

Interpretation of the Quran- Surat Al- A'raf (7)- Lesson (6)- Verse [11]: Story of the Creation

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of Creations, and Peace and blessings be upon our prophet Muhammad, the faithful and the honest.

Oh, Allah, we know nothing but what You teach us. You are the All-Knowing, the Wise. Oh Allah, teach us what is good for us, and benefit us from what You taught us, and increase our knowledge. Show us the righteous things as righteous and help us to do them, and show us the bad things as bad and help us to keep away from them.

O Allah our Lord, lead us out from the depths of darkness and illusion, unto the lights of erudition and knowledge, and from the muddy shallows of lusts unto the heavens of Your Vicinity.

The Quran deals with the issue of creation:

Dear brothers, our sixth lesson is devoted to the interpretation of Surat Al-A'raf, ayah 11. Allah the Almighty says:

"It is We Who created you and gave you shape; then We bade the angels to prostrate to Adam, and they prostrated, not so Iblis; he refused to be of those who prostrate."

1- Every surah deals with the issue of Creation from a different perspective:

Dear brothers, this ayah and the one that follows it deal with the issue of Creation, which was first mentioned in Surat Al-Baqarah and is being dealt with in seven different places in the Holy Qur'an, namely Al-Baqarah, Al-A'raf, Al-Hajj, Al-Isra', Al-Kahf, Ta-Ha, and Sad, and in each case it is being dealt with differently. Some might think that this is the case of repetition, but if you follow the alleged repetitions in the Holy Qur'an, you will find that every reference is being dealt with differently, and this is part of the reason why the Holy Qur'an is a miracle. After all, those are vital issues in the Islamic belief and mentioning them again and again in order to make them firmly established is part of the wise style of the Holy Qur'an. It would not be wise for a father to tell his son to work hard just once in his whole lifetime. He indeed has to say so each day –tell him to be careful and work hard on every occasion and whenever the opportunity arises.

2- The repetition of stories is meant for the benefit of eloquence:

Firstly, the repetition in the Holy Qur'an takes place for the purpose of eloquence –to confirm the main meaning as each story is being dealt with from a different point of view.

Fundamental and minor aspects:

Dear brothers, all of us know that there are fundamental and minor issues in our daily life. Man's health is a crucial issue given the fact that a heart problem might put an end to his life, and that is something vital. Faith is another vital issue as it may put an end to one's happiness. Thus, the important issues have an effect on the future and that is why they are reflected in the Holy Qur'an. Some scholars think that there are many issues in

our daily life which can be regarded as duties since our happiness and safety will not be realized if we do not perform what they enjoin on us. Other issues, such as prohibitions, are the main cause of our misery in both Worlds. Apart from what is prohibited and ordered, there is what is permitted, which can be considered neutral, such as your own way of sitting at home –on the floor, on a chair, on a specific bed.... Also, the colours of your clothes could be mentioned here. There are millions of such neutral issues and they do not have a positive or negative effect on faith. Therefore, Prophets and Messengers, peace be upon them all, mentioned in a very clear way the issues which have a positive or negative effect on your relationship with Allah. On the other hand, they ignored the issues that have neither positive nor negative effect on faith. Thus, they mentioned transparently everything that makes you approach Allah and that which might take you away from Him. Such is the meaning of the ayah:

"... This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion."

(Al-Maidah, 5:3)

We are dealing here with numeral completion and qualitative perfection; in other words, the cases that are dealt with in the Holy Qur'an and in the confirmed sunnah are complete in number, and the way the Holy Qur'an deals with them is perfect in its quality. So, this religion is based on perfect harmony. Nothing can be added to or omitted from it because it is from the Creator, the One Complete and Perfect; from the Utmost Wisdom, Mercy, Knowledge and Justice.

