

Sura Al-Mulk

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 1 of 6]

Introduction

Verses 1-2

Today we are having a seven-day memorial for the late Jihad Awada, and I felt that the topic which will suit that occasion is Chapter Tabāarak.¹ We always hear that chapter being recited on occasions of death, and there may be a reason for this. Normally, we read Chapter Yā-Sīn at the time of death, and when we go to the cemetery, we read Chapter Tabāarak. We may inquire, why, if the Qur'an is so long, do we concentrate on these two chapters especially. And, in fact, there is a reason for this. The Prophet used to recite Chapter Yā-Sīn at the time of departure whenever he was traveling. Looking at death as the final departure, after which there is no return to this world, we follow in the footsteps of the Prophet by reciting this chapter at the time of death. Then, when we are in the cemetery, we read Chapter Tabāarak and for this practice there are many opinions among the Muslim scholars: some say it protects from the punishment in the grave. Whether this opinion is a fact, or just *ijtehad*,² we are not losing anything by reciting that chapter on behalf of our deceased

when we leave them in their new homes, while we return to our houses in this world and await our respective turn for our final departure.

The Prophet's mission, while in Makkah, was to establish the faith and link the people to their Creator. The period in Madinah was geared to shaping the behavior of the Muslim society. The suras of the Qur'an revealed in Makkah are geared to the special subject of *al-aqeeda* which encompasses the dogma, faith in the oneness of Allah, in His Power, His Creation of the universe, and all such essentials of the faith. The Madinah suras deal with a variety of subjects: how we should act in this life, what our behavior and manners should be, how to resolve a dispute between two people, how to punish a crime that is committed, and so on. In other words, the part of the Qur'an revealed in Madinah is geared to legislation, laws, and rules.

Normally, we overlook and ignore the true rules of all the various relationships developed in the Qur'an. We have our prime relationship with Allah; then we have a relationship with each other on a personal, family, community, national, and international level; we have a relationship with the plant

¹ Chapter 67 in the Qur'an, also known as *Al-Mulk*

² A sincere effort to make an educated, enlightened and informed opinion explaining an issue related to Islam

and animal kingdoms, with the environment, and so on. I am going to talk about a particular situation we face here in this mosque. At the time of prayer, we hear the *adhan*. The *adhan*, as defined in the Islamic Fiqh,³ is a tool of information – a call for prayer – in the meaning that you are informing the people that the time of prayer is here and Allah is inviting you to respond to Him and come to the prayer. How many times do we hear the *adhan* and we do not respond despite the awesome fact that the Caller and the Inviter is Allah? Yet, when a human being invites us for a wedding, for example, we respond favorably. We are afraid if we don't go after having received the invitation card that we will be questioned: "I invited you; why did you not come?" And I don't dare go empty-handed; I take a gift with me, also. So, we hear the *adhan* and we do not reflect that Allah is inviting us, and He does not even expect a gift; still we do not go.

This chapter directs us to build our relationship with Allah and to know where and how to respond to Him. The chapter starts by saying "Glory be to the One who owns everything in this universe." We, human beings, have a strong inclination to be around the rich and the powerful. If Allah is the owner of everything in this universe, then why do we not act in the same manner towards Him? He owns all that is in the universe and "وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ" He is able to do everything." He is the one who is The Richest and The Most Powerful.

The following verse – verse number two – addresses three main items. [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

"He who has created death (الْمَوْتِ) as well as life (الْحَيَاةَ), so that He might put you to a test and thus show which of you is the best in conduct, and make you realize that He alone is almighty, truly forgiving (وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ)" [67:2].

Al-mawt means "death", and *al-hayat* means "life". What is death and what is life? There is a life after death, and there is a death before life. Before we existed we were dead – we were nothing – then, we came to life when the soul entered the body. Then, when the soul separates from the body, we go back into death. So, in the final analysis, we will

be dead twice and we will live twice. We are living when the soul enters the body and we live through our earthly life. When we die and are revived again that will be our life after death; that is what we call the Hereafter. So, we have two lives. This is referred to in the Qur'an in some other verse also. The sinners will say [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:] "O Allah! Twice hast Thou caused us to die, just as twice Thou hast brought us to life! But now that we have acknowledged our sins, is there any way out of this [punishment in the Hereafter]?"⁴ Is there any way we can make up for our sins and get out of this situation? Note that the verse starts by talking about death first and that is because, originally, we were dead and Allah brought us out of death into life.

Life and Death, and again, Death and Life – why did Allah create these? There must be a reason and a definite purpose for that. And the second part of that verse [#2] says, "So that He might put you to a test and thus show which of you is the best in conduct." So this life is an examination, and the reason behind the creation of death and life is to test the human beings to see who will be the best in conduct. This is the plain and simple reason of our life in this world, and our belief in this revelation of Allah is one of the prime differences between Muslims and Christians.

I'm sure many of us will sit with some Christians and the first thing they ask you is "Do you believe in Jesus?" We say, yes, we believe in Jesus and we believe in the Bible. "Do you believe in him as the Son of God?" And we say, no. We believe in him as a messenger of God, not as a Son of God, because the example of Jesus is as the example of Adam: Adam had no father and no mother and, in spite of that, we don't call him Son of God. We believe that Jesus, as the Qur'an says of him, was a human being, a messenger of God, and we refer to him as Jesus, the son of Mary. Then, your Christian friends will proceed with another question: "Do you believe that he died on the cross to forgive your sins?" And immediately your answer will be, no, I don't even believe that he was ever crucified. His response to this is "Then you are not saved because you don't believe that Jesus died on the cross." You argue this retort as follows: if Jesus died for your sake it means that you have a blank card to do anything you want, right or wrong. So here you have a credit card, which will take you to heaven automatically. You need not pray or fast, you can kill, you can steal, or do anything, because Jesus already died for

³ Jurisprudence

⁴ 40:11

your sake. Then he says to you: “No. You have to be a good and righteous person.” Then you say it is one of the two: either Jesus will take me to heaven, or my deeds will take me to heaven. The Qur’an addresses this argument:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ
عَمَلًا

He has created death as well as life, so that He might put you to a test and thus show which of you is the best in conduct.” The criterion of punishment and reward is your actions. Your father will not be of benefit for you; your son will not be of benefit for you,⁵ and your Prophet Muhammad will not be of any benefit for you on that Day of Accounting.⁶ No human being will be of any benefit to any other human being on the Day of Judgment. This, in fact, is the main theme of this chapter and when we read it on behalf of our deceased, at the cemetery, we ought to enhance our consciousness of this principle.

I am going to tell you the story that our shaykhs, in the mosques back home, narrate in their *khutbas*⁷ during Friday prayers. I heard it myself from several shaykhs when I was a student. And, believe it or not, I did the same, namely: repeat the story. I did it when I was young and I was not *thinking*. The story goes something like this: A man, who killed 99 persons, went to the shaykh and said:

“Give me a fatwa. I killed 99 people; is there any way I can

repent so God will forgive me?” The shaykh replied: “*Astaghfirullah*.⁸ You have no forgiveness. *Ninety-nine* – and you want to be forgiven?” So the man, having no hope, said: “Then I’ll complete the one hundred.” The moral implication of this story is *completely opposite* to what the Qur’an tells us. The Qur’anic verse which gives man the highest type of hope says to the Prophet: [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

“Say: [Thus speaks God] ‘O you servants of mine who have transgressed against your own selves! Despair not of God’s mercy: behold, God forgives all sins [whenever the sinner repents and returns to Him] – for, verily, He alone is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace’” [39:53].

That is the great hope that the Qur’an offers us. What is required is that we turn back to God; make sincere repentance.

