

**"Surely (the ones) who have disbelieved and die (while) they are steadfast disbelievers, upon those is the curse of Allah and the Angels and mankind all together. ", "Eternally (abiding) therein, the torment will not be lightened for them, and they will not be respited." (TMQ, 2:161-162)**

Those who insist on being disobedient without repenting, their recompense will be that the curse of Allah<sup>1</sup>, the angels and mankind at large will be upon them. Regarding the chastisement of the disbelievers, Allah, The Truth, mentions that it is a torment, for eternity, furthermore, the inmates of fire will be immortal. Allah (SWT)<sup>2</sup> mentioned eternity 'forever' in hell, in h<sup>3</sup> al-Jinn. He said what can be translated as, **"Excepting a proclamation from Allah and His Messages. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, then surely for him is the Fire of Hell. They are eternally (abiding) therein forever "**(TMQ, 72:23).

In the *ayah* we're tackling, Allah did not mention the word "forever" when he told us about the torment in hell. This is an indication that His mercy supersedes His wrath even when He prescribed chastisement. There is a paradoxical issue here arising from the shallow understanding of the *ayahs*. The Lord said what can be translated as, **"The Day it comes up, no self will speak except by His permission. So (some) of them are wretched, and (some) happy.**

**So, as for the ones who are wretched, then they will be in the Fire; therein there will be for them groaning and sighing.**

**Eternally therein (abiding) so long as the heavens and the earth (endure), except whatever your Lord decides; surely your Lord is The Sublime Performer of whatever He wills.**

**And as for the ones who are made happy, then they will be in the Garden, eternally therein (abiding), so long as the heavens and the earth (endure), except whatever your Lord decides: a gift uninterrupted."** (TMQ,11:105-108). In the *ayahs* above Allah (SWT) tackles the Day of Judgement and the happy and wretched of people. The wretched will be admitted in hell where they will exhale and inhale. One cannot imagine the nature of respiration in hell-fire, indeed it is a horrendous torment. The inmates of hell will abide in hell eternally as long as the heavens and earth exist.

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1 The word Allah is the Arabic term for God. Although the use of the word "Allah" is most often associated with Islam, it is not used exclusively by Muslims; Arab Christians and Arabic-speaking Jews also use it to refer to the One God. The Arabic word expresses the unique characteristics of the One God more precisely than the English term. Whereas the word "Allah" has no plural form in Arabic, the English form does. Allah is the God worshipped by all Prophets, from Adam to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.

2 SWT = *Suahanahu wa Ta'ala* [Glorified and Exalted Be He].

3 A chapter; the Qur'an is comprised of 114 surahs.

The superficial find that this *ayah* is contradictory as it says that both the wretched *and* the happy will be recompensed "**so long as the heavens and the earth (endure), except whatever your Lord decides: a gift uninterrupted**". We respond to them saying that the heavens and earth of the hereafter will be different from those in this world. In this world heavens and earth are means of livelihood, whereas in the hereafter we do not earn our livelihood through our endeavour and cause and effect but through the favours of the Causer. Allah will replace the heavens and earth in the Day of Judgement, "**Upon the Day the earth will be exchanged to other than the earth and the heavens (will be exchanged); and they will go forth to Allah, The One, The Superb Vanquisher** (TMQ, 14:48). Hence, what is meant is that the inmates of fire remain there as long as the exchanged heavens and earth exist, namely forever.

Note that Allah, The Truth said, "**except whatever your Lord decides**" regarding the torment of the wretched. We conclude that the wretched are not only the disbelievers but among them will be some of the disobedient believers who will enter hell fire according to their sinful deeds. Thus the exception regarding their stay there starts at the end of the time of their stay. Those believers will remain in hell-fire for a limited time until "**except whatever your Lord decides**". As to the happy who will go to paradise, they will remain there except those who are disobedient. The exception is from the start of the hereafter when the obedient will enter paradise, as the disobedient believers will first be chastised in hell then they will be admitted in paradise. Thus, there is no contradiction concerning the discussed *ayah*<sup>4</sup>.

Pertaining to the expression, "**the torment will not be lightened for them**", it explains that the nature of this torment will not be alleviated. Unlike this world, when a person is frequently exposed to a kind of torment, he might get inured to it. "**and they will not be respited**" the word "respite" means to reprieve or delay the punishment of someone. Or it could mean that they will not be looked at when the term is translated from the Arabic stem '*nadhara*' (look). "**and Allah will not speak to them, nor look upon them on the Day of the Resurrection, nor will He cleanse them; and they will have a painful torment**" (TMQ, 2:77). 'Looking' may connote sympathy. Yet, why did Allah say that they will not be respited? Because one might look at a sinful person then spontaneously give him respite. However, this look does imply sympathy for such a person, Moreover Allah (SWT) will not look at them at all, indicating that they will be totally neglected.

