great reward is to avoid the major sins and indecent immoralities. If they do that, then I will take care of the rest because “I am your Rabb” and “I am vast in (granting) forgiveness”.

Allah says:

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ

Certainly, did Allah confer [great] favour upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and **purifying** them and teaching them the Book and wisdom (Aali ‘Imran: 164).

This verse highlights that it was a great favour of Allah upon the believers that He sent the Messenger to them and that he would purify and cleanse them (يُزَكِّيهِمْ - Yuzakkeehim). It connects the sending of the Messenger ﷺ with the cleansing of the believers which is similar to the linkage in this verse of Surah An-Najm between Allah’s vast forgiveness for the believers and the special mention of the Messenger in His statement: رَبَّكَ (Rabbaka) “Your Lord”.

- Language points from His statement: هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ أَنتُمْ أَجْنَةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ: “Indeed, your Lord is very vast in forgiveness. He is most knowing of you when He brought you up from the earth and when you were foetuses in the wombs of your mothers”:

- The word: أَنشَأَ (Ansha’a) – النَّشْأَ (An-Nash’a) refers to a young camel. النَّشْأَ (An-Nasha’a) refers to new or young people (i.e., a new generation) and النَّاشِئُ (An-Naashi’a) refers to a youth or young man. النَّشِئَةُ (An-Nashee’ah) and النَّشْأَةُ (An-Nash’ah) is used to refer to any plant that is growing but has not fully grown yet. أَنشَأَ (Ansha’a) is used to mean to build, construct and make something rise up, like in the statement أَنشَأَ دَارًا (Ansha’a Daaran) “He built a house”. النَّشْأَ (An-Nash’a) is used to refer to the first part of the clouds that rise up. Allah said: وَيُنشِئُ السَّحَابَ الثِّقَالَ “And He causes the heavy (i.e., with rain) clouds to rise” (Ar-Ra’d: 13). Two main meanings therefore come from the usage of this word: 1) Raising and developing something and 2) Elevation.

- The word أَجْنَةٌ (Ajinnah) is the plural of جَنَّ (Janeen). It comes from جَنَّ (Janna) which means to cover, veil, hide and conceal. It is used to describe the coming of the night and darkness i.e., the cover or veil of darkness. جُنَّة (Junnah) refers to a shield and anything that protects you. جَنَّة (Jannah) is used to refer to a “garden of

paradise” because it is covered in greenery. It is also used to refer to “a grave” because it covers the corpse. جَنِين (Janeen) the singular of أَجِنَّة (Ajinnah) which is used here in this Aayah is used to refer to “a foetus” because it is hidden away in the womb of the mother. Secondary usages in Arabic from the same root as the word أَجِنَّة (Ajinnah) include: جَنَّ (Jinn) is also used to describe the blossoming of plants and to the first part or prime of something like childhood, implying the vigour and liveliness associated with that.

- اتَّقَى (Ittaqaa) in origin refers to protecting oneself and being on one’s guard.

Insights:

- Concerning His statement: هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ Allah is saying: That He is most knowledgeable about you from the time that He brought you out (i.e., created you) from the earth (i.e., from the origin of Adam (as)) and through all your phases of development. Allah’s knowledge of us is perfect and complete and no one knows us better than Him. He knows us better than we know our own selves. He knows everything about us including our weaknesses and secrets.

- Concerning His statement: وَإِذْ أَنْتُمْ أَجِنَّةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ “And when you were أَجِنَّة (Ajinnah - things which were hidden away) in the bellies (i.e., wombs) of your mothers”. The use of أَجِنَّة (Ajinnah) which carries the meaning of being hidden implies that the mother does not even know what is in her belly let alone any knowledge about what it will become. Allah was fully aware of us before we were even aware of our own selves.

- There is an implication tied to Allah knowing us better than anyone else or our own selves. It implies that Allah’s guidance to us is based upon the fact that He knows us best i.e., it the guidance from the One who created us and knows everything about us. When others are a source of advice or guidance, it will always be limited and imperfect, whilst Allah knows our reality and every aspect related to it whether it is open or hidden and as such His guidance is perfect based upon His complete and perfect knowledge about us. The doctor speaks from the medical perspective, the mother from the parental perspective, the historian from the historical perspective and so on, where each of these perspectives has limitations. When Allah speaks to us, He is speaking from every perspective, from complete and perfect knowledge which takes everything into account in relation to us. Allah’s speech cannot be restricted to what people may call religious matters whilst other worldly matters require other sources for advice and guidance. Rather, Allah’s guidance encompasses all knowledge

related to us. Nobody and nothing knows better what is best for human beings than Allah.

- Concerning His statement: فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ “So, do not declare yourselves to be pure” i.e., don’t be self-righteous or regard yourselves to be above sin or to be superior in your conduct or morals. This could lead to deception whereby somebody may do some good deeds and believe that he is in a good situation even if he is perpetrating major sins. They can be deceived into thinking that their own-devised moral compass is “pure” and be content with it. Another angle that can be drawn from this is the attempt to portray oneself as being pure and maintain an image of what is expected by your family, culture and society which can be at the expense of pleasing Allah. As a result, Allah would make something Halal and we would make it Haram or He would make something Haram and we would make it Halal.

- When you were veiled from the world, when you were veiled even from your own mothers, why then do you think that you can veil yourselves from Allah with self-righteousness? You are deceiving yourself because Allah is most knowledgeable about you and knows the complete truth about you.

- Concerning His statement: هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى “He is most knowledgeable about the one who has Taqwaa” Allah knows through this entire journey of life who it is who has protected himself. Allah knows those who have protected themselves and so don’t hide behind self-righteousness.

#53:33

أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي تَوَلَّى

“Have you seen the one who turned away”.

- At the beginning of this section in Aayah 27 of this Surah Allah instructs فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَّنْ “So, turn away from the one who turns away (تَوَلَّى)”. The Surah now returns to the “one who turns away” to provide more information about the kind of person who turns away.

#53:34

وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْدَى

“And gave a little and withheld”.

- Background to the Aayah:

- The Prophet ﷺ encountered three types of opponents in Makkah. There is the Abu Lahab type, the Abu Jahl type and the Al-Waleed bin Al-Mughirah type. Abu Lahab type: An enemy of Islam who was not known to have any good characteristics or traits i.e., through and out foul, vile and ugly with no integrity. This type was rarer. The Abu Jahl type was an enemy of Islam but was known to have some positive qualities, integrity, principles and chivalry. The third type is that which Al-Waleed bin Al-Mughirah is the most complicated one. He was an intellectual, respected and viewed to have integrity. He was well-known for his poetry. After hearing the recitation of the Qur'an, he described it as being sweetness and that it is superior to everything and nothing is superior to it. When the leaders of Quraish became concerned by him listening to the Qur'an and wanted him to adopt a position in opposition to it which could be shown to the people, he asked for time to think and then came back saying "This is magic that is imitated" (هَذَا سِحْرٌ يُؤْتَرُ) i.e., taken from others. Consequently, adopted the stance of being an opponent after realising and recognising that it was the truth. Internally he is not an opponent but outwardly adopts the position of opposition so as not to lose his social status and perceived benefits. This opponent was spoken about in detail in the Makkan Qur'an. The scholars of Tafsir would often state that such and such a description was about Al-Waleed Al-Mughirah. We should understand these verses to apply to those who fall under the category of the type that Al-Waleed bin Al-Mughirah represents. The three types can be summarised as being 1) The one without integrity, 2) The one with integrity and 3) The politician.

- "وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْدَى" "And gave a little and then withheld" reflects the profile of the third category of opponent exemplified by Al-Waleed bin Al-Mughirah. The savvy politician who turns away from the Qur'an for reasons of political manoeuvring to secure one's interests. It is not based on clear beliefs and principles but rather pragmatism to serve self-interests.

- The economic and political prestige and benefits enjoyed and accrued by Quraish revolved around the existence of the idols and the Islamic call meant the destruction of all that they had built their wealth and political positioning upon. The opposition and turning away from the Qur'an were not based on having strong beliefs or principles that Islam was contrary to but were rather due to the consequences of that call upon their interests. Their opposition was therefore based upon political and economic considerations. People like Al-Waleed bin Al-Mughirah opposed the message based on these economic and political calculations and these verses discuss and describe them.

- Here the Messenger ﷺ is being told to take a close look at the behaviour of this type of opponent. Allah states: **أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي تَوَلَّى وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْدَى** “Have you seen the one who turned away. And gave a little and withheld”. This type of opponent, the one characterised by political and economic considerations, was not just described but rather Allah stated: **أَفَرَأَيْتَ** “Have you seen?” i.e., taken in his reality. This implies that we should not restrict our sight to spiritual realities but we should also take a close look at the political, social and economic realities on the ground to gain a deep insight about them.

- Views of Tafsir scholars:

- Ibn ‘Ashur states in his Tafsir that: **وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْدَى** “And gave a little and then withheld” refers to those who initially show some goodness or Iman, then abandon it, whether out of hypocrisy, pretence, or weak conviction.

- It has also been mentioned in some Tafsir sources (At-Tabari) that some wealthy Quraysh leaders would give charity selectively to maintain social control. When they sensed someone leaning toward Islam, they would withhold support to pressure them back into conformity.

- Further insight: Giving can also be undertaken to be used as a tool to make people dependent upon them which can then be yielded as a vantage point to pressure or be harsh with them.

- Al-Qurtubi stated: discusses how Al-Waleed bin Al-Mughirah initially softened toward the Prophet ﷺ and was known for his generosity. But when he feared losing status or influence, he reversed course, cutting off support and publicly denouncing the Prophet ﷺ.

- Further insight: Someone like Al-Walid bin Al-Mughirah would give money or assistance to others because he wants to be seen to be a good person amongst the people, but he had limits and when that was reached, he would pull back or withhold.

- Muqaatil stated: Al-Waleed had praised the Qur’an, then stopped doing so. Then the verse was revealed: **أَعْطَى قَلِيلًا** “He gave a little”, meaning in terms of good speech **وَأَكْدَى** “and then withheld”, meaning, he ceased and refrained from continuing to do that.

Linguistic points:

- The word أَكْدَى (Akdaa) has several meanings. It is one of the beautiful examples of saying many things at once in the Qur'an. All the secondary meanings of this word add an extra benefit that can be gained from its usage.

- الْكُدْيَةُ (Al-Kudyah) refers to land that is hard and in which digging is not possible i.e., it cannot be penetrated. In the same way أَكْدَى (Akdaa) was specifically used to describe the act of attempting to dig for water but because of a rock or obstacle you were unable to dig a whole and extract water. مُكْدِيَةٌ (Mudkiyah) refers to a woman with a medical condition where a muscle blocks her ability to undertake procreational activity. These meanings provide the imagery of someone who does some good but blocks the path to other good. It can also capture the image of someone yielding influence over people through giving to them but as a result of that reliance he can treat them harshly and be hard towards them like a rock.

- The Arabic phrase كَدِيَ الْكَلْبِ (Kadiya l-Kalb) was used to refer to a dog that is suffering because it has a bone stuck in its throat. This can provide the imagery of someone who gives a little but then feels like he is choking because he doesn't want to let go of his wealth.

- أَكْدَى (Akdaa) is used to imply the meaning of hiding the ugliness of what is inside. In this context he gives a little to hide his true self and the ugliness it contains.