To continue with the verse now, the third item it talks about is *وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ*. God is *Al ‘Aziz* – the King, the Powerful; and *Al Ghafūr* – the Forgiver. The particle “Al” indicates the ultimate degree: *The Most Powerful, The Most Forgiving*. See the opposites? When an earthly king has absolute power what will he do to the people? *He becomes a tyrant!* True forgiveness is when you forgive while you have the ability to hurt. The Qur’an mentions these two attributes of God one after the other: Allah is the most powerful, and the most able to do anything, yet, He is the Most Forgiving.

⁵ 31:33

⁶ 7:188

⁷ Sermons

⁸ “God forgive me!” An exclamation of amazement and incredulity

Sura Al-Mulk

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 2 of 6]

Verses 3-4

The following three verses direct us to seek God, to look for Him and recognize His presence around us. Where and how to do this? It first directs our gaze upwards: Allah is He who created the seven skies –

سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ . That number – “seven” – people have written entire books about the number seven. We have seven skies, and we have seven earths, as mentioned in another verse in the Qur’an; there are seven days in the week; and when we go to Hajj, we circle around the Ka’bah seven times; and when we perform the Sa’y⁹ it is seven times; and when we go for *jamarāt*¹⁰ we throw seven stones at each one of the three pillars. In Islam, the number seven *seems* to have something ineffable about it, and so people have written books about it. But, in fact, it is exactly like, when making wudū, you wash your hands three times, and your nose three times, and your mouth three times, and your feet three times. Some people ask why you wash these parts three times; they question what

is special about the number three. The ulama say it is a sort of assurance that you washed those parts of the body thoroughly; it means even if you wash them 100 times, you will not be wrong, but three is the minimum in order to ensure that water has wetted every square inch of that part. Other than that, it has no significance.

“Allah is He who created the seven skies.” What are the seven skies? Does anyone know? *No one knows!* God said خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ He created seven skies. What, then, are the seven skies? We have a number of interpretations. Even our astronomers of today are not sure, and they say it *could* be the seven types of galaxies. A galaxy is a layer in the universe consisting of millions or billions of stars.

In Arabic terminology, according to the dictionary *Lisan ul Araby*, the word *Sama’*, or “sky” means, “Every thing that is above you”. *Tayyab!*¹¹ So, for Mr. Neil Armstrong, the first American astronaut who landed on the moon in July 1969, what would have been the sky as he stood on the moon? When you are standing on the moon, the earth, at certain

⁹ Walking between the hills of As-Safā and Al- Marwah – a ritual of the Hajj

¹⁰ Another ritual of the Hajj

¹¹ Fine!

times, will be above you, so in accordance with Arabic terminology, the earth will be considered *samā'*. It means, therefore, that all we can understand from the verse "God created the seven skies" is that this is part of the Unseen which nobody knows; it is limited to the knowledge of God. No matter how much we research, we will never reach a final conclusion or encompass the mysteries of the universe. We may know some things, but we will not know everything. All we can say is that we should take it at face value and we cannot interpret it. We take it as a challenge to the human mind that there is a Creator who created that universe, and that Creator is Allah. And, although we cannot grasp or fully understand the universe, we believe in Allah. The Qur'an many times directs our attention to it. [Imam quotes many Arabic verses. The translations are:]

"And so We propound these parables unto man: but none can grasp their innermost meaning save those who [of Us] are aware, and hence are certain that God has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with an inner truth: for, behold, in this very creation there is a message indeed for all who believe in Him" [29:44].

"Verily, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and in the succession of night and day, there are indeed signs for all who are endowed with insight" [3:190].

"Say (O Muhammad) 'Consider all that there is in the heavens and on earth'; but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not" [10:101].

Therefore, the intent of the verse which directs our attention to the surrounding universe where we see some things which are beyond our ability to understand is to make us think: who made that tremendous universe, those galaxies upon galaxies each consisting of billions of stars, receding into eternity where our vision cannot penetrate? And the answer is the One whom we call Allah. The Qur'an is repeatedly urging us to look to the things around us to increase our knowledge, and through that knowledge, to know God and, thus, get closer to Him.

The word "*tibāqan*", used in this verse as an adjective, means one of two things, according to the Arabic dictionary: either these seven skies are similar to one another in their creation, or, these seven skies are in layers one above the other. At one time it was thought by scientists that the heavenly bodies, as we see them, represented the seven skies. With the advancement of knowledge in the fields of physics and astronomy, and the discovery of the galaxies which are groups

of stars, they said, perhaps, "a sky" represents a galaxy. And all this is, as we say, *ijtehad* – a thought. People think and advance theories, but the final truth cannot be known for certain, because we depend upon our scientific knowledge to reach conclusions and propose theories, and our scientific knowledge is subject to change. All we have to believe in, as Muslims, without delving into details, is that God created seven skies. What they look like we don't know. What is the purpose behind their creation we don't know. Whether or not there are creations and beings in those skies we don't know. For example, when the Americans went to the moon, they were looking for signs of life on the moon. And they came back and declared that there was no life. Why? Because they found there is no atmosphere and no oxygen. But they are talking from a very narrow perspective: looking for signs of life, as we know it, namely, live creatures like us who need water, and oxygen to breathe. But, it is well within our knowledge, and beyond any doubt, that there are other creations which we cannot see, e.g. the jinn, and we do not know what their requirements for existence are. So, therefore, it could be that there is a creation on the moon or elsewhere in the skies which is not known to us in that it does not need what we need in order to exist.

The word "*ma*" (مَا) in the Arabic language is used for something which does not think, while the word "*man*" (مَنْ) is applicable to a thinking being. And, sometimes, a Qur'anic verse will read: *مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ*. It means that it is possible that in the sky there are some beings that think. Again, take the jinn for example. We don't see or feel them, but they are here with us on this earth. We have a whole chapter in the Qur'an called *Al Jinn*.¹² Al jinn are a type of creation that live in communities, they marry, they beget children; among them there are believers and disbelievers. All this is mentioned in a verse in Chapter Al Jinn. In Chapter Al-Ahqāf¹³ a verse says that a group of jinn listened to the Prophet while he was teaching the Qur'an. Afterward they went back to their own kind, and said that they had heard a fantastic word revealed by God and that this word had come after Moses, indicating that they were already familiar with the Torah. This

¹² Chapter #72

¹³ Chapter #46

is information we get from the Qur'an, while we cannot see the jinn, nor verify their existence. But it indicates that there is a creation other than us right on this earth.

There is a third example of another type of creation. We know that the articles of Faith and *īmān* are to believe in God, His Books, His Messengers, His Angels, and the Day of Judgment. The angels are one of the essential beings we believe in, and, yet we don't see them, we don't know what they look like, we don't know if they need oxygen to breathe or not. So, in the same way, when the Qur'anic verse tells us that God created the seven skies, then that is what we have to believe in. And, there is no need for further details, because it is a topic man will never comprehend fully as stated in the next verse. [Imam quotes Arabic verse. The translation is:]

"Glory be to God who has created seven heavens one above another: no fault and no want of proportion wilt thou see in the creation of the Most Gracious. And turn thy vision upon it once more: canst thou see any flaw? Yea, turn thy vision upon it again and yet again: and every time thy vision will fall back upon thee, dazzled and truly defeated. . ." [67:3-4].

Yet, if you want to enter into details about this subject of "seven heavens" just look into our tafseers which are not only full of *Israeliyyāt*, but have fantastic descriptions of what *the seven heavens look like!* From where they got all that information, I don't know.

There is a whole science called *Ilm-ul-Israeliyyāt* which means "The Science of the Israeli Hadith" inserted by the Jews as the sayings of the Prophet, at a certain time in the history of Muslims, in order to weaken Islam. In spite of this awareness, you will be amazed how many Muslims nowadays quote these same "ahadith".