Thus, nothing can be added to or omitted from this religion. According to those who chose to entertain doubts about the Deen of Islam, it is a tradition, but in fact it is not. It is a revelation from heaven, clarified by the Infallible; a revelation from Allah, whose all aspects were clarified by His Honest Prophet. Civilization, culture and tradition are earthly matters. Referring to the deen as tradition is unacceptable because it is a revelation; the Speech from Heaven to earth and no part of this Speech can be falsified. There are some who say that this religion should be renewed. The Deen cannot be renewed; what can be renewed is the religious discourse; that is, the way of calling to it. If we talk about renewing it at all, it should be done by taking away what has stuck to it and what has nothing to do with it.

Thus, they say that free thinking is what originally existed and you cannot forbid something without a decisive proof and definite evidence. However, prohibition constituted the basic rule in all forms of worship and acts of adoration, and nothing can be added without a decisive proof and definite evidence.

"Verily, this knowledge is a deen. Therefore, beware from whom you take your deen."

[Transmitted by Al-Hakim, from Anas, from al-Siyazi, from Abu Huraira]

"O son of Umar! Your deen! Your deen! It is your flesh and your blood, so beware from whom you take it. Take it from those who act righteously, not from those who only speak."

[Transmitted by Ibn Omar]

A truth confessed by everyone: Allah is the Creator

Dear brothers, the story of Creation is mentioned in different places in the Holy Qur'an and in many suwar and ayaat, each time in a different way, but what we are concerned about here is that Allah the Highest, Glory to Him, is the Creator. He says:

"O mankind! Worship your Guardian Lord, Who created you."

(Al-Baqarah, 2:21)

The only authority worthy of worship is the authority with full knowledge of all creatures:
Which authority in the whole Universe deserves to be worshiped? Clearly, it must be the authority that is All-Knowing. Allah the Almighty says:

"And none can inform you like Him Who is the Expert."

(Fatir, 35:14)

The man who worships Allah is a wise man, but, if he transfers his worship to another authority he ceases to be one, because it has been said that the wisest among you is the one who has the strongest love for Allah.

An example from your daily life: If you have a complicated, expensive, and useful device, and this device breaks down, you will not go to someone you love to get it fixed. Rather, you will go to a repair and maintenance expert, who will ensure its safety and getting the best of it.

Thus, Allah the Almighty addresses us saying:

"It is We Who created you."

The meaning which derives from these words is that you should pay heed to the Speech of Allah the Almighty, you should follow His orders and apply His instructions because they are the Instructions of the Expert; the Instructions of the Creator; the Instructions of the Lord, given for our safety and happiness.

"Then We gave you shape."

It is said that all creatures were created in the realm of concepts, according to Allah's Words:

"We did indeed offer the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it; he was indeed unjust and foolish."

(Al-Ahzab, 33:72)

In this realm the selves (nufus, pl. of nafs) are abstracted from their forms. There, some accepted to take on the Trust and some did not. As members of the human species we accepted to take on the Trust.

"It is We Who created you; then We gave you shape."

This life, this world is the world of forms. Thus, the horse has a form; the sun, the moon, the human being, plants and animals, all of them have forms.

"It is We Who created you; then We gave you shape."

The realm of concepts is the realm of abstracted selves, while this world is the world of forms (the materialization of this abstraction).

The Trust and the human being:

Dear brothers, the man accepted to undertake the Trust. What is the Trust? In the opinion of the scholars, it is your nafs, which is part of you. You were ordered to take care of it; to strive to make it know its Lord; you were ordered to make it obey Him; to purify it; to prepare it for Paradise; to transcend it. This is confirmed by the following Words of Allah:

**"Truly he succeeds that purifies his nafs;
And indeed he fails who corrupts it."**

"Truly he succeeds": Success is superiority, excellence, and achieving goals. Man loves being successful, and the successful man is a happy man; such is the one who has achieved his goals.

When are man's goals achieved?

Here, let me pose a question: When do you achieve your goals? The answer is that you achieve your goals when you work correctly. When is your work correct? When you know the cause behind your existence in this world. This is a precise discourse. Nowadays, most people are utterly lost. Some think they live to eat; others think they live to have fun; or else eat to live or live to know Allah the Almighty. Ask yourself the question –the precise, the crucial, the philosophical question: Why are you here in this world?