- أَكْدَى (Akdaa) is also used to mean to persist or press upon an issue until it is exhausted and nothing remains to be taken. In this context it can imply that he gives a little to give the impression of being generous whilst in reality he is incredibly self-serving and having an agenda.

- أَكْدَى (Akdaa) can also refer to becoming impoverished after being rich. This could imply here that he gives a little whilst actually being bankrupt. It could mean that he is morally bankrupt or that he will be bankrupt in the hereafter. It may also indicate that the money he is spending to attain position will not do him any good in the future.

- أَكْدَى (Akdaa) is used to describe someone whose goodness is little and is miserly. Here, he gives a little but is actually miserly. In such a case the giving is only for the purpose of a future benefit.

#53:35

أَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهَوْ يَرَى

“Does he have knowledge of the unseen, so he sees?”

Connection between this Aayah and the previous one وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْذَى “And he gave a little and then withheld”:

- Are all the political and economic considerations and calculations made by the one who turns away from the Qur'an and opposes the message, like the type described in the previous verse who “gives a little and withheld”, based upon some unseen knowledge that he has access to? Does he have knowledge of the Ghaib “Unseen” so that he sees what to do?

- In this Surah Allah has already spoken about the limitations of their knowledge when He stated: ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُم مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ “That is the limit or extent of their knowledge” highlighting that their knowledge was limited to the material world whilst they had no knowledge of spiritual matters, despite being “Custodians of the Ka’bah”. Their thinking was solely based upon material realities related to politics, economics and maintaining their positions and status quo. As for the spiritual matters, they had no knowledge. As such this question: أَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهَوْ يَرَى “Does he have knowledge of the unseen, so he sees?” employs the style of asking a rhetorical question which is not used for the purpose of seeking information, but rather to deny, reject, or rebuke an idea or claim. This type of question style is known as الاستيفهام الإنكاري (Al-Istifhaam ul-Inkaariy). The question therefore implies that he has no knowledge of the unseen and as such, how is it possible for him to see? The word see here does not imply physical sight but rather the sight of having an opinion or view about something. For example, he “sees” that this is the right approach or course of action.

- Another connection with the Aayah وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْذَى “And he gave a little and then withheld” could be that such a person believes that he is doing some good by giving a little and deceives himself into believing that he will be saved because of it however here he is being informed that he has no knowledge of the unseen to come to such a conclusion. What you consider to be morality holds no weight in the absence of knowledge related to spiritual matters i.e., without divine guidance that dictates morality people will make up their own morality and build their delusions around it.

- A further connection with the Aayah وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْذَى “And he gave a little and then withheld” could be that public figures engaged in what appears to be “good”

help corrupt the definition of goodness. Their good has nothing to do with knowledge of the Ghaib (unseen) and they sell a worldly broken version of goodness to society, like criminals or corrupt politicians giving charity. When these public good deeds are seen, they are not detached from the people who have done them. Glorifying these deeds is accompanied by glorifying those who do them and people take them as models despite their corruption which leads to the definition of good being redefined. Figures are then characterised with “goodness” whilst major aspects of corruption or immorality are present with them. This new definition of good will always be connected to the seen (i.e. worldly matters) and will never be connected to the unseen (i.e. spiritual matters) because they have no knowledge of that: **أَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهُوَ يَرَى** “Does he have knowledge of the unseen, so he sees?” They mix good with evil to diminish the evil and redefine what is good. A contemporary example is where social, economic or political movements or campaigns incorporate things that agree with Islam with things which are contrary to Islam. Muslims would then join onboard with the movements based on the good that they see and use that good to excuse the evil which the movements also incorporate.

- Allah previously stated in Aayah 32: **فَلَا تَزْكُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۖ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى** “So, do not declare yourselves to be pure. He (i.e., Allah) is most knowledgeable of the one who has protected himself”. The one who “give a little and withheld” attempts to make himself look pure before the people and then deceive himself that he is pure and righteous. Here, he is being told that he has no knowledge of the unseen (i.e., spiritual matters related to the hereafter and Day of Judgement) and as such is unable to reach the right conclusions, see what is right or seek to purify his acts. An example of that is Fir’awn who despite being the head of corruption and tyranny was bold enough in his own self-delusion to make the following claim about Musa (as):

إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَ دِينَكُمْ أَوْ أَنْ يُظْهِرَ فِي الْأَرْضِ الْفَسَادَ

“Indeed, I fear that he will change your religion or that he will cause corruption in the land” (Ghafir: 26).

- Insight concerning the connection between Allah’s question in the previous verses **أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي تَوَلَّى وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْدَى** “Have you seen the one who turned away. And gave a little and withheld” and the statement here: **أَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهُوَ يَرَى** “Does he have knowledge of the unseen, so he sees?” When these two statements are brought together it is like Allah is saying to His Messenger ﷺ: “Can you see the one who can’t see?” and can imply a subtle jab at Al-Waleed bin Al-Mughirah or those of his type.

- His statement **أَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهَوْا يَرَى** “Does he have knowledge of the unseen, so he sees?” also highlights the contrast between this person who has no knowledge of the unseen and the Messenger ﷺ who has knowledge of the unseen and actually seen that which is from Ghaib (unseen) as mentioned in the earlier part of this Surah including the encounter of the Prophet ﷺ with Jibreel (as), the ascent to the heavens and being shown some of the major signs.

#53:36

أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبِّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَى

“Or is it the case that he was never informed about what was in the scriptures of Musa?”

#53:37

وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّى

“And [of] Abraham, who fulfilled (his word or what was due of him)?”

- Background to verses 36 and 37:

- The Arabs had lost the original teachings of Ibrahim (as) however the Jewish tribes of Arabia around Yathrib did have scriptures which included the teachings of Musa (as) and Ibrahim (as). The opportunity was therefore present for the people addressed in these verses to have enquired from the Jews regarding the scriptures. This indicates that they had no desire to do that and made no effort. These verses 36 and 37 are indicating to their lack of knowledge being based on them not wanting to know. In addition, the Qur'an which they turned away from has preserved the legacies and guidance of Musa (as) and Ibrahim (as).

- **صُحُفِ مُوسَى** “The scriptures of Musa” – The Tawrah (Torah) or scriptures which were in the possession of the Jews did not have nearly any mention of the hereafter within them. However, the Quranic discourse concerning Musa (as) repeatedly links to the hereafter. We are learning implicitly that the scriptures of Musa (as) in their truest form is being provided to Muhammad ﷺ in the Qur'an and the original teachings of Ibrahim (as) in their truest form are being given to him ﷺ. The Jewish religion believed that it was not meant to be shared with others but was only meant for them. The message revealed to Muhammad ﷺ in contrast was meant for all mankind. As such Islam shared knowledge of the scriptures which those who were followers of them did not share and yet those described in these verses are not coming to learn from him.

- Suhuf (scrolls) of Ibrahim and Musa which are being mentioned are unlikely to be referring to what remained in the peoples' possession through Arab or Judeo-Christian tradition. The reason for this is because the Quranic discourse concerning both Musa (as) and Ibrahim (as) was focused upon the hereafter and Judgement Day, whilst their discourse concerning these Prophets does not contain any focus upon that. This core message concerning the hereafter and Day of Judgement has been removed from the scriptures. Allah states: **أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبِّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَىٰ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّىٰ** "Or is it the case that he was never informed about what was in the scriptures of Musa? And [of] Abraham, who fulfilled (his word or what was due of him)?" and follows that by stating: **أَلَا تَرَوْا وَازِرَةً وَّرَرَ** "Nobility who carries a burden will carry the burden of anyone else" i.e., that core message which was contained in the Suhuf of Musa and Ibrahim was related to the hereafter and that nobody will bear the burdens of another. As such, even though the Ka'bah built by Ibrahim (as) is still there, the message that he brought has been taken away, and even though the Jews are present around Madinah, the message of Musa (as) has been taken away from and stripped of core elements. This core message of the two Prophets is mentioned clearly in Surah Al-Aa'laa:

بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (16) وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ (17) إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَىٰ (18) صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ

But you prefer the worldly life, (16) While the Hereafter is better and more enduring. (17)

Indeed, this is in the former Suhuf (scriptures), (18) The Suhuf (scriptures/scrolls) of Ibrahim and Musa.

The Qur'an is saying that the original core and heart of the message of Ibrahim and Musa has been lost and is now being reclaimed by the Qur'an. The only true representation of the Suhuf of Ibrahim and Musa is what is contained in the Qur'an.

- **الَّذِي وَفَّىٰ** - "The one who fulfilled". The Quraish believed that the Ka'bah was built by Ibrahim (as) but they also believed in the legitimacy of the idols. And so, this mention here is implicitly saying that Ibrahim (as) who fulfilled his word and was true to it, has nothing to do with the corruption of the Ka'bah perpetrated by the Quraish and is completely absolved from that. His name may be mentioned upon your tongues, but you cannot ascribe yourselves to his legacy which is pure from you. The Qur'an corrects how religions have corrupted the legacies of the Prophets by reclaiming Musa (as) from the Jews, 'Isa (as) from the Christians and Ibrahim (as) from the Mushrikoon (polytheists) and then presenting the real truth about them without the corruption that they invented and added.

- **الَّذِي وَفَّىٰ** - "The one who fulfilled" – Ibrahim (as) was true to his word and you will find that when his Master (Rabb) said to him "Surrender", he said: "I have surrendered".

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِربِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

When his Lord said to him: “Submit”, he said: “I have submitted to the Lord of the worlds” (Al-Baqarah: 131).

Or Allah would test him and he would fulfil all those tests. Allah is therefore saying that Ibrahim (as) was true to his word and it is time for you. The “custodians of the Ka’bah” to be true to your word.

- Ibn ‘Aashur links the fact that the fulfilment was mentioned following the mention of the Suhuf to state his view that the Suhuf of Ibrahim was actually the fulfilment of his “word”. He states: “As what the Scrolls of Ibrahim contained were the very ‘words’ with which Allah tested Ibrahim, as mentioned in His statement in Surah al-Baqarah:

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ

“And [recall] when Abraham was tested by his Lord with words, and he fulfilled them” (2:124).

i.e., He conveyed them to his people and to those who believed in him. Thus, those words became a law for him and for those who followed him”.

- The mention of Ibrahim (as) and Musa (as) have a strong connection to the Seerah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. The mission of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is connected to the original legacy of Ibrahim (as) and the restoration of that legacy. Whilst in the form that it takes, the Seerah of the Messenger ﷺ is connected to that of Musa (as). As such, those two Prophets have a very deep connection to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his mission.

#53:38

أَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

Literally: “That no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another” and easy translation: “That no one shall carry the burden of anyone else”

- This begins a summary of some of the main teachings of Ibrahim (as), Musa (as) and then the Qur’an i.e., the core of the religion that was passed down from generation to generation.

- وَازِرَةٌ (Wazirah) and تَزِرُ (Taziru) and وِزْرُ (Wizr): Three words from the same root letters of وَزَر are mentioned in this Aayah. الْوَزْر (Al-Wazar) has been used in Arabic to refer to الْجَبَل الْمَنِيع (Al-Jabal Al-Manee’) which means a “fortified mountain”. Anything that is fortified it

and sought refuge in is referred to as **الْوَزْر** (Al-Wazar). The word is also used to refer to the burden or load of tied up clothes that a man carries on his back, just like the clothes traders would roam the villages or towns with. The central meaning of the word is the preservation of something by bringing together, carrying it, and containing it just like the bundle of clothing is tied to be carried, and like the mountain protects those who take refuge in it. **الْوَزْر** (Al-Wazar) was also used to refer to a place of refuge in which a person is fortified and protected. The verb **وَزَرَ** (Wazara) was used to mean “to carry something” like a burden or load. **الْوِزْر** (Al-Wizr) refers to heaviness or weightiness. The word **وَزِير** (Wazeer) which refers to an “assistant to the ruler” comes from this because he helps to carry the burden or weight of the rule.