There are several categories of hadith. The Hadith Mutawatar are at the very top and considered to be very strong hadith. The second category is called Hadith Hasan. There is a third category called Hadith Da'eef or weak hadith. Hadith Majsoos are those which have no known origin or basis; they are considered to be entirely false hadith. Anyone studying the science of hadith will find that it is a very, very, thorny science and requires extensive study to determine which one is right and which one is wrong, yet, you see many Muslims who don't read the Qur'an and all they draw on is hadith. The easiest thing for them is to say "The Prophet said. . ." The most

truthful book is the Book of God – that's the one.¹⁴ Anything else is susceptible to be right or wrong, to be added to, or, to be detracted from.

There are Muslims in America who sell their furniture and claim that the Prophet said not to sleep on a bed. They say he never ate using a fork or a spoon so they use their fingers, and in a very crude way. Such Muslims are living in the United States at present. Yet, when they go to work, they drive a Cadillac car. However, the Prophet did not have a Cadillac car, either. Why don't they ride a camel and tie it in front of the jeep factory, or in front of the office there – *tie it – to a light post there!* And, although this person does not sleep on a bed in his house, he sits on a nice thick carpet while the electric lights are blazing, and the air conditioner is working to cool the house in the summer and the heat is on in the winter. When he wants to pray, he looks into the Japanese technology on his wrist to offer his prayer. The Prophet didn't have all these things. These are the contradictions. We ascribe everything to Islam and hadith and thus appear in front of non-Muslims as backward and confused people, while, if we follow the true Islam, we will be the most advanced people. The Qur'an is the origin of the science of astronomy, but people have said to me, "No, we don't believe in that; that is the science of the Americans – the kuffar".¹⁵ Prayer and fasting are two equally important pillars of Islam. When it comes to prayer, I don't hesitate to look at my watch and then check the prayer times listed in the *Monitor*¹⁶ to see what time 'Asr is due today, and if the two timings are in agreement, I pray. But with regard to fasting, in order to determine the exact day when Ramadan will start, we say we have to go to the top of Sears Tower, in Chicago, to look for the new moon. And not only that, we have to see the moon with our *naked eye*. Isn't this a double standard? Why do we accept a calculation for the prayer timing and reject that same calculation for the start of fasting? When you analyze it, when you utilize your brain, you can see that we are following a certain method in one area, and falsifying that same method in another area. As a result, we have become the butt of ridicule and jokes. The last Eid was strange: Nigeria celebrated Eid on Monday, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states celebrated Eid on Tuesday, Egypt and most of the Arab countries observed it on Wednesday, while ISNA in

¹⁴ Holding up the Qur'an

¹⁵ Disbelievers

¹⁶ The bi-monthly magazine of the Islamic Center

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the United States declared Eid to be on Thursday. Imagine, four days of Eid!¹⁷ On the other hand, there are people who look into the prayer timetable and because *Zuhr*¹⁸ is listed at 1:38 P.M. if the *adhan* is delayed two minutes, they behave as if the Day of Judgment will come because you are not on time! I have witnessed this in one of our Muslim communities while I was conducting a funeral and giving a talk prior to the funeral. A man got up and started to make the *adhan* while the lecture

was in progress, and the people were perplexed, not knowing whether to listen to the *adhan* or to listen to the talk. My main point here is that we use the technology to *pinpoint* the times of prayer; we don't erect a stick in the ground any more and look at its shadow to determine the time of prayer. Why do we not use the same technology to pinpoint the start of fasting? Instead, we still follow, in a literal sense, what the Prophet said: "Fast when you see the moon of Ramadan."

¹⁷ In the year 1993

¹⁸ The noon prayer

Sura Al-Mulk

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 3 of 6]

Verses 5-12

These are very interesting verses which touch upon many topics: [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:] “Glory to God who has created seven heavens in full harmony with one another: no fault wilt thou see in the creation of the Most Gracious. And turn thy vision upon it once more: canst thou see any flaw? Yea, turn thy vision upon it again and yet again: and every time thy vision will fall back upon thee dazzled and truly defeated. And, indeed, We have adorned the skies nearest the earth (*samā’ ad dunya*) with lights, and have made them the object of futile guesses for the evil ones [from among men – **الشَّيَاطِينِ**]: and for them have We readied suffering through a blazing flame – for, suffering in hell awaits all who are thus bent on blaspheming against their Sustainer: and how vile a journey’s end!” [67:3-6].

Samā’ ad dunya means “the sky which is nearest to the earth”. God decorated it with “lamps” or lights. Do we appreciate the beauty of the sky which is nearest to the earth? We don’t. Firstly, because, at night, we don’t even look at the sky, and, secondly, we are surrounded by electric lights everywhere which mar our appreciation of this beauty, but the

bedouin who are living in the desert, and the farmers who are living in villages see the beauty of the night sky while being surrounded by total darkness. These “lamps” or lights are the stars. How many are there? Millions. Some far, some near, some bright, some faint. The farmer, from time to time, sees a light shooting on the horizon – *shehab* – which is just a spark of light: a meteor. We have heard our fathers and forefathers saying, “O, this is a star in pursuit of a devil to burn him.”

You know, in our countries, if someone loses his buffalo or cow, he goes to some special man with his problem, and asks him to find out who the thief could be. Or, if a woman is in trouble with her husband, she goes to that same man and asks him to write for her some words (as an amulet – *ta’weez*) to fix the situation. These men, who claim to be able to tell you the Unseen, say that, in order to determine who stole the cow, or, in order to fix the situation between the husband and wife, they have to utilize the services of the devils, the *Shayateen*. And these men claim that they utilize the *Shayateen* by sending them up to the sky to eavesdrop on the

talk of the angels. In the chapter of Al Jinn,¹⁹ it is mentioned that the jinn are talking among themselves about the past when they used to steal some of the talk of the angels, but since the revelation of the Qur'an and the advent of the message of Islam and the mission of Muhammad, the situation has changed: there is a heavy guard on the sky and it is full of sparking lights and any one trying to eavesdrop will himself be pursued by a piercing flame. This is all that is mentioned in the Qur'an. But, in our books of tafseer, the ulama sometimes add explanations and stories, and they make issues of these things, whereas no one truly knows exactly what that means, or how it happened. Man will always incompletely understand such verses which describe that Reality which is beyond the reach of human perception – the Unseen. We don't talk about, or attempt to discover, the more obvious functions of the stars. These stars have functions. First, they are a decoration for the sky; secondly, as the Qur'an says, they are guarding against *shayateen*; the third function is not mentioned in this verse, but in some other verses: to guide the people in the darkness of the night when they are traveling by sea or land. The Arabs, in the olden times, used to go through the desert at night by just looking at the stars, and they would never miss their way. Today we don't utilize that method.

These Qur'anic verses which direct us to look at the universe around us, are, in effect, an order to the Muslim mind to think: look, think, contemplate, see the beauty of creation, and, at the end, your sight will come back to you dazzled because it found no want of proportion, and found the universe to be unfathomable. This will urge you to believe in the Maker of that universe, and you can call Him by whatever name you want – give Him any name you want – but *there is a Maker* for that universe.

Next, we are going to deal with the classification, according to this chapter, of people into two types. It says, for those who reject the faith of their God will be *jahannam*,²⁰ and that is a bad place to go to – a terrible end to life's journey. That is one type, while the second type – the *muttaqīn* – are those who believe and are conscious of their God although they do not see Him (*al ghaib*): for them is forgiveness and a great reward.