Imagine you propose to travel to a foreign country and you come and ask us: "What shall I do there?" We would definitely say: "What a strange question!" Why are you going to travel there? If you want to study, then you should go to academic institutions and universities, this is clear. If you are a merchant, then you should go to factories and business companies. Also, this is clear. If you are a tourist then your way is also clear –you will go to cafeterias and parks. So, your movements in a specific place will not be correct if you do not know why you are there. This is obvious. When you know that you are in this world to know Allah, to obey His orders, to approach Him with your good deeds, and once your goal here is very clear, you will make use of all the means that can help you to achieve it.

For example: You have been sent to Paris to get there your PhD; this is the goal. All your movements, activities, and interests are related to this goal. Thus, you have to rent a flat, and given that your goal is studying, you will choose one close to the university in order to save money, effort, and time. If you buy a magazine, it will be related to your subject matter. To achieve your goal, you will befriend a student who knows the language of the country to help you learn it. You will eat the food that will facilitate the process of studying. You will need a part time job to earn some money and have enough time to study. I am speaking in a very precise way. Let me say it once again: When you know the reason why you are here, that you are in this world to know Allah, to obey His orders, to approach Him, to prepare yourself for Paradise –you will achieve your goals.

Dear brothers, I will not exaggerate if I say that, according to official statistics, those who know their goals are only 3% of the population of the world. The one who knows his aim will take all the necessary steps to achieve it; while the one who does not know his aim is a flunky. If people do right, so will he; and if they do wrong, so will he. He will follow fashions, prevailing concepts, vain conversations, mass media, environmental issues, living on the margin of life.

The wisdom behind the creation of man is to worship Allah:

When the believer uses his brains, reads his Lord's Book, and knows the reason for his existence, he will find out that he has been created to worship Allah.

"I have only created jinns and men that they should worship Me."

(Adh-dhariyat, 51:56)

Thus, it is worshipping Allah that is the cause of man's existence and he reaches the highest station when he becomes a worshipper of Allah. When Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reached Sidrat-ul-Muntaha (the utmost boundary over the seventh heaven beyond which none can pass), Allah the Almighty says that:

"(He) revealed to His Servant what He (meant) to convey."

(An-Najm, 53:10)

When he received the message, which is the highest task a man could aspire to, Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

"Ask Allah to bestow on me the means of approach, which is a station in Paradise given by Allah to the one of his worshippers who deserves it, and I hope I will be him."

[Reported by Muslim, from Abdullah ibn Amru ibn Al-As]

This station is worshipping.

"And yet when the slave of Allah stands forth to invoke Him, they just make round him a dense crowd."

(Al-Jinn, 72:19)

Then worshipping is the cause of our existence, the aim of our existence. Allah the Almighty says:

"I have only created jinns and men that they should worship Me."

(Adh-dhariyat, 51:56)

It is a voluntary obedience, mixed with the love for Allah, based on unquestionable knowledge that leads to eternal happiness. In it there are issues that regard knowledge, behaviour, and aesthetics. Once you know Him, you obey Him; and you will be happy beside Him in this world and in the Afterlife. In this life there is paradise, and the one who does not know it will not go to heaven. You know Him, you worship Him; you will be happy beside Him in this world and in the Hereafter.

The wide and narrow aspects of worship:

Dear brothers, what about the concept of worship? Some think that to worship is only to pray, to fast, to perform hajj, and pay zakat. This is the narrow aspect, but in fact, worshipping is a complete system which encompasses all the aspects and phases of your life; all your affairs –from marital relations to international ones. I would almost say that worshipping includes hundreds of thousands of aspects in the Qur'an and sunnah. Once again, it ranges from your most private affairs, your bedroom, to the most intricate relations between nations, the international relations. Normally, worshipping is understood as praying, fasting, performing hajj... that's all; while our private life, the way we earn money, the way we spend it, our financial affairs, how we deal with women, our happy and sad times, the way we travel... are all according to our Arabic and western traditions which are not Islamic. Thus, when we apply Islam in this way, we lose its core and its fruits, as well as Allah's Promises.