**"And your God is One God;1 there is no god except He, The All-Merciful, The**

## Ever-Merciful. " (TMQ, 2:163)

This is the core issue. The heedlessness of people made some deify others. Allah said, "**One God**" namely, there is no other. There is a difference between '*wahed*' and '*ahad*' in Arabic. '*Wahed*' (One) means that there is no other while '*ahad*' denotes that He is one whole and is not composed of different parts. We should not describe Allah saying that he is '*kolli*' (holistic) as this is the opposite of '*joz'i*' (atomistic). Allah is uniquely One. He is glorified and exalted above all else. He is given the best example.

Let me cite this example to clarify this concept: a chair is a '*koll*' (thing made of different parts): nails, wood, etc. Can we call wood, or nails or any part "a chair"? No. Thus, each part of a chair cannot be named the whole thing, i.e. the chair itself. Rather, the term 'chair' means these parts grouped together. '*Kolli*' or holistic is an attribute of many other things. *Insan* (man) is holistic, a genre, its examples are Mohammad, Zaid, etc. We say that a person named Zaid is *insan*, which is correct, unlike Allah (SWT) he is neither *kolli* because he is One nor is He *koll* (composed of different parts) because he is one whole.

The Qur'an negates deification of any other god stating that there is no god but Allah. There is nothing except that it is either a blessing from Allah or blessed by Him (SWT). Everything is a favour from the Merciful, the Ever-Merciful. Thus a favour cannot be described as god. Neither should a blessed be called a god as it is granted its blessings by another. A blessing is either a grant or is granted, so it cannot be a god. Yet, those who are tried are infatuated with the causes whilst Allah (SWT) is the Causer of all causes.

Following the above fact Allah (SWT) invites us to regard and reflect on the universe and the blessings available. O you who have been blessed with these blessings, if you find anyone claiming that those blessings are his, then ascribe them to him. You should rather attribute the blessings to He Who created them. Allah says in the Hadith Qudsy <sup>5</sup>, Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Messenger (SAWS)<sup>6</sup> said: Allah (SWT) said: *Among all partners, I am the most dispensable with association. So anyone who performs a deed in which he ascribes to Me others; I will abandon him and his act of polytheism.*" <sup>7</sup>

**"Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation (Or:**

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<sup>5</sup> The words of Allah, repeated by Muhammad (SAWS) and recorded on the condition of an isnad (chain of verification by witness(es) who heard prophet Muhammad say the hadith).

<sup>6</sup> *Salla Allah alayhe Wa Salam* [All Prayers and Peace of Allah be upon him]

<sup>7</sup> This Hadith is sound and related by Muslim

**differences) of the night and the day-time, and the ships that run in the sea with whatever profits mankind, and whatever water Allah sends down from the heaven - so therewith He gives life to the earth after its death and disseminates therein all kinds of beast - and the (constant) turning about of the winds, and the clouds subjected between the heaven and the earth, (these) are indeed signs for people who consider." (TMQ, 2:164)**

Allah (SWT), the Merciful, has created man blessing him with all that is in the universe which He (SWT) created. No one has ever claimed that he has created the universe. If polytheists claim that there are other deities, we reply to them saying that this wondrous universe represented in the earth, the firmament, the alteration of night and day, the ships that run in the sea, the water that Allah sends down from the heaven, the subjected clouds between the heaven and the earth and all these signs prove that their creator is greater than them.

Allah wants us to deduce that those marvellous signs are proof of Allah's words that can be translated as, "**And your God is One God...**" (TMQ, 2:163). It is unreasonable that someone else besides Allah could have created all this yet keeps silent about it. Besides, no one has ever alleged creating them. Thus, the dominion will remain Allah's. Allah says, "**Indeed the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind; but most of mankind do not know**" (TMQ, 40:57).

People, being created from earth and living on it, are the children of the earth. Their sustenance is from it. Allah (SWT) had created the earth before man was created. In order for man to live, Allah provided him with sustenance from the very source of his creation. The knowledge regarding how the earth and heavens were created can only be from Allah, as it an unseen fact. Allah said, "**In no way did I make them to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, neither the creation of themselves; and in no way would I take to Me the leaders into error (i.e., misleaders) as supporters**" (TMQ, 18:51). Therefore, we must take guard against the misleaders who try to create an illusion of untrue issues pertaining to the beginning of creation. Allah (SWT), through His infinite knowledge, has known that some will claim that the heavens and earth and man were originally created from such and such. Allah has warned us against those misleaders.