What is *jahannam*? And what is *jannah*?²¹ What is

the meaning of *jahannam* and *jannah*? In the Qur'an are some descriptions for those terms. A description for *jahannam* is: "Fear the Fire (*jahannam*) whose fuel is men and stones and it is prepared for those who reject the faith. Whenever their skins are burned We will replace them with new skins so the punishment will be continuous." In fact, these verses need some study. Why does the Qur'an mention only the skin? Why not the whole body? There must be some secret regarding the skin for the Qur'an to talk about it that way. And is *jahannam* – the Fire, as the Qur'an describes it – actually a fire the way we understand it as human beings in this life? What type of fire is it? How many degrees? Can we measure it with a thermometer? In fact, I think, when it comes to *jahannam* and Heaven, these are part of the Unseen – the realm which is beyond human perception – we believe in them, although we do not see them and we do not know any details about them. Our understanding of these concepts is necessarily limited to our experiences as human beings and also limited by our dependence on language in order to understand concepts. In some tafseers, we find lots of descriptions of *jahannam* and Heaven – descriptions that are, sometimes, easily accepted by some people who are not educated, but not so easily accepted by others who are educated.

Some verses in the Qur'an are intended to either attract or to deter people and so they are worded to make it easy for the human mind to grasp the concept they are trying to convey. Take, for example, the question of the *hūra'yeen*. This question is raised not only by Muslims but also by Christians. The Christians describe Islam as a chauvinistic religion, and when you ask them why, they say that Islam always talks about how, when the good men will go to heaven, they will have *al-hūra'yeen*.

What is *hūra'yeen*? From the aspect of the Arabic language, "*hoor*" or "*haur*" means "attraction" and "*een*" means eyes, *yā'ni*, "there is an attraction in the eyes". And this is applicable to both men and women. There are men whose eyes will turn women crazy, and that is described as "*hoor*". *Hūra'yeen* means, "his eyes have that *haur*", or, "have that attraction". So that is the situation: in Heaven, men and women *BOTH* will have *hūra'yeen*. We must not forget when we read the Qur'an that it is talking to the Arab Bedouin living in the desert. There is no shade, no water, just barren land stretching as far as the eye can see. And we must know, too, that the Qur'an was revealed to the Arabs. You know... The

¹⁹ Chapter # 72

²⁰ Hell

²¹ Heaven

Arabs... They go to Europe after the women. So, to attract them, the Qur'an says that Heaven will have all the hūra'yeen they want; it has deep shade spreading everywhere, flowing waters, lots of fruits, and all this will remain ever fresh and will never fade away – it will be continuous. The Qur'an is seeking to attract the human mind to the things which he does not find around him.

Personally, the best description I have come across for Heaven is the one the Prophet quoted when he was asked about the nature of heaven. The Prophet said: "God says: 'I have readied for My righteous servants what no eye has ever seen, and no ear has ever heard, and no heart of man has ever conceived.'" See the general terminology? You cannot 'catch' it anywhere. The same description will apply to jahannam, but we have people writing entire books describing jahannam: how it looks, what is its width, how the angels are standing by the door receiving the sinners, and they even name the angels, and give all kinds of other details. As a result, we have some other people making contemporary jokes based on these descriptions. It reminds me of one that is prevalent in Egypt. They say someone died so he went to Heaven. The guard at the door of al-jannah asked him: [Imam assumes a very stern voice]

"Where are you going?" And the man replies [meekly and in bewilderment]:

"Entering jannah."

The angel says: "What do you think this is... A coffee shop? Let me see if your name is on the list or not. What's your name?" He replied So-and-So. The angel looked at the list and said his name was not on the list and he could not enter. So, the man uttering "*Amr-e-ilallah*"²² left jannah and went to jahannam. The guard stopped him and asked him:

"Where are you going?" He said:

"To jahannam."

The guard said: "Do you think it is that easy? Let me see if your name is on the list or not. What's your name?" Told him his name. He looked at the list but did not find his name listed.

"Your name is not here, you cannot enter." The man said:

"In jannah they refused me, in Hell they refused me, am I going to be homeless and sleep in the streets?"

There are a number of books that quote a certain hadith, but I don't know where the authors got it. This hadith is also frequently repeated by lots of people. It says that when

the Prophet went to the Mi'rāj²³ and passed by jahannam, he found the majority of the inmates of jahannam to be women. The population²⁴ of jahannam – *most of them are women!* As if the men are very pure and they have no place there! How and where they got that hadith, I don't know. But there are *whole books* written on this hadith and when the western people read these books and translate them they mock us and laugh at us. The concepts of jahannam and jannah belong, in fact, to the "Realm that is Beyond Human Perception – The Unseen or *Al-Ghayb*". We should not go into details about the Unseen. The very name suggests that we do not know much about that topic, but we have to believe in it.

If you were to ask me what is jahannam, I'll say it is something – some place – *I don't like to go to*. What it looks like, I don't know. What is in it, I don't know. And when you ask me about jannah I say, yes, that is a nice place, a very desirable place and it looks to me I myself would like to be there. How does it look - I don't know. What is in it, I also don't know. In the final analysis, jahannam and jannah are part of the Unseen. All these details which we read in some tafseers, just keep them aside because nobody knows; nobody has returned from Hell or Heaven to know what is there. We can only go so far in our understanding and descriptions.

The verse says that when the rejecters of faith enter jahannam they will hear a sound like someone is expressing extreme displeasure, and they will see that it is boiling; they will see that jahannam is cutting itself into pieces from displeasure at the people who rejected God. They will see people being brought there in groups, and whenever a group enters, the angels guarding that place will ask them:

"Didn't you receive a messenger from God who warned you and taught you how to conduct your life so you would be away from this place?"

The sinners will reply: "Yes, we had. We had messengers who came to us; we not only denied them, but we said that God did not send them and they were just men gone astray. We did not accept their message and we insulted them."

Then, the sinners will think for a while and say, if they had only used their reason and acted upon and truly lived according to what they heard from those prophets, if they had internalized God's message in their hearts and acted accordingly, they would not have come to this place – this jahannam. In other

²² "I leave it up to God, whatever He wants"

²³ The Ascension to Heaven

²⁴ Imam laughs and radiates a sense of disbelief

words, they will admit their sins. And the Qur'an says, "It is an exceedingly bad end for your life's journey." This is one type of people.

The second type of people is those who believe in God and are conscious of Him. Although they do not see Him, they believe in Him and are aware and conscious of Him.

For them is forgiveness and a great reward. The first and foremost attribute of the *muttaqīn* – those who are conscious of their God – as mentioned in the Qur'an, is: "They are those who believe in the Unseen or that which is beyond human perception."²⁵

²⁵ 2:1

Sura Al-Mulk

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 4 of 6]

Verses 13-15

There was a group of rejecters of the faith who used to whisper to each other and tell each other not to raise their voices so Muhammad and his followers would not hear what they were talking about. So the next Qur'anic verse came to say that it makes no difference if they talk loudly or secretly because God knows what they reveal and what they conceal. How does God know the things that man conceals? The following verse explains: [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

“And know, O men, that whether you keep your beliefs secret or state them openly, He has full knowledge indeed of all that is in your hearts. How could it be that He who has created all should not know all? Yea, He alone is unfathomable in His wisdom, all-aware (*Al Latīf, Al Khabīr*)” [67:13-14].

If a human being manufactures something, he knows everything about that thing inside out. So the above verse is telling us that God, who created us, knows everything about us. He is *Al Latīf, Al Khabīr*. What's the meaning of *Al Latīf*? In our every day Arabic speech it means “beautiful”, anything that looks attractive, but the real meaning is “knowledgeable”. And

again, the particle “al” denotes the ultimate degree – He is the Most Knowledgeable. *Al Khabīr* means He has the experience; He is aware.