The Constituents of the Trust:

When Allah put on us the burden of holding the Trust, He gave us its constituents, and these are:

1- The Universe-

He has given us the Universe, and here is the proof for it:

"And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth; behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect."

(Al-Jathiyah, 45:13)

The Universe has been subjected to mankind in acknowledgement and honour since man is a superior creature, the one that accepted the Trust.

"And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth..."

Given that the Universe has been subjected to mankind in acknowledgement, you should believe in Him. And since it has been subjected to mankind to honour them, you should thank Him. Thus, when you believe in Him and thank Him, you arrive at the cause of your existence.

"What can Allah gain by your punishment if you are grateful and you believe?"

(An-Nisa, 4:147)

So, if you believe in Him and thank Him, you realize the cause of your existence. However, most people belong to the class which is referred to in the following ayah:

"Say: Shall we tell you of those who lose most in respect of their deeds? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works?"

(Al-Kahf, 18:103-104)

When does the human being become happy?

1-Safety and happiness are basic demands of all creatures

There are six thousand million human beings on earth, and I am quite sure that each one of them seeks safety and happiness.

2- Ignorance is the cause of misery

It is said that ignorance is the cause of misery and of going to Hell.

"They will further say: Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we should not be among the dwellers of the Blazing Fire!"

(Al-Mulk, 67:10)

Ignorance is our most immediate enemy. Do not think that our enemies, as a nation, are the traditional ones; those whom we describe as violent, arrogant, demolishing, annihilating, exploiting, and corrupting. We are the real enemies of ourselves.

I want to assure you once again that our fate is in our hands, not in theirs.

"And if you return (to the attack), so shall we."

(Al-Anfal, 8:19)

"Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."

(Ar-Ra'd, 13:11)

The objective of the enemies is to be aggressive, to exploit, to despoil, to dissipate, and to disperse, and that's what they do, and they get their strength from our weakness, ignorance and our disunion.

3- Happiness comes from achieving goals

Dear brothers, listen to the following example: You are a student in your last year, and you have an excellent specialization, and you are to sit for an exam in two days' time, when your dearest friends come and take you to the beach, where you stay at a very good hotel, eat the most delicious food, enjoy the most beautiful sights. So, everything seems to ensure your happiness. Dear friends... a beautiful place... delicious food... Then, why are you dissatisfied? Because such an event will prevent you from achieving your goal. On the other hand, if you stayed in a damp, badly lit room, without a view and unpainted, and you had your book with you and studied hard, and got ready for the test, then you would feel overwhelming happiness. Thus, happiness comes from achieving goals.

Let me give you another example: If sales are booming, the shopkeeper will work 12 hours non-stop, without eating or even sitting down, with no air-conditioning, feeling extremely happy. While, if sales are slow, he will feel dissatisfied though he may have a comfortable chair to sit on, refreshments, new papers, magazines, and friends with him. That's because he is not achieving his goal, which is selling goods. Thus, our movements in this life will not be correct unless we know the cause behind our existence; and we will not be happy unless we achieve our goals.

"O mankind! Worship your Guardian Lord, Who created you."

(Al-Baqarah, 2:21)

The Trust and the worship are two things with the same meaning. With the Trust, Allah has given us the Universe –he has subjected to us everything that is in heavens and on earth as acknowledgement and honour. Therefore contemplation of the Creation is one of the acts of worship.

"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are indeed Signs for men of understanding. Men who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (saying): Our Lord, not for nothing have You created (all) this! Glory to Your! Give us salvation from the chastisement of the Fire."

(Al-Imran, 3:190-191)

2- The intellect

The second element given to mankind by Allah is the intellect, which is the Balance.

"And the Firmament has He raised high and He has set up the Balance."

(Ar-Rahman, 55:7)

Thus, if man activates this capacity, he gets satisfactory results. For example, you have sold your house for fifty million, and you have collected the payment in foreign currency. In your right hand pocket you have an electronic detector of fake banknotes, and in your left hand pocket you have a list with the numbers of fake banknotes. However, you neither use your detector nor check the list, and it turns out that the money you have received was all counterfeit. Who is the loser then? Obviously, it is you. You have the intellect on your right and the teachings of the Qur'an on your left, yet you fail to make use of either of them. Thus, you become miserable.