- The meaning of this Aayah is that: “Nobody who carries a burden will carry the burden of anyone else”. Allah freed us from responsibility over anyone else in the end in the sense that we will only carry our burden and not be able to carry the burden of anyone else i.e., each person is responsible for their own burden.

- Other religions have promoted that others can carry another’s burden whether that is Prophets, saints, priests or angels whilst Islam made each person responsible for carrying their own burden and negated anyone carrying the burden of another.

- This principle holds true forever and is mentioned here to state that this is from the teachings that Ibrahim (as) came with and Musa (as) came with and now is being restated in the revelation revealed to Muhammad ﷺ and will continue until the Last day.

- The burden carried by the believers is his adherence to the rulings which Allah has set for them. However, Allah has stated:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ ۖ وَخُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا

And Allah wants to lighten for you and the human was created weak (An-Nisaa’: 28).

And He said:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ

And He wants for you ease and does not want for you hardship (or difficulty) (Al-Baqarah: 185).

This informs us that Allah’s laws make our burden lighter. Without my laws life is made harder and with my laws your life becomes easier. On one hand it is a lot of responsibility and on the other hand they come with this amazing benefit of making life easier.

- The use of التَّكْرَار (At-Tikraar – “repetition”) and الإطناب (Al-Itnaab – “Elaborateness by using more words than necessary to say something”). Here the root of وزر (Waw Zaa Raa’) has been used or repeated three times: وَزَرَ (Wizr) تَزِرُ (Taziru) and وَازِرَةٌ (Waazirah).

- Benefits that can be drawn from this repetition and ability to have presented the meaning in less words include: 1) To emphasise that there are no exceptions to this principle i.e., everyone is carrying a burden, no one is absolved from responsibility and accountability, and nobody carries the burden of another or have their burdens carried by someone else.

- Summary of the third section of Surah An-Najm and its structure and patterns:

- 1) Ignore the one who turns away. The one whose only ambition is this worldly life.

- 2) a) The worldly life is the extent and limit of their knowledge.
b) Your Rabb knows better who is guided and isn’t guided.

- 3) Allah owns all that exists in the heavens and earth and as such he compensates the sinners (for the sins they perpetrated) and grants the best (reward) for those who excel (in good), those avoid the major sins and indecencies except for Lamam (slipups).

- 4) a) Your Rabb is most knowledgeable about you from the time of your beginnings from the earth and the wombs of your mothers.
b) Your Rabb is most knowledgeable who protects themselves.

- 5) Did you see the one who turned away?
Does he know the unseen?

- There is a connection between number 1 and 5, between the first part of 2 (a) and the first part of 4 (a), between the second part of 2 (b) and the second part of 4 (b), and right in the middle (3), Allah states that He owns everything and will repay everyone. There is therefore a clear structural symmetry to this section of the Surah.

#53:39

وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى

“And that the human does not have (or attain) except the effort he has made”.

- Like the previous verse this is also from the core message that came in the Suhuf of Ibrahim and Musa.

- An understanding of this verse is that the only thing that will remain in one's possession and owned beyond this life are the efforts one makes. Everything else that a human owns is temporary and confined to the worldly life whilst his efforts (or deeds) will follow him after his life. (Note: This is NAK's interpretation which is contrary to the majority understanding of this verse. They state that it follows on from the previous verse that nobody will carry the burden of another and means that the human will only be held accountable and be recompensed for his own deeds. The difference between the two views is that NAK is stating that what belongs to the person is what he owns in this worldly life whilst the others state that it refers to what the person will get in the hereafter in terms of recompense).

Language points:

- The word سَعَى (Sa'aa)

- سَعْوَةٌ (Sa'wah) is used to refer to a candle or the wax that gathers under it and to refer to a portion or moments of the night (to convey the passage of time). سَعَى (Sa'aa) is used to mean to pace without intense exertion to cover and extended distance. السَّعْيِ (As-Sa'y) is used to refer to: The seeking of the means of livelihood by travelling from place to place (i.e., effort wandering in the pursuit of sustenance). All these meanings imply a meaning of some kind of movement or work towards a conclusion and is associated to working and earning. From this the meaning of working and expending effort to make something a reality or accomplish a matter was attached to سَعَى (Sa'aa). This meaning can be summarised as gradual and consistent effort with a goal in mind.

- The term سَاعٍ (Saa'in) refers to somebody who is responsible for organising or overseeing public or communal affairs, a Messenger or emissary, a collector or Zakah. It therefore implies somebody who takes charge of a matter. It has also been used to refer to a peace broker who makes efforts to stop bloodshed and quell the fires of discord between factions, where they have to go back and forth from one faction to the other. A meaning that can be drawn from this is that they take charge of and responsibility for issues or situations that are bigger than themselves.

Insights drawn from this Aayah:

- Insight that can be from this meaning in respect to the Aayah: وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى "And that the human does not have (or attain) except the effort he has made". It is like Allah is saying that human beings will own nothing except their efforts and except the charge they took in life. السَّعَى (As-Sa'y) implies that we need to keep pacing and moving forward to accomplish goals regardless of what might face in terms of excuses or obstacles. Rather, we are responsible for taking charge and facing challenges to meet goals. السَّعَى (As-Sa'y) means to move forward and to take charge. You cannot do السَّعَى (As-Sa'y) if you keep looking backwards, if you don't take charge and if you don't have the resolve to carry the Wizr (burden and weight).

- A world view is being crafted based on these core principles related to وَزَرَ (Wizr) and السَّعَى (As-Sa'y) where the person takes responsibility for his own actions which in opposition to the fake world view that is based on ظَنَّ (Zhann "Assumption, conjecture and doubt"), هَوَى (Hawaa "Desires and whims") and شَفَاعَةَ (Shafaa'ah "intercession of others on your behalf").

- Some issues have been raised in relation to the understanding of this Aayah that one is only responsible and recompensed for one's own deeds. Such issues which are mentioned in other Islamic evidences include: 1) The Issue of Sadaqaha Jariyah (ongoing charity) where good deeds continue to bring benefit after one's death. 2) The Hadith of the Messenger ﷺ: "الدَّالُّ عَلَى الْخَيْرِ كَفَاعِلِهِ" "The one who guides to a good is like the one who does it". 3) Hajj on behalf of the parent. 4) Du'aa for someone.

These can mean the reward is given for what is beyond the effort undertaken by a person whilst the Aayah states that humans own nothing except their own efforts. These realities can be explained as being gifts on top of your effort and not your effort itself. If someone in their life turned away from Islam and didn't fulfil any of its commitments but then after they die people are making Du'aa for them, doing Sadaqah Jariyah on their behalf and doing Hajj for them, then these efforts by others will not compensate for the efforts of the one who passed away.

- In the worldly life the focus of consideration and recognition are to the results and not the efforts. Results are seen and recognised but efforts are not. This is in the sight of people, however, in the sight of Allah, the focus is completely shifted to the efforts. Efforts mean everything whilst results are from Allah. The results don't belong to us but rather belong to Allah. It is the efforts that we own and it is these efforts that will be put on display. Only our efforts will be shown on the Day of Judgement and not the results. This understanding produces a world view that is diametrically opposed to the current prevailing one. It is the tireless and huge efforts of the Prophets that will be presented on the Day of Judgement and not

the results of their efforts. For example, Nuh (as), the many Prophets whose nations were destroyed after rejecting their message and the Makkan phase of the Messenger's ﷺ mission. Efforts in terms of good deeds may lead to results and extra reward, such as giving Sadaqah to a Masjid, for example, but the results are from Allah and the reward you attain from that is an extra bonus from the favour and mercy of Allah.

#53:40

وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَىٰ

“And that his effort will (soon) be seen or shown”

- أَرَى (Araa) is the passive for both يَرَى (Yaraa) which means “to see” and أُرَى (Araa) which means “show”. As such, يَرَى (Yaraa) can mean “to be seen” or “to be shown” here. His effort being seen implies that he will see it whilst being shown can imply that it will be shown to others as well and put on display.

- Our efforts may not be seen in the life of this world but this does not concern the believers because Allah tells us that our efforts will be seen or shown on the Day of Judgement. Efforts are not wasted because they are not seen in the worldly life.

- There is a disease of the feeling of helplessness that exists amongst people where they claim that they are unable to undertake the correct السَّعْيِ (As-Sa'y) and have no choice in the matter, in terms of moving forward and taking charge towards fulfilling goals, due to emotional, verbal or psychological pressures that they feel. Allah says that there will be people who come before Him:

وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءَنَا فَأَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلًا

And they will say: “Our Lord, indeed we obeyed our chiefs and our nobles (or great men), and they led us astray from the [right] way (Al-Ahzab: 67).

They attempt to excuse themselves by laying blame on their leaders and personalities for leading them astray from the path, as if they had no choice in the matter and were compelled to follow their leaders, however such an excuse will not be accepted. This disease of claiming to be helpless is dealt with by the verses: وَأَنَّ لِّلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ وَأَنَّ: “And that the human does not have (or attain) except the effort he has made. And that his effort will (soon) be seen or shown” i.e., each person will only be asked about his own efforts.

- Our efforts being seen can also refer to the light that comes from our right hands on the procession towards Jannah and lights the way along the path:

نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَى بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتِمِّمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا

Their light will proceed before them and on their right; they will say, "Our Lord, perfect for us our light ... (At-Tahrim: 8).

The light between their hands represents the light of Iman and the light from the right hand represents the efforts that were made and it is this light that they need to reach paradise. That light from these two sources may not be enough and so they say: "Our Lord, allow our light to be completed".

#53:41

ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءُ الْأَوْفَى

"Then he shall be compensated (or paid) it: Al-Jazaa'a l-Awfaa (The fullest recompense)".

- ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ (Thumma) "Then he will be paid it (it)": The it here refers to the سَعْيٍ (Sa'y – "effort" i.e., deeds). Normally in Arabic it would be said that someone is paid "for" or "upon" his efforts using a preposition (حَرْفُ الْجَرِّ – Harf ul-Jarr) such as بِ (Bi) or عَلَى ('Alaa) but here it states that he will be paid his effort directly without a preposition. A possible understanding of this is that the use of a preposition would create a distance between the one being paid and the payment and by omitting the preposition Allah brought them together whereby there would be no distance between them i.e., Allah would not delay that from you and not even allow a Harf (preposition) to get in the way. Another understanding that has been drawn here is that the rewards of paradise are a direct reminder of the effort سَعْيٍ (Sa'y) that was made in the life of this world and that there is no separation between the effort and the rewards of paradise. It is like Allah is saying that you are being rewarded for your effort and each reward is a conversion of your effort, where the reward becomes synonymous with the effort.

- ثُمَّ (Thumma) means "thereafter" or "then" after some time and delay. ثُمَّ (Thumma) is used to indicate a big jump from the previous thing that happened. The use of "thereafter" here can therefore imply more than just the sequence of events in terms of one following another. It can imply here that the previous Aayah related to the efforts being seen or shown is a precursor to something that is even greater which is spoken about in this Aayah i.e., receiving the reward in full by entering the doors of heaven.