[Imam quotes] “He it is who has made the earth *dalīl* [submissive] to you. . .” [67:15].

The word “*taskheer*” means “harnessed it for your service”. The word *dalīl* also has the same import but is normally used for animals as in Chapter *Yā-Sīn*.²⁶ An example is that of a very little kid leading a camel by a rope. Imagine that huge animal is *mudallal* – subjugated, submissive, harnessed – for the service of that little kid. That very little kid beats it, and pulls it, and takes it here and there. That is an example of *dalīl* as used in Chapter *Yā-Sīn*. The root meaning of *dalīl* is “humiliated”.

But here, in verse 15, the word *dalīl* is used for the earth. How can we apply the word *dalīl* to the earth? When this earth is referred to, metaphorically, as an animal, then, this word *dalīl* can be used for the earth. This is known in Arabic grammar as “*majaz*” – metaphorical language. We know that,

²⁶ 36:71

with regard to the animals, the word *dalīl* means we drive them, we ride them, we eat from them, and utilize them in a variety of ways. But what does *dalīl* mean if we apply it to the earth? That is a whole scientific subject.

We know that the earth is inclined at 23.5 degrees and is spinning at the speed of 1000 mph on its own axis. This results in the alternation of day and the night and also in the variation in their duration or length. The earth is harnessed in this way to provide this service for us. Imagine if the earth should disobey God's law and stop spinning. Then it will be perpetual day, or perpetual night. There will be no alternation. Imagine if it is day all the time. What will happen? The sun is out 24 hours, 6 months, one year, years, centuries: we'll be burned! Imagine if all the time it is night, then, we'll freeze. So the spinning of the earth on its own axis, to create the day and the night, is a service for man. We sleep during the night, we wake up in the morning, and we don't even think about how this happened or why it is taking place. But this is what we call a *ni'amah* – bounty – provided to us by God. And all of this falls under the Qur'anic verse which says, "We have created everything according to a law." All these scientific laws which are discovered and named after the scientists who discovered them, like the law of gravity, and the laws of reflection of light, and so on, are laws which God created to guide the planets and all His other creations, to fulfill the functions for which they were created.

In addition to spinning on its own axis to cause alternation of the day and night, we know that the earth orbits around the sun at the speed of 65,000 miles per hour resulting in the seasons of summer, winter, spring and autumn. We pass almost imperceptibly from one season to another and don't even think about it. Imagine if, all the time, it is summer, or, all the time, it is winter. That change from one season to another is what makes life varied and attractive. This is another way in which the earth is harnessed for the benefit of man. Furthermore, we eat from the plants of the earth, we drink from its water, we take from its minerals, we get varieties of provisions from its interior, such as petroleum, iron, coal, and so on. When we reflect on this, we begin to understand how God made the earth – that huge "animal" subservient – *dalīl* – to our needs; it has been harnessed for the service of mankind.

There is an element that is necessary for our survival and which we take for granted: air. When we move up to a higher elevation, as in mountainous terrain, the amount of oxygen decreases, and, normally, people will have a feeling of

constriction in their chest. Sometimes, we Muslims, read the Qur'an, but we do not notice the scientific implications of some of the verses. For example [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:] "And whomsoever God wills to guide, his bosom He opens wide with willingness towards accepting Islam; and whomsoever He wills to let go astray, his bosom He causes to be tight and constricted, as if he were climbing unto the skies..."²⁷ There is a scientific truth in this verse: the higher up you go from the surface of the earth, the more the oxygen in the air decreases. This is an example of a verse which the ulama of seven or eight or nine hundred years ago did not, and could not interpret as we can today, owing to the changed circumstances and the advancement of knowledge. Another scientific fact we know today is that human beings breathe oxygen, and exhale carbon dioxide while plants transpire carbon dioxide. This means that the elements of this atmosphere are kept in balance by the creations of God on this earth. Imagine if this process stops for five minutes; there will be no life left on earth. And that is one of the ways in which God has adapted this earth for human beings.

If you have read yesterday's *Blade*,²⁸ it informs us that our Muslim brothers in the Lucas County jail are demanding that the jail supply them with the beads²⁹ to say *tasbeeh*.³⁰ The use of those beads is originally a Catholic tradition and the Muslims have copied it. Some of the Muslims use the beads for *tasbeeh* and some use them for *dabka*.³¹ I have seen a person, who was at the start of the *dabka* line, twirling them around his index finger! The point is that the rules and the laws of this universe are created by God. When the planets and different types of creations follow these laws and rules, it represents *tasbeeh* on the part of these planets and creations. In other words, by obeying the laws and rules set down for them by Allah, these creations are glorifying the name of God. The Qur'an mentioned this by saying, "Everything in the universe is glorifying the name of God, but you do not understand their language." Every creation is obedient in its own way: for the earth to spin on its own axis to create the day and night is a form of obedience or *tasbeeh*; for the sun to rise

²⁷ 6:125

²⁸ Toledo's daily newspaper

²⁹ *Masbaha*

³⁰ Repeating "Subhānallah, Alhamdulillah, Allahu-akbar" meaning: "Glory to God, Praise to God, God is the Greatest" on each of the 100 beads

³¹ A Lebanese dance

daily from the east and set in the west is a form of tasbeeh. For us human beings, also, following the laws and rules set down for us by Allah, in the Qur'an, constitutes tasbeeh: you glorify the name of God by following these rules; it is not by saying "subhānallah" with the *masbaha* one hundred times or one thousand times – it is not that – but [Imam quotes many Arabic verses. The translation is:]

"True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west – but truly pious is he who believes in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the revelation, and the prophets; and spends his substance – however much he himself may cherish it – upon his near of kin, and the orphans and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage, and is constant in prayer, and renders the purifying due; and truly pious are they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of peril: it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they, they who are conscious of God" [2:177].

"Verily, God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance, and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean."

"O you who believe! Fulfill your contracts!" "Forbidden to you are carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine."

"Help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness. Do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity."

"Those who spend in His way in time of plenty and in time of hardship, and hold in check their anger, and pardon their fellow-men because God loves those who do good."

"Behold, God bids you to deliver all that you have been entrusted with unto those who are entitled thereto, and whenever you judge between people, to judge with justice: verily, most excellent is what God exhorts you to do."

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God's claim takes precedence over the claim of either of them." Hundreds of rules like that in the Qur'an. We are supposed to follow them, and by following them we are glorifying the name of God. I think I will stop here and we will continue next week, *insha'allah*.

Sura Al-Mulk

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 5 of 6]

Verses 15-23

– فَاْمَشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِهِ

disperse in the mountains and valleys and eat from its provisions...” [67:15].

This is a positive urge for the Muslims to work. In this country we work hard and you mark down eight hours where you work eight hours. In our Muslim countries, the day’s work time will be two hours, if that, and, this despite the exhortation in Islam for people to work.