Allah the Almighty has told you what to do and what not to do, and now you have to use your mind. The mind agrees with the transmission, as Allah gave it to us as a criterion, and the transmission is His Words. Thus, if you use your mind without bias, and not as a means to cover up or to justify, then it will lead you to Allah the Almighty. The ayaat that talk about intellect, contemplation, and knowledge add up to about one thousand. Thus, Allah has given you the Qur'an, in which there is all that is prohibited and all that is lawful. Thus, the reason for man's misery is ignorance and not using the intellect and the transmission, in spite of the fact that they go together; and praised be Allah.

3- The Original Mould (al-Fitrah)

Allah has given you fitrah. Even if you fail to use your mind or read the Qur'an, you have been given a kind of nature called fitrah which reveals the errors by itself.

**"By the nafs and the proportion and order given to it;
And its inspiration as to its wrong and its right."**

(Ash-Shams, 91:7-8)

"What is prohibited is clear, and what is lawful is clear."

[Agreed on]

"The sin is what is abrasive in your chest; and what you would hate to be revealed to people."

[Related by Al-Bujari, Muslim, and At-Tirmidi, from Al-Nawas ibn Saman]

Would anyone cheat openly, in front of other people? Would the milkman say: "Wait a minute; I'll just add some water to the milk." No way, since he knows by fitrah that this is wrongdoing. Thus, as we have said, Allah has given you the Universe, the intellect, and the fitrah.

**"By the nafs and the proportion and order given to it;
And its inspiration as to its wrong and its right."**

(Ash-Shams, 91:7-8)

4- The Lusts

Thus, Allah gave man the fundamentals and He showed him what is wrong for him and what is right for him. If man chooses to act wrongly, he becomes sinful; and if he acts correctly, he becomes righteous. Allah has

given you lusts as a means of gaining Heaven providing you resist them. So, man will be raised twice; once, on account of his patient resistance to temptations and secondly, on account of his being thankful to Allah, the Lord of earth and heaven. Allah the Almighty says:

"Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: women and sons; heaped-up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded (for blood and excellence); and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world's life but with Allah is the best of goals (to return to).

(Al-Imran, 3:14)

The desires Allah has given you are meant to raise you to a higher rank. Actually they are a gift for they are a guarantee of your safety. These desires are like a sign which says: "Minefield! Keep away!" You do not feel hostility towards the one who has put it up. Rather, you thank him from the bottom of your heart because this sign guarantees your safety. Also, a sign placed at the high voltage area which says "Danger of death! Do not approach!" is an act of compassion; there is wisdom and mercy in it; there is wise care for the citizens. Thus, you have been endowed by Allah with desires so that they may elevate you by your being patient and grateful to Him, the Lord of earth and the heavens.

Allah has subjected to you the Universe as acknowledgement and honour, and the proper reaction to those gifts is to believe and be thankful, respectively. Furthermore, He has given you the intellect in order to ascertain the validity of the transmission and to understand it; not as a means of canceling this transmission by your reason, for the reason should not be used as a means of judging it. Furthermore, He has given you fitrah (the original mould, real human nature) as a means to reveal mistakes.

Nowadays the most modern aircraft do not have any meters. There is a dark screen on the dashboard and if there is any imbalance, it flashes to tell where it is. Also, you have something just like this screen. When you do something wrong, you feel it is wrong; and when you do something right, you feel it is right thanks to your fitrah, which is fully compliant with the Will of Allah the Almighty. Thus, whether you submit to Allah's Will or respond to your fitrah is one and the same case. Thus, anything Allah orders you to do, you feel eager to follow due to your fitrah, even without being aware that He has given you the Universe, the intellect, the fitrah and the desires.

5- Freedom of choice

Allah has given you freedom of choice, thus you are free.

"Let him who will, believe; and let him who will to reject (it)."

(Al-Kahf, 18:29)

"Verily, we showed him the Way, whether to be grateful or ungrateful."

(Al-Insan, 76:3)

"To each is a direction to which Allah turns him."

