

يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦﴾

He is the One who has made the sun a glow and the moon a light, and determined for it stages, so that you may know the number of the years, and the calculation (of time). Allah has not created all this but for something right. He elaborates the signs for a people who understand. [5]

Surely, in the alternation of night and day and in what Allah has created in the heavens and the earth, there are signs for a people who are God-fearing. [6]

Commentary

These two verses mention some signs openly visible in the universe of our experience. They are evidences of the perfect power and eloquent wisdom of the most exalted Allah. They prove that the Lord Almighty is fully capable of bringing about the end of this universe, reducing it to particles, then reassembling the particles and bringing everything back to life, all anew, making everyone account for one's deeds and get punishment or reward as enforced. And when He does that, it will be nothing but reasonable and wise. Thus, these two verses are an extension of what was said briefly in verse 3. Mentioned there was the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, the positioning on the Throne and the management of matters. The later proved that He did not, after having created the universe, abandon it to survive on its own, instead, He manages, directs and controls everything, all the time, every moment.

The opening statement of verse 5: **هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسُ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا** (He is the One who has made the sun a glow and the moon a light) is a part of this very system and its management. Both words: ضياءَ (*diyā'*) and نور (*nūr*) mean glow and light, therefore, many master lexicographers have taken these as synonyms. 'Allamah al-Zamakhshari, al-Ṭibī, beside some others, said: Though the sense of light is common to both words, but *nūr* is general. Whether strong or weak, dim or clear, every light is referred to as *nūr*, while ضوءٌ و ضياءٌ (*daw'* and *diyā'*) refer to light that is strong and clear. One needs both kinds of light. For the usual business of life, the sharp and clear light of the day is required, while the comparatively dim light of the night is preferred for ordinary chores. If the day had nothing but the pale light of the moon, business will be affect-

ed adversely, and if the sun were to keep shining also during the night, sleep and chores that must be taken care of at that time alone would be disturbed. Therefore, nature made arrangements to provide both kinds of light by giving sunlight the degree of *ḍaw'* and *ḍiyā'* and let it manifest itself at the time when people are busy in business, vocation or other avenues of livelihood. And the moonlight was made to be gentle, pale and pleasing and the night was appointed to be the time of its manifestation.

The Holy Qur'ān has differentiated the lights of the sun and the moon variously at several places. In Sūrah Nūḥ, it was said: **وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِنَّ نُورًا** (And made the moon therein and made the sun, a lamp – 71:16). Again, in Sūrah al-Furqān, it was said: **وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَقَمَرًا مُنِيرًا** (and placed in it [the sky] a lamp, and a shining moon – 25:61). '*Sirāj*' means lamp and since the light from a lamp is its own and not borrowed from somewhere else, therefore, some commentators have said that *ḍiyā'* (ضياء) is the intrinsic light of something while نور (*nūr*) is extrinsic light derived from something else. This semantic approach appears to be influenced by Greek thought, otherwise it has no lexical basis and the Qur'ān too has not given any categorical verdict about it.

Zajjāj takes *ḍiyā'* to be the plural of *ḍaw'*. Perhaps, this may be indicative of the Sun being a compendium of the seven colours of light which show up in the post-rain rainbow. (Al-Manār)

Another manifestation of Divine power related to the system of the sun and the moon appears in the second sentence of verse 5: **وَقَدَرْنَا مَنَازِلَ لِنَتَعَلَّمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ** 'and determined for it stages, so that you may know the number of years and the calculation (of time).' The word قدر (*qaddara*) is a derivation from تقدير (*taqdīr*) which means to maintain something at the level of a particular quantity and measure in terms of time or place or attributes. To keep the timings of the night and the day at a particular measure, the Holy Qur'ān has said: **وَاللَّهُ يَقْدِرُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ** (And Allah determines [the measure of] the night and the day – 73:20). That spatial and travel distances have been kept at a particular measure finds mention elsewhere. In Sūrah Sabā, it was said about the habitations lying in between Syria and Sabā: **وَقَدَرْنَا فِيهَا السَّيْرَ** (and We determined between them the [distance of] journey – 34:18). And about quantitative measures in general, it was said: **وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا** (and created everything then determined a measure for it, determining pre-

cisely – Sūrah al-Furqān, 25:2).

The word: منازل (*manāzil*) in the verse under study is the plural form of منزل (*manzil*) which essentially means the place one arrives at on a journey, its stage or destination. Allah Ta'ālā has appointed specific limits for the movement of the Sun and the Moon, each of which is called *manzil* or stage. Since the Moon completes its orbit of the Earth every month, the count of its stages comes to thirty or twenty-nine. However, since the Moon is not visible at least for a day, therefore, its stages are usually known as twenty-eight. The orbit of the Sun is complete in a year and it has 360 or 365 stages. During the Arab Jāhiliyah, and by astronomers and mathematicians as well, particular names were given to these stages as borrowed from stars located in their proximity. Being above such technical nomenclatures, the Holy Qur'ān has simply referred to the distances the Sun and the Moon cover in specified number of days.

In the verse under discussion, the words: قَدَّرَهُ مَنَازِلٌ (and determined for it stages) have been used with a pronoun in the singular form – although, being referred to here are the stages of both the Sun and the Moon. Therefore, some commentators say that, no doubt, what has been mentioned here is in the singular form, but in terms of the reference to each single one, it includes both. Examples of this usage abound in the Qur'ān, and Arabic idiom.