- الْجَزَاءُ الْأَوْفَى (Al-Jazaa'a l-Awfaa) – Here Allah qualifies the effort that will be compensated and rewarded by stating that it will be Al-Jazaa'a l-Awfaa which means “the most complete”. It can be understood to be qualifying the “effort” as being “the most complete form” of it. It is as if to say the effort was imperfect but Allah will add to it to make it complete. It also means that no one will be shortchanged but rather given their recompense and payment in full.

#53:42

وَأَنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ

“And that to your Rabb (Master) is Al-Muntahaa (the final end)”.

- الْمُنْتَهَىٰ (Al-Muntahaa) was mentioned previously in Surah An-Najm: عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ “At the Lote tree of the utmost boundary” and this mention is an echo of that reminding that humans were made to head back to their Rabb at the end of their worldly life.

- To Allah all matters reach their end and conclusion, all things return to him, to His judgment and the final end of life’s journey and recompense ends with Him.

Points raised by Ibn ‘Aashur connected to this verse:

- He argued that this statement does not necessarily have to go back to what was contained in the Suhuf or Ibrahim and Musa like the previous statements related to no one carrying the burdens of anyone else, only owning your own efforts and being shown your efforts. Rather, it can go directly back to أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّأْ “Or, was he not informed ...” i.e., “Was he not informed that to your Rabb (Master) is the final end?”. The address here is directed to the Prophet ﷺ (رَبِّكَ – Rabbika “Your Master”) and as such does not need an equivalent speech from Ibrahim (as).

- The use of رَبِّكَ “Your Master” with the singular pronoun directed to the Prophet ﷺ is an honouring to him even though the end (Al-Muntahaa) of everyone and everything is to Allah. (NAK adds: This honouring could be connected to the fact that the Messenger ﷺ had visited the heavens before having to return to the life of earth and it is like Allah is saying, don’t worry, you will be returning).

- There is a another meaning to this Aayah which NAK summarises as follows: Anyone who truly deeply ponders, reflects, contemplates, thinks and uses their intellect with what they find in creation, the end and conclusion that they would reach is that there must be a single creator for all that exists i.e., the end and

conclusion of using the mind is the existence of Allah and everything goes back to and ends at Him.

- Insights:

- Every سَعْيٍ (Sa'y – “Effort”) has an end goal. You are heading towards something. The previous Aayah was about the effort itself and we stated that the Qur'an is not concerned about the results but rather the efforts. The Qur'an is however concerned with the goal and the goal is with Allah. وَأَنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ. “And that to your Rabb (Master) is Al-Muntahaa (the final end)”.

- The use of إِلَىٰ (Ilaa) contains a powerful wisdom. The paths and roads which people take to get to the final destination are all different and we all have a different starting point, in terms of time and place. Our end point however is the same. That means that each person inevitably takes a different step by step effort to reach the end point. Everybody works upon the form and reality that Allah has provided them with:

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَتِهِ فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ سَبِيلًا

Say: "Each works according to his Shaakilah (form), but your Lord is most knowing of who is best guided in way" (Al-Israa': 84).

The fact that the end of each person is to his Rabb (Master) means that he must have that goal in mind, that this is his goal, that he has to work for.

- The previous verse states that the human will be recompensed with the complete and full recompense for their efforts but this verse which follows it is highlighting that there is something even greater and more significant awaiting the human, and that is that it is to your Rabb that is the final end and conclusion.

#53:43

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكَ وَأَبْكَىٰ

“And that He, He is the one who makes one laugh and makes one cry”.

- This can be understood in connection with the previous verse of the final end being with Allah and the emotions that will be felt by reaching that end. Which will include both laughing and crying.

- It is understood from this Aayah that it is Allah who has brought about the laughter and crying in us as a reaction to factors and stimulants that we face. He has made and caused these emotional reactions within us.

- Language points:

- Related to الضَّحَك (Ad-Dahak – “Laughter”):

- الضُّحُوك (Ad-Dahook) refers to a road that is wide open. الضَّاحِك (Ad-Daahik) refers to a white rock that is seen on a mountain. These meanings are closely related to a wide smile and showing of teeth.

- Related to الْبَكَاء (Al-Bakaa’ – “Crying”):

- الْبَكْي (Al-Bakaa) refers to a plant or tree that sheds a white milky substance or sap when cut. It refers to a liquid coming from out the inside of something bit by bit like being squeezed out.

- Views of Scholars of Tafsir:

- Ibn ‘Aashur stated: The mention of the laughter and crying benefits in encompassing the human conditions in a summarised manner i.e., in two words He can encompass the human emotional state.

- Ibn ‘Aashur and Al-Alousiy also stated: That it is Allah who created these emotions. (NAK: What a loving Creator we have, that created the reasons for laughter and laughter itself).

- Insights:

- That in this life: Allah created every circumstance that led to a every emotion.

- The range between the extremities of laughter and crying implies the entire spectrum that exists between the two.

- The addition of هُوَ after أَنَّهُ implies exclusivity i.e., it is Allah alone that brought about these emotional reactions and caused laughter and crying.

- Laughter and crying are human emotions created by Allah and they should not be suppressed unnaturally.

- Darwin described crying as purposeless. This is a reflection of Aayah: **ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ** **مِنَ الْعِلْمِ** “That is their extent (or limit) of knowledge” i.e., that their knowledge of matters are limited to what they can sense based upon their worldly and material parameters. When the limit is the knowledge of this world the most joyous, beautiful and profound experiences are reduced to a useless neurological process. The emotions attached to the most precious moments of one’s life are declared worthless. Removing the value of emotions removes value from human life. If something does not have purpose, it does not have value and is meaningless.

- **وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكَكَ وَأَبْكَى** - “And that He, He is the one who makes one laugh and makes one cry”. Instead of saying that Allah gives a joy and sadness, Allah is saying that Allah is giving you the way to express joy and to cope with sadness.

- Laughter is placed before crying which can indicate that the original position is joy and has precedence and that when those joys aren’t there Allah will give you moments to cry to be able to cope. Laughter is mentioned first because of the love and favour he has bestowed upon us by it.

- Allah mentions the Qur’an to be a cause for both crying and joy:

Crying is mentioned in His statement:

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ

And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of what they have recognized of the truth (Al-Ma’idah: 83).

And joy in His statement:

قُلْ بِفَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَبِرَحْمَتِهِ فَبِذَلِكَ فَلْيَفْرَحُوا هُوَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَكْتُمُونَ

Say: “In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy - in that let them rejoice; it is better than what they accumulate” (Yunus: 58).

As such, not only is He the cause of laughter and crying but His word is also the cause of laughter and crying.

#53:44

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَمَاتَ وَأَحْيَا

“And that He, He is the one who caused death and caused life”.

- It can be observed that Allah mentioned laughter and crying first and death and life second. NAK draws from this that it is as if the emotional states in which Allah intervenes are a greater matter than life and death itself. That is because laughter and crying are connected to the life and death of the heart which is more important than the life and death of the body. Our connection to Allah is much more connected to our heart than to our body. It is our heart that we will be coming to Allah with on the Day of Judgement:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ

The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children (88) But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart (Ash-Shu'ara: 88-89).

#53:45

وَأَنَّهُ خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَىٰ

“And that he created the two mates, the male and female”.

#53:46

مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ إِذَا تُمْنَىٰ

“From a fluid/drop (i.e., sperm) when it is emitted”.

- Insights:

- This is a reminder of the lowly beginnings of the human being in contrast to the heights that he may reach mentioned previously in this Surah. Allah says:

هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُن شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَّبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا

Has there [not] come upon man a period of time when he was not a thing [even] mentioned? (1) Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing (Al-Insan: 1-2).

The human went from not even worth being mentioned, from a sperm-drop, to “And that to your Rabb (Master) is Al-Muntahaa (the final end)”. Allah reminds us of our place and our journey.

- In Ayah 25 of this Surah Allah stated: فَلِلَّهِ الْآخِرَةُ وَالْأُولَى which can mean: “Allah alone owns the final end and the ultimate beginning”. He mentioned the final end before the ultimate beginning, and in then in this Surah He mentioned the final end: وَأَنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَى “And that to your Rabb (Master) is Al-Muntahaa (the final end)” before mentioning the beginning: مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ إِذَا تُمْنَى “From a fluid/drop (i.e., sperm) when it is emitted”. This reflects an amazing correspondence in the structuring of the verses of the Qur’an. Indeed, Allah began this Surah by stating: “إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى” “It is nothing but a revelation that is inspired”.

#53:47

وَأَنَّ عَلَيْهِ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَىٰ

“And that upon him (i.e., he has the exclusive responsibility) is the other raising”.

- Insights:

- Allah has already mentioned one time that the humans were raised from the earth, when He stated earlier in this Surah: إِذْ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ “And when We raised you from the earth”. Now, He is saying: “I have taken it upon myself to raise you all over again”.

- There is a pattern in the verses of this Surah that can be seen in terms of Allah switching between this life and the next life, and also that things are being constantly paired with each other. Allah has provided the correlation between the two but has one more thing to mention that applies to this life and the next life to complete this sequence as stated in the following verse.

#53:48

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَغْنَىٰ وَأَقْنَىٰ

“And that He, it is He who enriches and makes it last”.

- A simple translation of this can be that He: “Grants independence and makes it permanent”.

- Language points:

- أَعْنَى (Aghnaa): الغني (Al-Ghaniy) and الغاني (Al-Ghaaniy) is: The one who possesses abundance or plenty (i.e., he does not need anymore). It is the opposite of الفقر (Al-Faqr i.e., not having enough). The verbs غَنِيَ (Ghaniya), اسْتَغْنَى (Istaghnaa) and اِغْتَنَى (Ightanaa) mean: He came to have wealth. المَغَانِي (Al-Maghaaniy) refers to: The homes that people build (i.e., after they have enough and a sufficiency of wealth). It is said that a people have غَنِيَ (Ghaniya) in a home when they have lived and resided in it for a long time. The central meaning is the existence of sufficiency i.e., the absence of need. اسْتَغْنَى (Istaghnaa) means that someone has enough for himself and needs, sees himself to be self-sufficient and is not in need of more.

- Insights from أَعْنَى (Aghnaa):

- Allah is saying: It is he in fact who is the only One who grants self-sufficiency and independence. Allah is telling the wealthy people of Makkah that the cause of their wealth is because Allah granted them the independence or sufficiency.

- اِغْنَاء (Ighnaa') does not just refer to financial self-sufficiency and can apply to other areas such as those related to knowledge or spiritual matters in the case where someone views that they are not in need of any more and what they possess is sufficient. Allah is saying that He is the only One who grants you something where you don't feel the need for more of it. People's needs are often tied to others and to accomplishing things in order to gain recognition. In this situation people are not free from the opinions of the people or society. Allah is the only One who makes you free and independent from people and the need to satisfy them.

- أَقْنَى (Aqnaa): القناة (Al-Qanaat) is used to refer to an underground water channel. القنوة (Al-Qinw) refers to a cluster or bunch of dates. It is said that someone has sheep which are قِنْوَة (Qinwah) which means they are exclusively his, firmly established as his property, i.e., he acquired them and holds on to them. If someone اِقْتَنَى (Iqtanaa) something it means: He took it for himself (i.e., to possess and make use of) and not for sale. قَنَى (Qanaa) is used to mean to preserve and hold on to something like one's modesty. The Arabs would say: قَانَى قَانَى to mean: "May you always have a life of comfort" in the case where قَانَى (Qaanaa) means for something to be preserved and for it to persist.