(Al-Baqarah, 2:148)

If you were not created free, your works could not be evaluated, and you would not be able to elevate yourself towards Allah the Almighty. You are free to do whatever you want with what you have been ordered. On the other hand, you are not free to choose your sex, or to choose your parents, or your place and date of birth. In fact, this is for your own good and this is the best choice for you since you cannot choose better than what Allah has chosen for you.

Thus Allah has given you the freedom of choice and then He will evaluate your acts. If Allah had forced His worshipers to carry out a specific duty, then reward would be impossible. By the same token, if He had obliged them to commit a specific sin, then the punishment would be out of the question. And if He had neglected them altogether, it would be a defect in His Capacity.

Thus, what He orders his worshipers is a matter of choice, and what He restrains them from is a matter of warning. What He makes them responsible for is easy, not difficult, and He has given so much. You are always free to choose, and if you do find an obligation in any ayah, it should be related to another one, which was first placed as a choice.

"Those who give partners (to Allah) will say: If Allah had wished, we should not have given partners to Him, nor would our fathers; nor should we have had any forbidden thing. So did their ancestors argue falsely, until they tasted of Our Wrath. Say: Have you any (certain) knowledge? If so, produce it before us. You follow nothing but conjecture: You do nothing but lie."

(Al-Anam, 6:148)

This ayah shows that you are free to choose and anyone who says that Allah has obliged him will be denying Him and committing shirk. Thus Allah has given you the Universe, the intellect, the fitrah, the desires, and the freedom of choice.

The Divine Method:

Above all, Allah has given you a method, in case you get deluded with something. There is a way, the Qur'an, sunnah, fiqh – what to do and what to abandon. The scholars said: "The good thing is what the shari'a makes good and the bad thing is what the shari'a makes bad," as the shari'a is entirely just, merciful, wise and beneficial. Thus, anything that has turned out to be unjust, unmerciful or unwise is definitely not in the shari'a, even if the claim has been made to the contrary.

Thus, we were created by Allah and because He created us, He ordered us to worship Him.

"O mankind! Worship your Guardian Lord, Who created you."

(Al-Baqarah, 2:21)

According to "Madarej as-Salkin" by Ibn-Alquiem, may Allah have mercy upon him, it has been transmitted in a hadith qudsi:

"The jinn and men are in a predicament: I have created them and they worship others; and I have bestowed on them their sustenance and they thank others."

[Transmitted by Hakim Albihaqi, from Abi Ad-Darda']

"My Goodness is forwarded to my worshipers, and their evil is coming up to Me. By giving them My Grace I love them, and they hate Me by committing sins, although they are the ones who need Me more than anything else. Anyone who gets near Me, I call from afar; and I get near anyone who gets away from Me. Those who mention Me much are the ones whom I affect; on those who thank Me, I increase my blessings. I do not bar those who commit sins from My Mercy. If they repent, I love them, and if they do not repent, I heal them by making them go through hard times to rid them of their defects and faults. I reward a good deed tenfold, and more. And I punish a bad deed as one, and I may forgive it; and I am more merciful to them than a mother to her child."

Dear brothers, consider this noble ayah:

"It is We Who created you and gave you shape; then We bade the angels to prostrate to Adam..."

(Al-A'raf, 7:11)

Mankind are the best species before Allah. Angels are endowed with intellect but lack desires, and animals are endowed with desires but lack intellect, whereas man is endowed with both. Thus, if his intellect outweighs his lusts, he is higher than Angels; and if his lusts outweigh his intellect, he is lower than animals.

"Those who disbelieve, among the People of the Book and among the mushrikun will be in Hell Fire, to dwell therein forever.

They are the worst of creatures. Those who have faith and do righteous deeds, they are the best of creatures."

(Al-Baiyinah, 98:6-7)

Thus:

"It is We Who created you and gave you shape; then We bade the angels to prostrate to Adam, and they prostrated, not so Iblis; he refused to be of those who prostrate."

(Al-A'raf, 7:11)

Translation : Hazar Saqbani

Auditing : Nayat Roszko