A question frequently asked of us by American non-Muslims is “What is your Sabbath? We have our Sunday for a holiday and the Jews have the Saturday for a holiday, what is your holiday?” And, immediately, most of us will answer, “Friday”. That is not the correct answer. Friday is not a holiday – it, *also*, is a working day. The meaning of “holiday” as understood by the Christians and Jews in reference to Sunday and Saturday is that it is *haram*³² to work on that particular day. You remember when President Sadaat of Egypt was buried? It was on a Saturday. When Menachem Begin honored Egypt by

attending his funeral, he refused to ride in a car, or to drive a car, to the cemetery. Why? Because it was a “holiday”. He was not supposed to ride in a car, so he walked. Friday is a holiday in that there is a congregational prayer known as *Jumu’ah* prayer which is a must for every sane, adult Muslim to perform in a group. The rest of the 34 prayers of the week can be performed individually, or, preferably, in congregation. So, in Muslim countries, Friday is a day off to make it convenient for the people to attend the Friday congregational prayers. We do not call Friday a “holy” day, nor is it supposed to be a “day of rest” as the Christians and the Jews consider their Sabbath days. People may ask where you get the authority to say this when, in fact, all the Muslim countries take Friday as a holiday and as a day of rest. Our answer is that we get our authority from the Qur’an in which we have a whole chapter called *Al-Jumu’ah*.³³ [Imam quotes:] “O you who have attained to faith! When the call to prayer is sounded on the day of congregation, hasten to the remembrance of God, and leave all worldly commerce: this is best for you, if you but knew it. And when the prayer is

³² That which is forbidden or sinful

³³ Chapter 62

ended, *disperse freely on earth and seek the bounties of God...*³⁴ It is very clear from this verse that Friday is not a holiday in Islam. It could be a working day on which, after fulfilling your duty to God, you are urged to go and earn your livelihood by seeking the bounties of God. You know, here in America, we have no religion at all – *Alhamdulillah*³⁵ – so we don't feel it, but, if you cross the border to Canada, it is striking that all businesses are closed on Sunday, although they are currently in the process of repealing that law. They would like to get religion out of their lives, too! So, the meaning of holiday, according to the Jews and Christians is that it is a day in which it is prohibited to work. This notion is based on the interpretation of their religious scriptures, namely, that God created the sky and the earth in six days, then rested on the seventh.

According to the Jews, God created them in six days and on the seventh day which was a Saturday, He rested. According to the Christians, God created the skies and the earth in six days, then relaxed on the seventh which happened to be Sunday. For the Muslims, too, “God created the skies and the earth in six days, but He does not weary of His Creation”,³⁶ so He needs no rest or relaxation. If He is tired and needs rest just like a human being, then, He will be equal to His creation; then why should we worship Him? That is the logic of Islam.

Moreover, when the Bible and the Torah and the Qur'an say that, “God created the heavens and the earth in six days...” we have to ask ourselves what is the meaning of “day”?

The Qur'an says, “Your God is the one who created the skies and the earth in six days.” This is a clear-cut verse in the Qur'an. But what is “day”? Is it a day as we understand it – 24 hours? Or could “day” mean a period of time that could be millions of years according to the way in which we are accustomed to counting? What is the meaning of “day”? We have to think because we have another Qur'anic verse which says, “A day to your God is like 1000 years of what you calculate.”³⁷ And another verse says, “In a day which is calculated as 50,000 years.”³⁸ So what “day” are we talking about, and how do we apply it or relate it to the seven days of the week? The “day” as mentioned in reference to creation is not the 24-hour-day as we know it, but is a period in geological

time. From this we understand that the notion of “holiday” or “Sabbath day” could be completely out of order.

If we follow properly the Qur'anic instructions regarding work, then, as Muslims, we'll not be in our present state. But go to any Muslim country and you will not find anyone doing his job as it is supposed to be done. When I was in Egypt – and you know I am always rushed to finish the work that is assigned to me – my friends, in the office where I worked, would advise me: “The more you work, the more mistakes you make, and the more you will be punished. The less you work, the fewer the mistakes you make, and the more you will be promoted.” And so, based on this “principle”, no one does his job, while the Qur'an pushes us to work, pushes us to mind our time and to utilize it wisely. Although God harnessed the earth for our service, we still have to work to obtain our livelihood from the bounties of God. So the Qur'anic verse [67:15] says, walk over the earth – in its mountains and in its valleys – and seek your living; seek the bounties which God provides you, because, at the end, you will be resurrected and you will be questioned, and you will be accountable for everything you did.

The next three verses are, again, *Ayāt ul-Wa'eed*: using scare tactics. [Imam quotes:] “Can you ever feel secure that He who is in the sky will not cause the earth to swallow you up when, lo and behold, it begins to quake? Or can you ever feel secure that He who is in the sky will not let loose against you a deadly tornado, whereupon you would come to know how true My warning was?” [67:16-17]

It is a question. When you analyze this verse linguistically, you wonder why Allah says “The One who is in the sky”? Is God in the sky? *He's everywhere*: He is in the sky, He is on earth, and He's everywhere, because a Qur'anic verse says, “He is with you wherever you are.” So, the phrase “The One who is in the sky” could have many interpretations. It means, the One who is above you, not in the physical sense, but metaphorically, meaning the One who created you and has total power over you. People generally understand, when they read a Qur'anic verse like that, that we are on earth and God is in the sky. No. God is not in the sky, God is everywhere!

“Where is God?” This question, which even little children ask many times, was once asked of a scholar in the past. And the answer was, “He is everywhere.”

The questioner said: “Then how come I cannot see Him or catch Him?”

The scholar gave a very nice little example to make the answer

³⁴ 62:9-10

³⁵ Praise be to God

³⁶ 50:38

³⁷ 32:5

³⁸ 70:4

very easily understood. He asked the questioner:

“What do we normally get out of milk?”

The questioner replied: “Butter.”

The scholar got a glass of milk and said to the questioner:

“Look into this milk. Do you see the butter in the milk?”

“No.”

Then the scholar said: “God is everywhere in the universe, like the butter in the milk; you cannot see Him, but He is there.”

How does the earth open up and swallow people? You have seen but one example of that in California – the earthquake in California. *Hāseban*, a word used in verse 17, is a kind of windstorm which, sometimes, carries stones and sand, moving them from one place to another – like a sandstorm in the desert. The verse says, does man feel safe or secure that the One who is in the sky will not send against him a *hāseban*? Reminds one of Hurricane Andrew of last year,³⁹ and the destruction it wrought. Sometimes, Muslims take it easy while saying at the same time that this is “*ghadab*” – “a manifestation of the wrath of God”. If you saw the news in the morning, you would have seen the destruction from a single tornado which struck Oklahoma today. And we don’t know why this happened in Oklahoma. Of course it was God’s will. As far as I am concerned it should happen in Washington, D.C. because all the homosexuals are there. These days, newscasters on TV point out that there are hundreds of thousands of them concentrated there. What we have seen in Oklahoma today is exactly what happened to the people of Lūt and to the people of ‘Ād as described in the Qur’an. *Yā’ni*, the people of ‘Ād not only refused to believe in the prophet of God when he came to them, but when he told them “God is the most Powerful”, they said, “*More than us?*” The Qur’an narrated that story [Imam quotes Arabic. The translation is:]

“Now as for the tribe of ‘Ād, they walked arrogantly on earth offending against all right, and saying, ‘Who could have a power greater than ours?’ Why – were they, then not aware that God, who created them, had a power greater than theirs? They went on rejecting our messages; and thereupon we have sent to them a severe wind (*sarsaran*: means it makes a noise and is accompanied by a darkness during the day), so as to give them, in the life of this world, a foretaste of suffering through humiliation: but their suffering in the life to come will be far more humiliating, and they will have none to succor them” [41:15].