- The Aayah وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَعْنَى وَأَقْنَى therefore implies the meaning that Allah grants you sufficiency and independence and that He grants you things that are worth holding on to

or He makes that sufficiency and independence something that you get to keep. In this sense أَفْنَى (Aqnaa) adds the dimension of permanence and retention to the meaning of أَغْنَى (Aghnaa). As such Allah grants you that which makes you sufficient and grants you that which maintains and preserves that.

- Views of the scholars of Tafsir:

1. If the meaning of أَفْنَى (Aqnaa) comes from قَنِيَّة (Qinyah) it implies more than just sufficiency and being enriched. It further implies persistence and that the freedom of need is made to go on and is maintained. (NAK addition: He sees that أَغْنَى (Aghnaa) may apply to this life and that أَفْنَى (Aqnaa) applies to the next life. That is based on the pattern of the previous themes preceding this in the Surah switching between this life and the next life. This could imply that Allah makes you independent from false Gods, expectations and pressures in this life and then if you were able to accomplish that in this life, He will make that independence permanent in the next life).

2. That Allah gives some what is enough to suffice them (أَغْنَى - Aghnaa) and he grants others more (أَفْنَى - Aqnaa). (NAK observation: To being given enough is not one standard and the enough does not just refer to wealth. It can imply enough to be able to fulfil one's purpose. It can also imply the variation of sufficiency that Allah gives to people).

3. أَفْنَى (Aqnaa) has also been interpreted to mean أَرْضَى (Ardaa) which means to please or bring contentment and satisfaction to someone i.e., Allah enriches (or grants sufficiency and independence) and grants contentment and satisfaction. (NAK: Just because you have been given wealth and made independent from the pressures of people that doesn't mean that you attain contentment.

4. Ibn 'Aashur proposes that أَفْنَى (Aqnaa) means the opposite of أَغْنَى (Aghnaa) in line with the previous verses that have come in pairs of opposites i.e., Allah enriches or grants sufficiency to some and He also does not to others. This opposite meaning has also been derived by some from the form of the verb أَفْنَى (Aqnaa) which has a Hamzah (أ) added to its root which can change the meaning of the original verb قَنَى (Qanaa) which means "to attain, acquire and keep in possession to benefit from" to its opposite i.e., to be deprived of that. The meaning of the Aayah is therefore: He gives sufficiency or independence and He (also) takes it away. (NAK: This can apply to both the material sense and the spiritual sense i.e., someone could be wealthy in the material sense but devoid of that in the spiritual sense and vice versa, or wealthy in both senses or bankrupt in both).

Insights from this Aayah:

1. Allah does not mention who He benefits. He does not say: “He granted ‘you’ sufficiency, wealth or independence” or “He granted “you” continuance and retention of what ‘you’ acquired”. Rather, He just states: “He granted it” in an unrestricted manner without specifying to whom it was granted. It is left broad and open and we will never know who will be enriched and who will be deprived and remains a mystery.
2. Allah also does not mention specifically what He enriches or grants independence and freedom of need from i.e., is it wealth, knowledge, wisdom etc. that is because He did not limit it and left it open ended.
3. He placed the additional pronoun of هُوَ (Huwa) at the beginning which implies exclusivity and that He is the only one that independence can come from. If humans have a dependency, the only One who can grant them independence from it is Allah. Attaining that therefore means turning to Allah for it and by default to His words. Allah states: **وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ** “And hold fast to Allah” and He also says: **وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ** “And hold fast to the rope (i.e., the Qur’an) of Allah”.
4. The past tense is used for everything that has happened so far and is also used to emphasize everything that is coming i.e., He granted this independence and its retention and He is the only one who can guarantee its continuance.

#53:49

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ رَبُّ الشَّعَرَى

“And that He, it is He (alone) who is the Rabb (Master or Lord) of Ash-Shi’raa (The star Sirius)”.

- Background:

- Many journeys have been presented in this Surah. Beyond the heavens, to ancient Arabia and their religions, with a subtle journey to Makkah, At-Ta’if and Al-Madinah, deep within our own selves, to the legacies Ibrahim and Musa and to the next life. Now Allah takes us on another journey and that is the journey of history beyond the Arabian Peninsula. Allah is now saying that He alone is the Master of الشَّعَرَى (Ash-Shi’raa- “Sirius”).

- Sirius is the brightest star in the sky and is closely associated with ancient civilisations. There are pyramids and temples in Egypt that point in its direction. Pre-Islamic Arabs and many ancient civilisations or peoples across the whole world took it as a Goddess or associated it with divine forces and mythologies.

- Abu Kabshah is mentioned in Islamic tradition as a pre-Islamic figure associated with the worship of celestial bodies, specifically Sirius (الشَّعْرَى). The Quraish would attempt to mock the Prophet ﷺ by calling him the son of Abu Kabshah because like him he was introducing something new and possibly also because of the Qur'an's mention of the stars and celestial bodies.

- Insight:

- These religious beliefs and practises of worship were all a reflection of the limits of their knowledge which was restricted to the worldly life and what they can see whilst being devoid of knowledge related to the unseen (i.e., spiritual knowledge). What they believed in and worshiped was restricted to what they could see. Here, Allah is stating that this star that they worshipped or attributed divine qualities to and is the most ancient worshipped star in human history and states: "It is He (alone) who is the Rabb (Lord and Master) of this star". In doing so, Allah is confronting and putting in place the Shirk of all humanity. Allah started by confronting the Shirk of Makkah, At-Ta'if and Al-Madinah, then the Shirk of the people of Ibrahim and Musa (i.e., encompassing a wider geographical area) and ends by confronting that which has misled peoples throughout human history.

#53:50

وَأَنَّهُ أَهْلَكَ عَادًا الْأُولَىٰ

"And that He destroyed the first (or earliest) 'Aad".

- عَادًا الْأُولَىٰ "The first 'Aad" can imply the ancient 'Aad. This description of being first can also imply that they preceded Thamud (ثَمُود) who were like another version of them that came later.

- Allah is reminding the polytheists at the time of the Messenger ﷺ about how he destroyed previous nations established upon Shirk (polytheism and idolatry) and 'Aad is such a nation that is close to them in terms of geographical location and knowledge i.e., the pre-Islamic Arabs kept the memory of 'Aad alive and their ruins were known to travellers.

#53:51

وَتَمُودَ فَمَا أَبْقَىٰ

“And Thamud whom He did not allow to remain”.

#53:52

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا هُمْ أَظْلَمَ وَأَطْعَىٰ

“And the Qawm (nation) of Nuh from before. They were worse wrongdoers and more rebellious”.

Insights:

- The expression مِّن قَبْلُ (Min Qablu) implies that it was a long time before implying that Nuh was way before ‘Aad and Thamud.
- A reason for why the nation of Nuh were worse wrongdoers and more rebellious is that they committed crimes against a Prophet, rejected and opposed his message for the longest span of time. Nuh (as) passed through at least twenty generations (more likely 30+).
- This reality of one generation passing on their stance towards Nuh (as) was encapsulated as follows: “O my son, my father took me to this one (i.e., Nuh) and I was like you on that day. So, beware to believe in him (i.e., make sure that you don’t)”. In this way the parent would die upon disbelief and the child would grow up upon what his father instructed him with (and this would repeat continuously from father to son). In this way they were not impacted by his call whilst he invited them for one thousand years minus fifty i.e., each father would instruct his son to disbelieve in Nuh (as) and in this way generation after generation followed in disbelief.
- They suffered a catastrophic flood and the word for such a flood in Arabic is طُغْيَان (Tughyaan) which is from the same root as أَطْعَى (Atghaa). As such those who perpetrated طُغْيَان (Tughyaan) suffered the punishment of طُغْيَان (Tughyaan) which is known in Arabic by the expression: الْجَزَاءُ مِنْ جِنْسِ الْعَمَلِ “The recompense is of the same kind as the act or deed” i.e., the principle that one’s reward or punishment corresponds in nature to one's actions

#53:53

وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ أَهْوَىٰ

“And the overturned towns He hurled down”.

- Language points:

- أَهْوَى (Ahwaa) is from هَوَى (Hawaa) and means to make something fall down.

- الْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ (Al-Mu'tafikah) comes from أَفَكَ (Afika) which means to turn something upon its head or flip over. أَفَكَ (Afika) can also mean to deviate i.e., from a direction.

- Summary of opinions of the scholars of Tafsir:

- It refers to the towns of the nation of Lut (as) which were called that (i.e., Al-Mu'tafikah) because they turned their inhabitants upside down (i.e., they were raised up and flipped upside down). The word الْإِفْكَ (Al-lfk) which means “The lie” comes from this because it is the flipping or turning upside of the truth. It is also possible for الْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ (Al-Mu'tafikah) to refer to any place where its homes were turned upside down and their locations were made obsolete or completely effaced, where the town was made to fall to the earth after being raised up. الْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ (Al-Mu'tafikah) can also refer to those peoples or towns that deviated and were brought down and destroyed. According to the meaning of deviated it can imply that every nation that deviated was raised up and destroyed (on top of itself).

#53:54

فَعَشَّاهَا مَا عَشَّىٰ

“Then He covered them layer upon layer with what He covered them (with)”.

Language points and insights:

- The Shaddah in the verb عَشَّى (Ghash'shaaa) is an intensification of the verb عَشَّى (Ghashiya) which means “to cover” and implies a greater or more intense covering. It refers to these nations and peoples being covered by Allah and what they were covered by in terms of rock and soil. It can indicate to what covers over

things over a long period of time like thousands of years, where layers are added upon others burying something deep and removing any trace of it.

- The word مَا (Maa – “What(ever)”) in the statement مَا غَشَّى (Maa Ghash’shaa) is general capturing the varieties of what covers.

- فَغَشَّاهَا مَا غَشَّى – The غَشَّى (Maa Ghash’shaa) here can refer to the thing that buried them in which case the translation would be: “Whatever buried them, buried them” or it could be the thing that they are buried with in which case it is referring to Allah doing the covering and the translation would be: “Then, He (Allah) buried them with whatever buries”.

- There is a correlation in terms of language to what was mentioned earlier in Aayah 16 of this Surah: إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَى “When (all of a sudden) the Lote tree was being covered by that which covers it”. The context of that Aayah is very different to the context of this Aayah. The first was in the context of a great blessing where the Messenger ﷺ was acknowledged by being allowed to see something nobody else has ever been able to see whilst here it is in the context of great nations of the past instead of being honoured and acknowledged are being completely forgotten and buried away.

Allah states:

تُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ

You give honour to whom You will and You bring low (or humiliate) whom You will
(Aali ‘Imran: 26).

In this Surah Allah honoured the Messenger ﷺ with a covering (غِشَاوَةٌ - Ghishaawah) and He also humiliated and brought low nations with a covering (تَغْشِيَةٌ - Taghshiyah).

#53:55

فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارَى

“Then which of the favours of your Lord do you doubt?”.

Language points:

- The word آلَاءِ (Aalaa’) is the plural of the word أَلِيَّةٌ (Alyah). It is repeated over and over again in Surah Ar-Rahman in the oft-repeated Aayah:

فَبَايَ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

So, which of the favours of your Rabb (Lord or Master) will you deny

It is commonly translated as favours. The Tafsirs will usually translate its meaning with the word نِعَم (Ni'am) the plural of نِعْمَة (Ni'mah) which means "favour or blessing".