Some other commentators have said, 'though, Allah Ta'ālā has determined stages for the Sun and the Moon both but, at this place, the purpose is to describe the stages of the Moon only. Therefore, the pronoun in قَدَّرَهُ (*qaddarahu*: determined for it) refers back to the Moon. The reason for this specification is that one cannot find out the stages of the Sun without the help of relevant instruments and calculations. Sunrise and sunset follow the same pattern every day throughout the year. A simple observation cannot tell anybody in what stage the Sun is on a given day. This is contrary to the case of the Moon. Its states are different every day. By the end of the month, it is just not visible. By observing such changes, even uneducated people can figure out the dates. For example, let us say the date today is March 8. Now, by just looking at the Sun, nobody can tell whether it is the 8th or the 21st. The case of the Moon is different. One can find out the date even by looking at it.

In the cited verse, the purpose is to tell people that man's own interest is also tied to these great signs of Allah Ta'ālā since the count of years, months and its dates can be kept through them. No doubt, this calculation can be made from the Sun and the Moon both. Years and months, both Solar and Lunar, are universally known. Then, the Qur'an has also mentioned in Sūrah al-'Isrā' (Bani Isrā'il):

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَاتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً
لِتَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْحِسَابَ .

And We made the night and the day two signs. Then made the sign of the night disappear, and put the sign of the day with the light to see, so that you may seek bounty from your Lord, and that you may come to know the number of years, and the count (of time) – (17:12).

Here, 'the sign of the night' means the Moon and 'the sign of the day,' the Sun. It is only after having mentioned both that it was said that you can find out the number of years and the dates of the months from these. And in Sūrah Al-Raḥmān it was said: *اَلشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ* which tells us that we can calculate the date, the month and the year through the Sun and the Moon both.

But, the calculation of month and date through the Moon is based on observation and experience. On the contrary, when done through the Sun, the calculations are so complex that no one other than regular mathematicians would understand them. Therefore, after having mentioned both the Sun and the Moon in this verse, when the Qur'an talks about having determined their stages, it elects to say: *قَدَرًا* (*qaddarahu*: determined for it) using the pronoun in its singular form, whereby mentioned there were the stages of the Moon only.

Since great attention is paid in the injunctions of Islam, practically in all situations, to ensure that abiding by them is easy for everyone – educated or uneducated, urbanized or rustic – therefore, reliance has usually been placed on lunar year, month and dates in its laws. Thus, it is the lunar calendar that operates in all matters of Islamic obligations and duties, such as, Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Zakāh, 'Iddah etc.

This does not mean that using the Solar Calendar is impermissible. In fact, one can choose to use the Lunar Calendar in the case of Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Zakāh and 'Iddah in accordance with the Shari'ah, but

use the Solar Calendar in commercial and vocational activities. However, this is subject to the condition that the Lunar Calendar must continue to be in use among Muslims on a collective basis, so that the occasions and timings of religious obligations such as Ramaḍān and Ḥajj are in common knowledge at all times. This is to avoid the terrible situation in which Muslims just know no other months but January, February etc. Muslim jurists, may the mercy of Allah be on them, have placed the responsibility of keeping the Lunar Calendar alive and functional on Muslims as *Fard al-Kifāyah* (collective obligation).

And there is no doubt about it that the Calendar used in the Tradition of the blessed prophets and in the Sunnah of the Last among them, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and in the practice of his rightly-guided *Khulafā'* was no other but this very Lunar Calendar. Using it, following in their footsteps, is certainly an effective cause of blessings and rewards for modern day Muslims as well.

In short, the verse points out to the perfect power and wisdom of Allah who created two inexhaustible treasure troves of light so harmoniously synchronized with the rest of the creation. And then, He determined ideal measures of their movement which help us find the time frame we are in, the year, the month, the day and its hours right up to every second. Neither does their movement vary, nor do they go ahead or remain behind, nor do these God-made marvels of what we call machines need any workshop appointments for repairs, nor greasing, nor replacement of worn-out parts. Someone in eternity had asked them to move and be good. This they are doing even today.

For added warning, it was said at the end of the verse (5): مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (Allah has not created all this but for something right. He elaborates the signs for a people who understand). It means that Allah did not create all these things in vain. There is great wisdom behind it, and certainly numerous are the benefits they bring for human beings. These are elaborated signs. They are loud and clear. They are telling the truth to people who are blessed with reason and insight.

Similarly, it was said in the second verse (6) that there are signs in the coming of the night after the day and the day after the night, and in everything Allah has created in the heavens and the earth. These are open proofs (of the Oneness of Allah and the inevitability of the

Hereafter) for those who fear Allah.

That they are proofs of the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) is not difficult to see. He has the power to make things happen. He makes things as no one can. He creates everything without the help of materials, personnel and prototype, and has the mastery to operate them under a system that never breaks or must be replaced.

And they are proofs of the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter) because Allah is a great creator. He created, in His infinite wisdom, objects of such proportion and efficiency for the benefit of human beings. Then, He made them follow a remarkably stable system. Now, it is not possible that He would have created human beings, who are the served ones in this universe, just for nothing, or just to eat and drink, or in some other nonchalant manner without assigning any duties to them. When it stands settled that some restrictions must apply to the served one of this universe, it also becomes necessary that those who observe or do not observe these restrictions should face an accounting of what they have done, sometime, somewhere. Naturally, those who do observe these shall be rewarded and those who do not shall be punished. Then, it is also obvious that things do not work like this in the present world of our experience. Here, reward and punishment do not follow that pattern. It is quite likely that a criminal here may be living better as compared to someone God-fearing, righteous and innocent. Therefore, it is necessary to have a day for the accounting of deeds, rewards and punishments. This is what Qiyāmah (The Last Day) and 'Ākhirah (Hereafter) are.

Verses 7 - 10

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنَّنُوا
بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غٰفِلُونَ ﴿٧﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ مَا لَهُمْ النَّارُ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ فِي جَنَّاتِ
النَّعِيمِ ﴿٩﴾ دَعَاؤُهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ
وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

As for those who do not believe in meeting Us and are-