Their existence is proof of Allah's truthful words. Some of them claimed that mankind evolved from apes, others said that the earth was part of the sun then split from it. Nevertheless, true knowledge could come even from those rejecters of faith when they analysed man and found that he consists of

16 elements. Then, they analysed the mud, a source of fertility for the plant to grow, and found that it consists of same 16 elements. Allah is truthful for He (SWT) informed us that He created man from mud. Moreover, He has made our sustenance grow out of mud. O man, you should marvel at the creation of the heavens and earth and reflect on what's around you so that you may be guided to your Creator. If anyone tries to deceive you and claim that there is another god, say, "There is no god but Allah, glorified be He".

Allah (SWT) tells us about man, the occupier of this universe. This occupier needs two things: Time and space. Space for man is the land he walks on and the heaven that is his ceiling. Time is a result of the constant succession of night and day, an example to meditate on. Both night and day alternate; night comes after day and vis versa. **"And He is the One Who has made the night and day-time a succession for whomever is willing to constantly remember (Or: for whomever He wills to be mindful; or: whomever He wills) or whomever is willing to give constant thanks."** (TMQ, 25:62).

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The succession of night and day is meant to be so as not to have a continuous day or an unceasing night. In this regard Allah (SWT) says, **"Say, 'Have you seen (that) in case Allah should make the daytime unceasing over you till the Day of the Resurrection, what god other than Allah shall come up to you with (i.e., bring) night to rest in? Will you not then behold?'"** (TMQ, 28:71) Thus, man who constantly move about in this universe, must have a time for rest as much as a time to move about and around. Therefore, time is divided into night, for you to rest, and day, for you to work. Regarding this Allah (SWT) says, **"And He is the One Who has made the night for you (to be) a garment and sleep for repose..."** (TMQ, 25:47)

Allah (SWT) knows that night, time of repose, cannot be so for all. There must be some who take up jobs that makes it incumbent upon them to stay awake through the night. Allah (SWT) addresses those people in the Qur'an, **"And of His signs is your sleeping by night and daytime..."** (TMQ, 30:23) He (SWT) gives a break for those who stay awake all through the night to rest by daytime. Indeed, it is a sign of Allah's greatness that He made night and day a succession. **"And (by) the forenoon, And (by) the night when it (comes) with its dark stillness!"** (TMQ, 93:1-2). Forenoon is the time of seeking sustenance while night is the time of quiet and both are sequent.

**"...and the ships that run in the sea..."**

How can the running of ships in water be a sign? Man realizes that water carries ships and boats because of its liquid nature. Before the power of steam had been discovered, those ships were sailing by the power of wind. Water is either seas or rivers. Rivers always flow down towards the

estuary. Therefore, we can attribute the motion of ships to the water tide . But what if we wanted the ships to sail against the tide? Then wind is needed to help do that. *Reeh* (wind) in Arabic means 'air', and it also means 'strength'. Allah says, "... **and do not contend together, (and) so you would be disheartened and your *reeh* (vigor) goes away...**" (TMQ, 8:46) Hence *reeh* is vigor and power. However, man dispensed with wind after steam power was explored in sailing. The Qur'an explains that using the word *reeh* to denote power in the following *ayah*, "**In case He (so) decides, He quiets the *reeh*, (and) so they linger on motionless on its surface**" (TMQ, 42:33).

*Reeh* could also mean scent. This is evident in the following *ayah* that can be translated as, "**And as soon as the caravan departed, their father said, “Surely I indeed find Yûsuf’s scent, (Or: breath) unless you think me doting”**" (TMQ, 12:94). Ya'qub (AS)<sup>8</sup> (Jacob) father of Yusuf (AS) (Joseph) had a strong smelling sense. When the caravan departed from Egypt he could smell Yusuf's scent. In the country they use the expression, "I will take revenge from such person and remove his scent off the earth!" Scent in this usage means 'trace'. Lately, it was proven that scent is the most lingering trace of a living being. Evidence of this is the police dog, having a strong sense of smell, it can lead the police to the criminal through tracing his scent. The Truth (SWT) bestowed us with the intellect. Nevertheless He granted some of us and some of His creatures gifts that most of us do not possess. Thus, the dog, an animal that cannot talk, can infer facts we cannot reach. This is because this has to do with the concrete matters, whereas man has some knowledge of both the concrete and the abstract.