- Language points:

- أَلْيَة (Alyah) is used to refer to the fleshy part of the backside that someone rides on or of a sheep or ram. The fleshy part around the base of the thumb. It is used for parts of a body that are fleshy or meaty.

- From this آلَاء (Aalaa') became associated with blessings that are related to softness, tenderness and comfort like the word نِعْمَة (Ni'mah) which is connected to نُعُومَة (Nu'oomah) which means softness, smoothness and tenderness.

- Opinion of an Indian scholar named Hamid-ud-Deen Al-Farahi who passed away at the beginning of the 20th century wrote a book about important vocabulary in the Qur'an and discussed آلَاء (Aalaa').

- He believed that early understandings that understood آلَاء (Aalaa') to refer to be نِعَم (Ni'am) was incorrect. He argued that the Qur'an and Arab poetry doesn't accept this meaning. He stated that At-Tabari said that آلَاء (Aalaa') meant: الْقُدْرَة (power and capability). It is apparent that its meaning is the wondrous (or miraculous) acts and because most of Allah's acts are associated to mercy (Rahmah), they thought that آلَاء (Aalaa') referred to the favours (Ni'am) which were wondrous. The origin however of its meaning is "the wondrous divine acts of Allah".

- He referred to a part of a narration within a long Hadith recorded by Al-Hakim in Kitab al-Usool related by Laqeet bin 'Aamir: He said: So, I said: "O Messenger of Allah, how will Allah gather us together after the winds, tribulations, and wild beasts have scattered us (or torn us apart)?" He ﷺ replied: "Shall I inform you of something like that from the آلَاء (Alaa') of Allah: I gazed upon the earth and said: It will never come back to life. Then your Lord sent the sky upon it, and not many days passed by until I looked upon it again, and behold, it was like a single basin (i.e., with water and vegetation). By my life: Your Lord is more capable of gathering them from water than He is of bringing forth vegetation from the earth. They will emerge from their resting places—or from their graves—then He will

gaze upon them and they will gaze back at Him”. I asked: “O Messenger of Allah, how is that from the آلاء (Alaa’) of Allah?” He ﷺ replied: “Shall I inform you of something from the آلاء (Alaa’) of Allah that resembles it? The sun and the moon are a sign (Aayah) from it? Yet you see them both at the same time, and they see you, and you are not harmed in your vision of them. By my life, your Lord is more capable of seeing you and letting you see Him than they are.”

- Al-Farahi commented that the mentioned of آلاء (Aalaa’) in this narration in two places is according to the meaning of “the wonders of power (or capability) and creation”. (NAK summary: This means آلاء (Aalaa’) refers to demonstrations of Allah’s wondrous power).

- Al-Farahi quoted the poetry of Tarfah bin ‘Abd: كَامِلٌ يَحْمِلُ آلَاءَ الْفَتَى “Perfect, carrying (or embodying) the آلاء (Aalaa’ - “wonderful qualities”) of youth”.

- He also quoted the poetry of Mayah Bin Diraar which was a eulogy for her brother: كَرِيمٌ تَنَاءَهُ وَآلَاءُهُ “How noble is his commendation and his Aalaa’ (wonderful qualities/deeds)”.

- He quoted poetry from Al-Muhalhal: الْحَزْمُ وَالْعَزْمُ مِنْ طِبَائِعِهِ مَا كُلُّ آلَاءِهِ يَا قَوْمَ أَحْصِيهَا “His resolve and determination were from his natural traits and I am unable, O people, to count all of his Aalaa’ (i.e., wonderful qualities)”.

- He quoted poetry from Rabee’ah bin Maqroom: وَلَكِنْ أَذْكُرُ آلَاءَنَا حَدِيثًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَّا حَيْثُ مَا قَدِيمًا “However, I am mentioning our آلاء (Aalaa’) of the current time and of what we had in the past”. آلاء (Aalaa’) he refers to their amazing feats, achievements or qualities which are mentioned in praise of his tribe.

- Based on this alternative or additional meaning the Aayah can mean: “Then which of the (wondrous or miraculous) acts of your Lord do you doubt?”. The previous verses can then be seen in light of these mentioning wondrous acts of Allah. Think and look at all of the things that Allah is doing in these Aayaat and then at the end of that list He says: “Which of the آلاء (Aalaa’) of your Rabb are you going to be in doubt about?”

- فَيَأَيُّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكَ تَنَمَرَى - “Then which of the favours of your Lord do you doubt?”. is the second time “doubt” has been mentioned in this Surah. The first was: أَفَتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَى “Will you then doubt him about what he sees?” In the first case they were doubting whether or not he travelled up to the heavens attached to their doubt in the Qur’an and Prophethood of the Messenger ﷺ. Here, it is like Allah is saying that it is not just these matters that you doubted but rather you

have doubted all these signs that have been mentioned in this Surah preceding this Aayah and which surround you. Allah's signs and works have been surrounding you, but you have been in doubt concerning them all. As such, doubting the Qur'an now is just another example of the doubt that you have consistently been showing towards all the signs and acts of Allah.

- تَنَمَّارَى stems from the word مَرِيَّة (Miryah) which is one of the words in Arabic used to refer to "doubt". It is used to refer to doubt being generated concerning something that was originally clear and had no doubt associated with it. There are two ways in which something clear is made unclear:

1) Using part of a true statement and adding your own falsehood to it.
Example in Surah An-Najm: أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّى (19) وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَى "Have you seen Al-Lat and Al-'Uzza. And Manaat the third other (one)?" The Quraish added falsehood to this clear statement ignoring the verses that followed it to twist the verse to serve their own ends. A real-life example: A boss tells his employee that he is unhappy with him missing deadlines. The employee then says to others that the boss is unhappy with him and hates his work i.e., he adds something that was not actually said and twists it.

2) Presenting a partial truth or lying by omission.

- An important lesson to take from this when studying the Qur'an is to make sure that everything is understood according to its correct textual context and not taken or twisted away from that context, like for example when an Aayah is taken out of context by not studying the Aayaat and evidence that relate to it. The majority of contexts that need to be observed in the Qur'an are textual contexts whilst some verses require some historical context to understand.

- تَنَمَّارَى "You doubt" means to take something true but only tell a partial truth about it that relates only to the physical or material aspect whilst neglecting the unseen and spiritual aspect of that reality. Because they deny the spiritual aspect of things they deny that which is profound. In this way they take that which is profound and make it meaningless.

#53:56

هَذَا نَذِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّذْرِ الْأُولَى

“This is a warner from the earliest warners” or “This is one of the earliest or ancient warners”.

- This is the last Aayah of this section (4) of Surah An-Najm.

- Language points with insights:

- The word نَذِيرٌ (Nadheer – “Warner”) comes in the Qur’an in reference to the Messenger ﷺ: إِنَّهُ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (Al-A’araf: 184). There are two words for warners in the Qur’an: مُنْذِرٌ (Mundhir) and نَذِيرٌ (Nadheer). مُنْذِرٌ (Mundhir) is the اِسْمُ الْفَاعِلِ (Ism ul-Faa’il – “Noun of the doer or agent of action”) form from أَنْذَرَ – اِنْذَارٌ whilst نَذِيرٌ (Nadheer) is an اِسْمُ الصِّفَةِ (Ism us-Sifah – “Descriptive noun”). The difference is that مُنْذِرٌ (Mundhir) implies someone who is engaged in the act of warning whilst نَذِيرٌ (Nadheer) is characterised with being a warner i.e., it is a permanent and constant attribute. When the Messenger ﷺ is described as “Mundhir” it is highlighting his active role and when he is described as a “Nadheer” it is highlighting what he is.

- However, it has been said that in this context it appears that the meaning of نَذِيرٌ (Nadheer) is “warning” and the meaning of this verse is: “This is a warning from the earliest (or most ancient) warnings”. That is because the context preceding it was not about the Prophet ﷺ but rather related to the coming of judgement day when our efforts will be shown and the destruction of previous nations which serve as warnings. As such warnings are being spoken about but they are being referred to here as “a warner” (Nadheer).

- NAK quotes someone in this regard without saying who: “The فَعِيلٌ (Fa’eel) form (which Nadheer is upon) is a morphological form typically denoting a Sifah Mushabbahah (quasi-permanent adjective) which is used for sentient beings (i.e., humans). It can be used to embody an extended meaning: That the Qur’an is alive, possessing a spirit that moves and fulfils a function akin to that of a living messenger”. NAK: There is no Messenger after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ but Allah also provided us with a “warner” through His words in the Qur’an that will forever stay alive.

- Quote in reference to the statement of Allah: وَالْقُرْآنَ الْحَكِيمَ “And by the Qur’an Al-Hakeem” in Surah Yaa Seen in the case where “Hakeem” like “Nadheer” is upon the فَعِيلٌ (Fa’eel) form and is being attributed to the Qur’an: “Expressing it in this manner bestows upon the Qur’an the attributes of life, intent, and will, all of which are necessitated by its being wise (Al-Hakeem). Though metaphorical, this expression conveys a true reality and draws it near. Indeed, this Qur’an

possesses a spirit! And it has the qualities of one who lives, one who shares an emotional resonance with you and with whom you share an emotional resonance whenever you open your heart to it and made your soul sincere to it. You perceive within it secrets and hidden depths each time you open your heart to it and devote your soul to its message. You yearn for its features and markings, just as you yearn for the features of a companion you are missing, when you have spent time with them, found comfort in their presence, and find comfort in their shade. Indeed, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ loved to hear the Qur'an recited by others. He would pause at doors and listen intently whenever he heard someone within reciting it, just as a lover stops and listens to the voice of the beloved" (Quote traced to "Zhilaal ul-Qur'an" by Sayyid Qutb (rh) in his Tafsir of the verse two of Surah Yaa Seen: وَالْقُرْآنَ الْحَكِيمَ "And by the Qur'an Al-Hakeem".

- This warning that is alive for you and will remain alive for you is a continuation of the great earliest warnings. Previous nations such as those mentioned in this Surah of 'Aad and Thamud had Prophets but did not have books. This feeling of having the presence of a Prophet is replaced for this Ummah by having the Qur'an until the end of time. As such Allah used the word that is used for Prophets to refer to the Qur'an.

- نُذُرٌ (Nudhur) which is the plural of نَذِيرٌ (Nadheer) can be a stand-in for الرُّسُلُ (Ar-Rusulu l-Mundharoon) "The Messengers who engage in warning". It could be a stand-in for إِنْذَارَاتٍ (Indhaaraat) which means "warnings" and implies that the warnings come in a variety of different forms or ways.

- There is a correlation between His statement النُّذُرِ الْأُولَى "The earliest or ancient warners or warnings" and the earlier statement in this section of the Surah عَادًا الْأُولَى "Ancient 'Aad". Allah is connecting the most ancient historical nation that remained in the minds of the Arabs with the fact that the Qur'an they have presented before them represents thousands of years of the wisdom of Prophets.

- Summary conclusion of the meaning of this Aayah:

- There are two possible interpretations of this Aayah. Many scholars of Tafsir understood it to mean that "This is a Messenger that is part of the group of the earliest Messengers" i.e., our Prophet ﷺ is a continuation of all previous Prophets. However, it is because of the context in which this Aayah has been placed in this Surah. The context is about warnings and about the revelation itself. It is for this reason that some of the scholars of tafsir said that "Nadheer"

refers to “news” and the Aayah would mean “This is news from the earliest news” or “This is the warning of the earliest warnings”.