³⁹ This hurricane devastated south Florida in August 1992

I am telling you that science will show us one day that the sun is orbiting also.⁴⁰ Don’t take the verdicts of the science of today as gospel, because, previously, science did not know all these facts which the Qur’an talks about. Today they say that the sun is static but there is a Qur’anic verse which is very general, “No one will interfere in the orbit of the other,”⁴¹ suggesting that every heavenly body has an orbit. Therefore, if we have not discovered it today, there is a chance that we will discover it another day, or, maybe in ten years from now. An example is that of the atom: the atom was at first considered by scientists to be indivisible. And this was the theory of Abu Gadru as I remember it from my high school days. Eventually, we found that the atom actually consists of electrons and protons. Before, if you were to talk about electrons and protons, scientists would have said that it was not correct. Some young fellow⁴² who heard me saying, one day, that the sun has an orbit said, no, the sun is stationary and the other planets are moving, because he had read this in his science book. But if we take the Qur’anic verses as fact, then, we can say that human beings simply haven’t yet discovered that the sun, too, is orbiting, because the Qur’an is applicable for all times and all places. Our knowledge is advancing as time goes by and what we know today, our predecessors did not know, and when you read some tafseers that were written four or five hundred years ago for the interpretation of some of the scientific verses, it will make you laugh!

All the planets are going farther and farther apart from one another. That is another fact stated in the Qur’an, also subscribed to by science today.

The next verse [67:19] deals with a very nice fact – something we see in front of us daily: [Imam quotes:] “Have they, then, never beheld the birds above them, spreading their wings and drawing them in? None but the Most Gracious upholds them: for, verily, He keeps all things in His sight.”

This invites one to think about the birds which are airborne. From the flight of birds, man got the idea of the airplane. And the first man who tried to imitate the birds in flight was an Arab: his name was ‘Abbas ibn Mirdas. He made wings for himself and tried to fly, but fell. In this way, if we take the Qur’an as a base for research, we may make

⁴⁰ This statement made by Imam in the year 1992

⁴¹ 36:40

⁴² Amin Ahmad was an 11-year-old, 5th grade student in the audience. He happens to be my nephew.

inventions and arrive at new ideas which can benefit man in his life. This verse is attracting our attention to a fact which we see in front of us every day, but we don't pay much attention to it. How do these birds fly? "They spread and fold their wings", and when you look at the airplane as it takes off and lands, it, also, has a kind of spreading of wings and folding in of wings in imitation of the birds.

The Qurayshites and those who rejected the faith of the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to say that their gods will save them from all these calamities. So the Qur'anic verses were revealed posing two questions to them: [Imam quotes:]

"Is there any, besides the Most Gracious, that could be a shield for you, and could save you from danger? Or is there any that could provide you with sustenance if He should withhold his provisions from you? Is the one who is stumbling on his face more guided than the one who is walking upright on the Straight Way (صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ)?" [67:20-22].

The "Straight Way" is the English translation of the term "*Serāt-ul-Mustaqīm*." In the olden times, we used to hear our elders referring to the term *Serāt-ul-Mustaqīm* as a thread between Heaven and Hell, and saying that, on the Day of Judgment, everyone will have to walk on that thread. If he was a good person he will fall on the right, if he was a sinner he will fall on the left. Some tafseers describe it as being "as fine as a hair, and as sharp as the edge of a sword" and you have to walk on it on the Day of Judgment.

As a matter of fact, every time we offer our prayer, we recite Sura Al-Fātihah, and we supplicate God to "Show us the Straight Way, that Straight Way which is accepted by God." It means The Way which, in practice, is the pursuit of the rules made by Allah to guide His creations. If you remember I said

that when God creates something, He creates for it rules to follow, so that it can reach its ultimate destiny and potential. For the sun, God created the rule that it should rise every day in the east and set in the west. For human beings also, God created rules which we are supposed to follow, to achieve our ultimate goal which is to go back to God, pleased and satisfied. The question was posed to the pagan Arabs: is the one who is wandering aimlessly and stumbling upon his face more guided, or the one who is going on the Straight Way? It means that, if you follow the Straight Way, then, you are following the rules and laws which God has revealed and they are the best guidance, rather, *the only guidance* which will navigate you through the sea of life and land you safely on the shores of the other world. If you do not follow these rules and laws, then you stumble here and there, wandering aimlessly, lost, at the mercy of the waves, as if sailing on the ocean without a compass, and, in the end, the waves take you to a place where you will not want to be.

Then, by way of reminding the people of God and to increase their awareness of Him, the next verse says, He is the one who created you and supplied you with the faculties of hearing, seeing, and comprehending. God mentioned those three one after the other in that sequence. This requires our medical doctors to think, and share with us, why God put them in that sequence. Why is hearing mentioned before seeing, and why are those two mentioned before comprehending? The faculty of comprehending encompasses the faculty of feeling as well as of rational thinking. Where is the faculty of comprehending exercised in the body? Even until the present time this is a very thorny topic among the ulama: how do we think? Is the faculty of thinking in the heart or in the head?

Sura Al-Mulk

Imam A. M. Khattab

[Part 6 of 6]

Conclusion

We have now dealt with Chapter Tabāarak which is recited frequently on occasions of death and in the cemetery. Today, I am going to talk about funerals and dealing with the deceased because we make a variety of mistakes in these situations. This talk is meant to be both educational and instructional. Many people from different countries have different ideas, traditions, and hearsay which they believe should be said or done at the time of death, and we accept these traditions as if they were a part of our religion, when, in fact, they are not. Also, on occasions of death, personally, I find it very hard to correct people in the time of their sadness, and to tell them this is not right - don't do this, or, do that, etc. This will be a lesson for all of us, so I am going to say this in Arabic, and then in English, so no one will have an excuse. . . .

This is a question I was asked just this week: "Is it true that we have to make wudū for the deceased seven times? And should the person who is to wash the body of the deceased perform wudū before beginning to wash the body? And, after washing the body, does the person's wudū become void, necessitating a new wudū?" All this has nothing to do with

Islam. These are traditions; these are the fatwas of the people of the street, and all this has *nothing* to do with Islam. What is required for the washing of the deceased is to ensure that water reaches every part of the body. A shower will accomplish this and serve as a wudū at the same time. Even for the living people, if you have a shower before you come to the mosque that is wudū plus; you don't need to make wudū separately. Regarding the person who is washing the body of a deceased, it is not necessary for that person to have wudū before beginning to wash. And the person doesn't need another wudu afterwards, if he or she was in wudū before washing. Washing the deceased is not one of the causes which will void a wudū.

If you are sitting beside some one who is dying, then your role is to say *Ashhado Allah ilāha illal-lāho wa ashhado unna Muhammad-ur rasool-ul Allah*.⁴³ If the sick or dying person can pronounce it, ask her or him to do so. But, if they cannot, then, you do it on their behalf. Just whisper it into their ear. After that, tie a handkerchief around the face from the head to

⁴³ I bear witness that there is no god but one God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His messenger

the chin to keep the mouth closed. Also close the eyes. That is required of you when you are beside a dying person.

Many people recommend reciting Qur'an over the dying person. This is not required. That is a very, very wrong thing to do, to ask someone to recite the Qur'an while the person is dying. There is no such thing in Islam. Even after death, when you read the Qur'an, it is not to be read on the person *per se*, but done with the understanding that, when you read the Qur'an, you are gaining *thawab*⁴⁴ for that recitation because it is a sort of worship. So, after you read the Qur'an, you grant the *thawab* of that recitation to the soul of the deceased; it will be a grant from you to him or her. This falls under the hadith which says that when the son of Adam dies, his actions and deeds from which he can benefit come to an end, except in three cases:

1. Any knowledge that he left behind from which the living can benefit. For example, if he wrote books, or taught Qur'an.
2. A charity that is continuous – *sadaqa jariyah* – like building mosques, building hospitals, etc. where the living continue to benefit after the person's death.
3. A righteous offspring who prays for him or her. That is the type of prayer which our recitation of Qur'an falls under, i.e. we grant the *thawab* of our recitation to the soul of the deceased.