**" ...and whatever water Allah sends down from the heaven - so therewith He gives life to the earth after its death..."**

In this *ayah* Allah (SWT) mentions water coming down from heaven. This does not mean that water originates from heavens rather its main source is from the earth. Yet, water on earth is salty and pungent, it is mainly a storage. Allah (SWT) created in it chemicals to maintain its properties and prevent it from going putrid. Moreover, the water surface is expansive to allow the process of vaporization to take place. This is the divine distillation process. Sending down rain from the heaven is preceded by several stages. These stages are vaporization, condensation, formation of the clouds, etc. This process has been discovered recently, and we tried to mimic it by vaporizing the salty water and condense it to produce rain. It proved very costly. One glass of distilled water takes time and requires strenuous efforts and huge expenses, while the divine 'lab' produces abundant copious water.

Water cycle begins with the vaporization of water, then it ascends to cold areas then fresh water falls down. Allah with His mercy made the level of fresh water higher than that of the salty. As a result, water flows from the rivers to the sea. If it were the reverse, the salty water would overcome the fresh water and spoil it. Then it will not be fit for drinking. Water revives the earth after its death. What is the 'death' of the earth? Death is motionlessness. Such is the case of earth when it is dry. Our senses cannot perceive the motion of the earth during the growing of plants. Nevertheless, Allah asserts this fact in the *ayah* that can be translated as, "**And you see the earth torpid; then when We send down water upon it, it shakes and swells...**" (TMQ, 22 :5 ) When rain falls, the surface of the earth swells and rises. Then what takes place is the following, "... **and grows of every (growth) a delightful pair**" (TMQ, 22:5). This is the same meaning in "**so therewith He gives life to the earth after its death...**" Then the *ayah* mentions "...**and disseminates therein all kinds of beast...**" that is disseminating on earth all kinds of creatures that walk on the earth.

### "...turning about of the wind..."

This means the changing of the direction of the wind to different areas: south , north, east, west. This change does not make the air blow continuously in one direction. The change of temperature makes the weather temporal. This is due to the fact that air blows from a hot area to a cold area and vis versa. This change of wind direction is a blessing from Allah (SWT). If the wind were constantly from one direction it would be very exhausting for people.

In Arabic there are different names of wind. Generally, if it comes in the plural form '*ryah*' then it has a good connotation. Whereas, the single form '*reeh*' denotes that it is fruitless and harmful like in the *ayah* which says. "***reeh* most clamorous (and) furious (Literally: rebellious)**" (TMQ, 69:6)

Nevertheless, this rule is broken in one *ayah*: "**and the ships run with them with a good *reeh***" (TMQ, 10:22) This is due to the fact that if the wind ('*ryah*' in the plural form) blew on a ship from different directions it would be catastrophic for it, that is why Allah called it a 'good' *reeh*, in the single form. Then Allah (SWT) says , "...**and they exult with it, there comes to them (i.e., the ships) a tempestuous *reeh*...**" Allah (SWT) draws our attention to His Ability, so that no one might reckon that He has created the universe, with the rules that govern it, yet forsook the people. He is definitely the The Superb Upright Sustainer of the heavens and earth.

### "...and the clouds subjected between the heaven and the earth..."

Allah (SWT) subjects the clouds to rain in a specific area. He (SWT) drives it wherever He wishes. You might benefit from rain that falls in a place far from you. Take Egypt for example, it benefits from the Nile water although the rain is sent down in the south of Sudan and Abyssinia plateaux. If we in Egypt confined ourselves to water that comes from rain in Egypt, we would have died out of

thirst! The above fact is asserted in Allah's saying, "**...till when they carry heavy clouds, We drive it (i.e., the clouds) to a dead land; then We therewith send down water...**"(TMQ, 7:57) Clouds have no will as they go submissively to a defined destination.

Allah concludes saying, "... **signs for people who consider**) this is meant to alert the intellect in man. When Allah (SWT) does that, know for a surety that what He tells you is an issue that your mind can deduce if you only think. Otherwise, He would not have mentioned the thinking or consideration aspect. The glorious Qur'an always cites words like, 'people who think', 'people of understanding', 'people who consider', 'people who reflect', 'people who remember'. All the preceding terms mean that if people do the above, they would certainly come to the truth which Allah wishes them to realize. Allah (SWT) draws the attention of the Muslim to work his mind and intellect and reflect on matters deeply for He (SWT) knows that once man does this, he will eventually come to the right conclusion.