- It is important to observe that during the time when the Qur’an was being revealed it was not possible for the Book to be separated in the minds of those hearing it from the person conveying it to them.

- In the view of NAK the main conclusion concerning this Aayah is that it saying: “The warnings that the Qur’an is giving are the same warnings that have been given since the earliest and most ancient human civilisations and throughout that history those warnings have continued and are within this Book now”.

- Summary of the structure of section 4 of Surah An-Najm: Aayaat 39-56:

1) The ancient scriptures (The Suhuf (scrolls) of Ibrahim and Musa), responsibility (nobody will carry the burden of another), efforts are all that you own and they will be shown or put on display and compensation).

2) Allah grants us emotions (Laughter and crying)

3) He gives death and life

4) He created male and female from a drop

5) Resurrection is His domain

6) He grants independence

7) At the end there is an ancient warning and which of the wonders/acts of your Rabb (Lord or Master) will you doubt?

- There are connections between 1) and 7), 2) and 6), 3) and 5), whilst 4) is in the middle.

#53:57

أَزْفَتْ الْأَرْفَةُ

“The thing that is approaching so quickly has just about approached (or drawn near)”.

- Language points:

- الْأَزْفَةُ (Al-Aazifah) “The thing that is approaching quickly or imminently” refers to “The Day of Judgement”. And أَزْفَتْ (Azifat) means “to be approaching imminently”.

- The root letters of these words are أ ز ف (Hamzah, Zaay, Faa') and the root verb is أَزَفَ (Azifa).

- Words and their meanings as used in the Arabic language that come from its root include:

- الْمُتَأَزِف (Al-Muta'aazif) which is used to refer to a man who is short and fat because he is close to the ground. Or it refers to a man who is short with closely spaced limbs i.e., a compact physical form where the body and steps are closely spaced. Both these meanings draw on closeness and proximity.

- تَأَزَفَتِ الْقَوْمُ (Ta'aazafa) is used in the statement تَأَزَفَتِ الْقَوْمُ to mean “The people (Qawm) have drawn close to each other”.

- أَزَفَ الْجُرْحُ (Azifa l-Jurh) means “The wound (Al-Jurh) has closed up i.e. healed. This is used here because the ends of the wound are getting closer and closing up.

- A place that is مُتَأَزِف (Muta'aazif) is one that is narrow.

- The core meaning of the word مُتَأَزِف (Muta'aazif) is the convergence of the distant parts of something or its sides, causing the space between them to narrow. From this the person who makes close steps when walking is described as مُتَأَزِف (Muta'aazif).

- الْأَزِف (Al-Aazif) is used to describe someone who hastens in his walking or to complete a task so that it is completed in a narrow and close timeframe and not extended or made to go on for long.

- In respect to time أَزِفَ (Azifa) means for it to become close or near where the time gap between you and its occurrence has become narrow i.e., that its occurrence is imminent.

- The past tense of أَزِفَتْ (Azifat) I used here to imply that “It is as good as done”. The past tense is used to refer to the future when it is about to happen or guaranteed to happen.

- Insight:

- This Aayah is mentioning the impending and close occurrence of the Day of Judgement. Some Muslims pay a lot of attention to the signs of the coming of the Day of Judgement, to determine how near it and to try to pinpoint its time. However, the focus of a Muslim should correspond proportionately to the focus that Allah has given subjects in the Qur'an. So, for example Allah has placed a lot of focus on the occurrence of the Day of Judgement but not the signs of the Day of Judgement i.e., our attention should be upon the fact that Judgement Day is coming, that we will inevitably face it and its consequences and that we should be heedful of that in our lives. That is whilst we should not be focused on trying to disclose when the exact time of Judgment Day is.

#53:58

لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ

“It has no alleviator or discloser besides Allah”.

- Points raised by the Tafsir Scholar Al-Aalousiy concerning this Aayah:

- كَاشِفَةٌ (Kaashifah) refers to a Nafs (i.e., person) that is capable of making it كُشِفَ (Kashf) in the case where the كُشِفَ (Kashf) means “removal” i.e., there is no one nothing that can make the الْأَرْزَقَةُ (i.e., Day of Judgement) go away or alleviate it. (Note: كَاشِفَةٌ (Kaashifah) is feminine and he states that it is feminine because it is referring to the word نَفْسٌ (Nafs) which is feminine. It has been omitted in the text but implicitly understood. As such, the meaning is interpreted as: “It has no Nafs Kashifah (alleviating person or entity) besides Allah) i.e., nothing can make it go away and save you from its occurrence.

- He states this is what Az-Zamakhshari intended when he stated: “It does not have now any alleviating person or entity that can delay it”. (Note: i.e., no one and nothing now has the capability to delay the judgment day).

- He said At-Tabari and Az-Zajaj stated: That its meaning is that there is no Nafs (person) that can disclose and make clear the time of its occurrence because it is from the most hidden of the unseen matters. And الْكُشْفُ (Al-Kashf) means to

make something clear and disclose it. The Aayah is like the statement of Allah: لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ “None can reveal its time except He” (Al-A’araf: 187). (NAK addition: The Hadith where Jibreel (as) came in the form of a man to teach the people the Deen and He asked the Messenger ﷺ. “When is the final hour?” and He ﷺ responded: “The one being asked has no more knowledge about it than the one asking”].

- كَاشِفَةٌ (Kaashifah) may have its ending of التاء المربوطة (At-Taa’u l-Marbootah - ة) may be for the purpose of مُبَالَغَةٍ (Mubaalaghah – “Stress and emphasis”) like the word عَلَامَةٌ (‘Alaamah – Great Scholar) (Note: This means that it is not feminine in origin and does not need a feminine word like نَفْس (Nafs) to qualify it).

Language points:

- الْكَشَف (Al-Kashaf) refers to when the hair recedes (i.e., because the head is being exposed).

- الْكَشَف (Al-Kashaf) refers to crookedness in a horse’s tailbone.

- If a man كَشَفَ (Kashafa) an item of clothing, it means “He took it off” (i.e., because he exposes or reveals what is underneath).

- If a man أَكْشَفَ (Akshafa) it can mean: “That he laughed causing his gums to be revealed”.

- The central meaning of كَشَفَ (Kashafa) is “The removal of that which covers the surface of something, so that what lies beneath becomes visible”.

- لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ - The sentence structure here includes advancing the mention of مَنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ “Other than Allah” before the mention of كَاشِفَةٌ “Discloser/revealer or Alleviator” in opposition to the normal Arabic sentence structure. This style places the focus of attention upon Allah i.e., Allah is the only One who can expose it, Allah is the One speaking, so focus upon what Allah is saying and stop running around trying to find answers to questions, the answers to which are exclusively for Allah).

#53:59

أَفَمِنْ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ

“Is it then from this speech that you (people) are shocked/surprised?”

- General understanding of the Aayah:

- It is like this Aayah is capturing all that has been stated before it in this Surah to say: “So, you with your mythologies related to stars, Angels, Laat, Uzzaa, Manaat, Shi’raa, complete ignorance of the unseen and spiritual matters, your exclusively worldly ambition and design, political theatrics and denial of responsibility and accountability, you, of all people, are finding this speech strange?!” Are you questioning this speech and find it strange whilst your world view for life is established upon all these falsehoods?

- The form of questioning is used for the purpose of **إِنْكَار** (Inkaar – “Rebuke and reproach”).

- This Aayah elevates the standing of the Qur’an and rebukes their unjustified reaction to it. Is it this Qur’an that causes you to be astonished and to deny that it is from Allah? And yet you are not shocked and astonished at your own beliefs?

- Language points:

- The word **الْحَدِيثِ** (Al-Hadeeth) in origin refers to the revealing (Al-Kashf) and exposing (Al-Izh’haar) of something that was concealed. **الْحَدِيثِ** (Al-Hadeeth) is used to refer to speech because it is the manifestation of one’s thoughts i.e., it reveals and exposes what is in your head. **حَدَثٌ** (Hadath) and **حَادِثٌ** (Haadith) are used in Arabic to refer to an “event or incident” that has occurred, because it describes something that has been revealed and exposed. The root of this word is therefore intrinsically connected to the meaning of “exposure”.

- Insight: The previous Aayah was connected to exposure: **لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ**: “It has no discloser (or exposer) besides Allah”. This Aayah in respect to the linguistic origins of the word “Hadeeth” also contains a hint of the meaning of “exposure”. It is as if between the lines Allah is saying: “Somethings Allah will never expose but the thing that He did expose, you find strange!” This subtlety exposes the mentality of someone focusing on all the things that Allah is not telling me whilst ignoring all the things that Allah is telling me!

- The Qur’an is the exposing of Allah’s guidance and wisdom to mankind through speech after it had been lost and hidden from humanity.

- **الْحَدِيثِ** (Al-Hadeeth) was used by the Arabs to refer to “speech” and “something that was new”. The use of **الْحَدِيثِ** (Al-Hadeeth) to refer to the recorded sayings and acts of the Messenger ﷺ is a terminological meaning that came later. In the

Qur'an الْحَدِيثِ (Al-Hadeeth) is used in accordance with its original meaning and refers to “speech” or “story or recount of an event”. This is like Allah’s statement: إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ “It is only the ‘Ulamaa’ from His slaves that fear Allah”. The word ‘Ulamaa’ later adopted a terminological meaning that referred to scholars who had been recognised according to particular criteria. However, its original meaning understood at the time of revelation was merely “those who have knowledge” and could include those who couldn’t read or write but had knowledge of the fundamentals of the Deen.

- The use of the word الْحَدِيثِ (Al-Hadeeth) to refer to the Qur’an can imply that it was meant to be delivered by way of speech. There is a difference between conveyance and imparting by means of speech and conveyance and imparting by means of writing. Speech has a greater capacity to impact and affect others than written forms of communication. It is as if by declaring it to be “strange” they have already decided to not listen to the Hadeeth (speech) so that they can escape from its capacity to impact them.

- The word تَعْجُبُونَ (Ta’jaboona) comes from (عَجِبَ – ‘Ajiba). It refers to extreme strangeness when something is outside of familiarity or what people are used to. It is used to imply الاستغراب (Al-Istighraab) and الإنكار (Al-Inkaar), which means to view or deem something to be so strange or improbable that it is denied i.e., to find something unbelievable. Ar-Raghib Al-Isfahani said الْعَجَب (Al-‘Ajab) is used for that which can’t be explained or is inexplicable because of how extreme it is i.e., to express the meaning of “How could that happen?!” or “How is that possible?!” عُجِبَ (‘Ujb) was used to refer to “arrogance and pride someone has in himself” i.e., where he views himself to be special and that there is no one quite like him!

- Consequently, تَعْجُبُونَ (Ta’jaboona) can imply the meanings here: “Do you find this Hadeeth (speech) strange, unusual, inexplicable, extreme or far-fetched?”

- Ibn ‘Aashur stated: الْعَجَب (Al-‘Ajab) here means deeming something impossible or so-far-fetched (i.e., to be from Allah). It is like His saying: أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ “Are you in shock at the decree of Allah?” (Hud: 73), or it serves as a metaphor for denial (i.e., this is too strange to accept).