Now let us talk about the coffin. The coffin can be understood in two ways. Here, in America, in English terminology and traditions, coffin is understood to be the whole casket. In Islamic tradition, the coffin is understood to be "the clothes of the deceased". A coffin in Islamic Law is comprised of three pieces of material, preferably white, but it is not a must. One piece is used to wrap the upper half of the body and is called *qamees*; one piece to wrap the lower half of the body is called the *izaar* which means "a skirt". The third piece is called *lifaffa* which wraps the body from head to toe, and you tie it above the head and below the feet. There are some Islamic schools of thought which add a fourth piece of cloth to be tied around the chest of a deceased woman, like a bra which she used to wear during her life. It is not necessary, but I am letting you know so that if you read about it in a book, you will know why it is there.

If you go back to our history, here in Toledo – let us

not talk about the others, let us talk about ourselves – we have come a very long way when it comes to funeral rites. I have seen the dead being wrapped, not in a coffin, but in a three-piece suit – and a brand new one at that. I have known others who were buried in their graves with their glasses on, while still others with their gold rings on their fingers. I was asked a question by telephone, from Arizona, by a Muslim man who told me about his young 18-year-old girl who died in a car accident. He said she was "in love with her tape recorder", and he asked if it could be put in the casket with her? Imagine! Abdul Halim Hafiz⁴⁵ will be singing even in the grave!

The thing which used to kill me in the past was the practice of keeping the body in the funeral home for three and four days. The casket was kept open and visitors would come every night to pay the so-called last farewell. They never saw him while he was alive, but are paying him the last farewell now! And if the deceased was a woman, the funeral home prepared her very well, putting on makeup so she looked more beautiful than when she was living. Then, the men would line up and look into her face and say, "Isn't she beautiful?" When I asked the people to stop this practice, some people were mad at me, but I reasoned with them and said, listen, show me one woman who is alive and sleeping, and to whose bedroom I can go while she is sleeping, and I can look at her face, and say, "Isn't she beautiful." Tell me if *any* woman who is alive will accept this. But, because she is helpless now, and cannot fend off the onlookers, the people come one by one looking into her face. But, anyway, this is history now; we have forgotten all about it. We bury the body now, sometimes within 12 hours, and this has become a tradition for us now. However, there are still some people in our community, even now. . . . One person told me, "Please Imam, if I die while you are here, just keep me in the funeral home, or even in the mosque, for two, three days." I said to her: just die and I'll bury you the same day!

When I first came here, I found some people going to the funeral home specifically to select a casket. The businessman in the funeral home would show them several caskets and say: "You know, I knew your father since 50 years. God showered His mercy on him. I'm sure you will buy him the best. This casket is \$15,000.00. This casket is \$10,000.00." I have personally seen a funeral cost \$15,000.00.

⁴⁴ Reward

⁴⁵ A very famous Egyptian singer

These days⁴⁶ our caskets cost \$600.00 and the rich and the poor all use the same one. So, nowadays, we have standardized our procedure. But, if I could find one worth \$100.00, I'll not hesitate to utilize it.

Many people think, mistakenly, that a funeral here is the same as what they remember from back home, because, back home, as you know, if my father died, the whole village would pitch in: someone would be digging the grave; someone would wash the body, and, in the end, my only expense would be buying the coffin for about \$10.00. That's it. Ten dollars will be the cost of the funeral. But here, no. The cost of a funeral now,⁴⁷ if you have a space in the cemetery already, will be between \$2500-\$2800 dollars. These are the actual costs of a funeral. If you don't have a space in the cemetery, add \$500 for that. If you buy a plot for your grave, today, directly from a cemetery, it will cost you \$1250.00. The Islamic Center charges its members \$500.00. The digging and the closing of the grave is \$635.00. If you want a tent over it and you want chairs placed under the tent for the immediate family, add \$60.00 to that. So the cemetery charge alone is \$700.00 to open and close the grave. Then the funeral home charges for its services, transportation, death certificate, concrete vault, and casket; these add up to \$2100.00. And what does the mosque charge? Nothing. *Nothing!* These are the facts and figures.

Recently, someone's baby died. The family wanted to sue the mosque because the mosque did not pay the cost of the funeral. That happened recently. When are we going to understand that the mosque is not working for free? These expenses are paid directly to the cemetery and the funeral home. These expenses have been minimized since opening of the mortuary downstairs,⁴⁸ because for every day that a body is lying in a funeral home, a storage charge is incurred. Now the body of the deceased doesn't go to the funeral home, but comes directly from the hospital to our mortuary.

There is another tradition prevalent in some Muslim countries of which we should be aware. In some of our countries, the people consider even death a matter of pride and an occasion to show off: when my father dies, I am supposed to get a camel or a cow, and slaughter it under his casket while it is being carried to the cemetery. And who ends

up eating that meat? The very rich people: the mayor of the city and the congress people of the Arab countries – if they have a congress – but the poor will never get anything. Why do we do this? So the people will say, "O, look what all he has done for his father." This is completely against Islam. The true Islamic practice in this respect is that the people who are relatives, friends, and neighbors of the deceased prepare food in their houses and take it to the family of the deceased to feed them. This is because they are in mourning and are not expected to cook. That is the true Islam. The idea of "mercy food" which we do here, sometimes in the mosque, and sometimes in Beirut Restaurant, is completely un-Islamic. We should be aware of these things and know what Islam is and what it is not.

With regard to the funeral of a new born child: a child that dies while it is in the womb of its mother, or, if the child comes out of the womb of the mother but does not cry or make any sound, meaning it is still-born, then the child's body doesn't need to be washed, nor does prayer need to be said. It is treated exactly as a miscarriage. In some of our countries, people dig a little grave behind the house and bury the child; they don't even take it to the cemetery. And in some of our countries, the hospitals have an area for such babies where they can be buried. But if the child comes into this world crying and breathing, then, it is like a human being that died and the janaza prayer must be performed. But the newborn child is like a blank page, considered sinless, so we don't pray for it as we would for a normal deceased. Instead, we pray: "Allah, make him or her as a reward for us; make him or her a mercy and *rahma* for us."

When an adult person dies, the whole janaza procedure is followed. The janaza prayer consists only of *takbeer* – there is no *ruku'a* and no *sujūd*. The imam will stand up in front of the casket very close to the chest of the deceased, if it is a man, or in the middle, if it is a woman, and vow four *takbeers*. After the first *takbeer*, *Sūra Al-Fātihah*⁴⁹ is recited; after the second *takbeer*, *Allahumma sally and Allahumma barak*⁵⁰ is recited as is done in the formal prayer while sitting down; after the third *takbeer*, *du'a* for the deceased is offered. The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to say: [Imam recites the *du'a* in Arabic. The English translation is:] "O Allah forgive him and have mercy upon him. Purify him from all sins. O

⁴⁶ 1993

⁴⁷ 1993

⁴⁸ In the Islamic Center

⁴⁹ Chapter #1

⁵⁰ As-Salah Al-Ibrahimiyyah

Allah, forgive him and honor his new dwelling – his grave – enlarge its entrance and make it spacious and full of light. Merciful and Gracious God wash him with snow and purify him from sins just as a white dress is washed and purified from impurities. Allah, give him a home better than the one he had in this world and give him family better than the one he had in this world. And, Allah, Most Merciful and Gracious, protect

him from the punishment of the grave and the punishment of hell fire.” This is followed by the fourth *takbeer* after which the prayer is ended by saying *Assalām-u-Alaykum wa Rahmatullah* to the right and then to the left.

Since this sermon was dedicated to the ladies – Jihad Awada – let us recite *Sura Ikhlas*⁵¹ seven times and finalize this topic.

⁵¹ Chapter 112 in the Qur'an