- Summary of points captured from the meanings of the word تَعْجُبُونَ (Ta’jaboona):

- You are deeming something that came from the same place that you came from strange and unfamiliar. This should be more familiar to you than anything because it connects to you Ruh (soul).
- You believe in the inexplicable (Laat, Uzzaa, Manaata, Angels with female names, stars etc.) whilst you considered the clearest and most explained speech inexplicable.
- You go to every extreme in your life with your Shirk, greed, worldly ambitions, major sins and immoral indecencies, and yet you consider this balanced speech to be extreme.
- You are calling this speech strange (i.e., unreasonable) while the whole message of this Book is for you to think and to use your reason. For example, the oft repeated: أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ “Will you not then use your reason?” or لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ “That they may think deeply” and أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ “Will you not think deeply?”
- Allah, the Most High, speaks and yet you act as if you are high and mighty in the presence of his speech! (in reference to the meaning of عُجْبَ ('Ujb)).

#53:60

وَتَضْحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ

“And you laugh and do not weep”.

- This Aayah comes after Allah stated in Aayah 43 of this Surah: وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكَ وَأَبْكَى “And that it is he who causes laughter and causes crying”. In this verse laughing and crying are attributed to the people and in the previous verse Allah is the One who causes it. The understanding is that Allah creates reasons to laugh and cry and here He created a reason for people to cry and yet instead they are laughing.

- This is the Qur'an's criticism for them laughing at this speech (هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ). They are laughing and mocking this and not crying because of the impact that it should have on them, whether that relates to its emotional effect on the listener or due to the consequences and implications of its content and message. It is their dismissal of the Qur'an alluded to in the previous verse that allows them to make fun of it and make it an object of ridicule. If they stopped to think about it, they wouldn't do that.

#53:62

وَأَنْتُمْ سَامِدُونَ

“While you are Saamidoon”.

- Language points:

- This follows the previous verse which makes use of the مُضَارِع (Mudaari’ – “Present tense”) verb form – تَضْحَكُونَ “You laugh” and تَبْكُونَ “You cry”. Here there is a switch, where instead of following the pattern by using تَسْمَدُونَ (Tasmadoonaa), the اِسْمُ الْفَاعِلِ (Ism ul-Faa’il – Noun of the doer) is used. This means that you laugh or cry on certain occasions or in relation to certain realities or situations (i.e., when being exposed to the Qur’an), however the characteristic of being سَامِدُونَ (Saamidoon) that they are being characterised with is something that is permanent i.e., a permanent and constant state and condition.

- سَامِدُونَ (Saamidoon) is the plural اِسْمُ الْفَاعِلِ (Ism ul-Faa’il – Noun of the doer) of the verb سَمَدَ – يَسْمُدُ – سُمُود (Samada – Yasmodu – Sumood).

- مَسْمَدٌ refers to a basket or container which is filled up and takes the shape of that which it is being filled with. Usually, used for carrying manure.

- وَطَبٌ سَامِدٌ (Watab Saamid) refers to a swollen or filled vessel or waterskin standing upright.

- السَّامِدُ الْمُتَنَصِّبُ (As-Saamid Al-Muntasib) - A person or animal that lifts up the head and sticks out or puffs up the chest. It is for show in a display of self-importance and pride or for the purpose of distraction.

- These meanings have in common the meaning of filling something up, but with something temporary like air, making something appear bigger than it actually is.

- سَامِدُونَ (Saamidoon) means here in this Aayah that they are acting as if they are higher and mightier than they are. They are raising their heads and puffing their chests in a false display of pride and self-importance. It is an interesting word to portray their arrogance. Allah could have described them as مُتَكَبِّرُونَ (Muta’kabbiroona) to highlight their arrogance but instead stated to them وَأَنْتُمْ سَامِدُونَ “While you are Saamidoon” to highlight that their arrogance is rooted in or based upon empty air i.e., they are just posturing.

- It is also used to refer to be engaged in لَهْوٍ (Lahw) i.e., that which is frivolous, heedless, idle and acts as a distraction. It has also been said to refer to singing

which is a form of لَهْو (Lahw). This also reflects an emptiness and lack of substance.

- الغِنَاء (Al-Ghinaa) in the language of the Arab tribe of Himyar meant 'Singing' (Al-Ghinaa' – "Singing"). The meaning of وَأَنْتُمْ سَامِدُونَ "And you are Saamidoon" would imply as such: That you are pleased with your own selves (i.e., in your self-importance, arrogance and heedlessness towards the warnings) singing songs due to your lack of care and heedlessness towards what you hear from the Qur'an. It is like the statement of Allah in Aayah 35 of Surah Al-Anfal:

وَمَا كَانَ صَلَاتُهُمْ عِنْدَ الْبَيْتِ إِلَّا مُكَاءٌ وَتَصْدِيدٌ

And their prayer at the House was nothing except whistling and handclapping.

i.e., a mockery of worship just like their mockery of the Qur'an by the stance that they took.

- The سَامِد (Saamid) is also described as the arrogant person who turns away from advice and is pleased with himself and his situation.

- Concerning His statement: أَفَمِنْ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ "Is it then from this speech that you (people) are shocked/surprised?" in connection with the reaction or behaviour towards this speech mentioned in this verse وَأَنْتُمْ سَامِدُونَ and the preceding verse: تَعْجَبُونَ "You are surprised or find strange" in this Aayah has been delayed from its normal place in the sentence structure (known as تَأْخِير "Ta'kheer) and placed at the end whilst the مِنْ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ "from this speech" has been moved forward or advanced (known as تَقْدِيم - Taqdeem). Ibn 'Aashur comments on this stating that this has been done for "the purpose of Al-Qasr (exclusivity), meaning that this speech in particular is not suitable to be met with laughter, ridicule, denial, nor of being heard without the listener repenting. In other words, had you responded with such behaviour to some other speech, you might have had a pretext for your actions. But your response to this speech in the way that you did leaves you with no excuse whatsoever" (i.e., the one speech that does not deserve to be treated in such a manner, that came as a mercy, guidance and true warning to you, is the speech that you choose to treat in this way).

#53:63

فَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ وَاعْبُدُوا

“So, fall down in prostration to Allah and worship (or be a slave)”.

- This is in response for their arrogance and heedlessness and a command to humble themselves by lowering their heads to the ground and being slaves to Allah in worship. It is like Allah is saying: “Let your arrogance go, give up your pride and fall in Sajdah (prostration) to Me”.

- “And worship or be a slave” is the permanent and constant state that you should be in following your prostration. “Prostrate to Allah now and worship (Him) forever”. Here you are now laughing and in a constant state of being Saamidoon (arrogant and heedless). Instead of that, you need to prostrate to Me now and worship me in a constant and continuous manner.

- The prostration (Sajdah) relates directly to the act of worship whilst ‘Ibadah (worship) encompasses the whole life. This Aayah therefore calls not just for a transformation and change in terms of how the people worship but also how they live the entirety of their lives in every aspect of human life. Instead of living as a سَامِد (Saamid), live as an عَبْد (‘Abd – “Slave”).

- Structural summary of the fifth section of Surah An-Najm:

- 1) The final end (Day of Judgement) is coming down (about to descend) and getting closer (57)
- 2) No one can expose it/ make it go away (58).
- 3) You laugh (60a)
- 4) And you don’t cry (60b)
- 6) Yet you puff your chests, sing and act carefree (or heedless (61).
- 7) So, prostrate to Allah and worship (62).

- The first and last are connected in terms of both including the meaning of coming down and getting closer, in the case where the Day of Judgement is coming down and getting closer and when you prostrate you come down and get closer to Allah. As such, before the Day of Judgement comes down, make sure that you come down and get close to Allah.

- The second and second from last are connected in the case where they are behaving like they can handle anything and can remain in an arrogant state of carelessness and heedlessness, but Allah is saying that nobody can alleviate the coming of the Day of Judgement and make it go away.

(Note: He misses out Aayah 59 in this summary).

- Further insights from the Surah as a whole:

- Some parallels between Aayaat 29-32 and Aayaat 33-42.

- "Ignore those who turn away from our reminder" (29) *فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَن تَوَلَّىٰ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا* - and "Have you seen the one who turned away?" (33) *أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي تَوَلَّىٰ*.

- *أَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهَوْ يَرَىٰ* "That is their extent of knowledge" (30) and *ذَٰلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُم مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ* - "Does he have knowledge of the unseen, so he sees?" (35).

- *إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّٰ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن اهْتَدَىٰ* - "Indeed, your Rabb has knowledge of the one who has strayed from His path and He is most knowledgeable of the one who committed to His guidance" (30) and *أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبِّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَىٰ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّىٰ* "Or is it the case that he was never informed about what was in the scriptures of Musa? And [of] Ibrahim, who fulfilled (his word or what was due of him)?" (36-37) i.e., He sent scriptures of guidance.

- *وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنَىٰ* - "And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth – that He may recompense those who have done evil with what they have done and recompense those who have done good with the best [reward]" (31) and *أَلَا تَرَىٰ وَازِرَةً وَّرَزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ (38) وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ* "Nobody who carries a burden will carry the burden of anyone else. And that the human does not have (or attain) except the effort he has made" (38-39).

- *هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ أَنْتُمْ أَجْنَةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ* - "He is most knowing of you when He produced you from the earth and when you were foetuses in the wombs of your mothers" (32) i.e., He knows better where you began and *وَأَنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ* "And that to your Lord is the final end" (42).

- Some other correlations:

- Between "The last day is about to descend" and "The last revelation descended".

- Between "No one can expose its secret" and "The Prophet sees the greatest secret".

- Between "You find this speech hard to believe" and "His heart did not lie about what he saw".

- Between “The stars fall” and “You fall in Sajdah”.
- Between “Be in ‘Ibadah” and “He inspired to His ‘Abd (slave) what He inspired”.
- Between “The tree is covered” and “Destroyed nations are covered” – Covering can be a mercy from Allah that is greater than any other or as the consequence of the anger of Allah which is great than any other.
- Between “By the tree at the final end” and “To your Rabb is the final end”.
- Between “The stars disappear” and “The original scriptures of Ibrahim and Musa disappeared”.
- Between “He doesn’t speak from Hawaa (desire)” and “He did Ahwaa (make fall down) to the nations of Hawaa (desire)”.
- Between “The mighty one taught him” and “Mighty nations have fallen” – True might is when you have the might word of Allah and however buildings, great architecture and armies are not true might.
- Between “You doubt him” and “You doubt so many of Allah’s Aalaa’ (divine acts and signs)”.
- Between “The last revelation has come” and “It includes the earliest warnings”.
- Between “Angels cannot speak on your behalf” and “Allah is vast in forgiveness”
– An intermediary is not required to reach Allah.
- Between “The false gods of three major cities: Laat, ‘Uzzaa and Manaaf of Makkah, Al-Madinah and At-Taa’if” and “The false gods of several civilisations: Ash-Shi’raa.
- Between “He inspired laughter and crying” and “You laugh and do not cry”.
- Between “He (the Messenger ﷺ) saw the unseen” and “They (the Quraish) only believe in the seen”.
- Structural overview of the entire Surah:
 - 1) The Most powerful event in history – The coming of the Qur’an

2) Guidance of Allah was corrupted by the Arabs – Laat, ‘Uzzaa and Manaata, the beliefs about the Angels, false intercession.

3) Ignore them, Allah knows who is guided, and has guided humanity concerning what to do to save themselves – Avoid the major sins and Fawaahish (indecent immoralities).

4) What true guidance was and how nations kept corrupting it – What was given to Ibrahim and Musa and the corruption of ‘Aad, Thamud, the people of Nuh (as).

5) The most powerful event in the world’s future – Al-Aazifah (Judgement Day).

- Correlation between the first and last (1) and (5), between (2) and (4) and (3) is in the middle.