

*Compiled from traditional
sources by MAWLĀNĀ FIRĀQĪ*

THE FORTY QUESTIONS

*Prophet Muḥammad's ﷺ Response
to the Jews of Medina*



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چهل و چهار سوال
مولانا فراغی

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ḤAJJĀH ĀMINĀH 'ĀDIL.*



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IN LOVE AND RESPECT dedicated to HĀjjah Āminah 'Ādil, known under the name of HĀjjah Anne, our beloved spiritual mother, who provided us the treasures of the following book.

May Allāh ﷻ send His blessings to her soul and may the reader recite on her behalf: *al-fātiḥah*.

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family of HĀjjah Āminah 'Ādil.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Publisher's Note

WE ARE HAPPY to republish the text of *The Forty Questions* and hereby fulfilling the wish of our Shaykh's family, especially Ḥajjah Āminah 'Ādil, who has relayed its treasures by reading from an old Ottoman source, very likely *Kitāb-ı hikayāt-ı qurq su'al*, a book well-known for centuries which still enjoys great popularity in Turkish speaking lands, and which has been repeatedly reproduced in lithographic editions. The language is informal, unpretentious Turkish with occasional elements of Eastern Anatolian dialect.¹

The beautiful and astonishing stories full of wisdom and spirituality are an enrichment of Islamic knowledge. They lead to a profound understanding of the power of Allāh Almighty, His will and compassion which He bestows upon His creation – a wisdom which generations of Muslims are proud of.

The tales, frequently corroborated by qur'anic verses, include various themes beginning with the creation of the world and ending with its destruction on the Last Day. They bring to light martyrs, saints and prophets, legendary peoples and ancient folk. Muslims highly esteem these stories and love them to be told at length, whereas Qur'an and prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*) often only hint at the events related in them.

The stories are embedded in a frame of those forty questions that the elders of the Jewish community of Medina had prepared and passed down through the generations to be asked of the long-awaited and expected Prophet when he came, in order to test his authenticity. The holy Prophet answered all the questions to their satisfaction and herewith won the disbeliever's confidence.

¹ Cf.: MEWLA FURATI: *Das Buch der vierzig Fragen. Eine Sammlung koranischer Geschichten*. Aus dem Türkischen übertragen und mit Erläuterungen versehen von Joachim Hein, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1960, p. VII ff.

Little is known about the author. Even his name is not certain, but he is assumed to have been a mystic and a Sufi by the name of Furati or Firaki. He probably collected the tales of the Forty Questions from oral traditions handed down through the generations by Turkoman nomad tribes.²

In spiritual matters we are required to trust the authority of our Shaykh and those associated with him, Mawlānā Shaykh Nāzīm Efendi and his wife, Ḥajjah Āminah, followers of the true way of Sayyidinā Muḥammad ﷺ, the highly distinguished Naqshbandī order.

We hereby would like to express our gratitude to Hajjah Āminah who by her reading has made this wisdom accessible, and to Radhia Shukrullāh who translated this into beautiful English text, thus making it available to English readers. We are also happy with the tireless support of our English brothers from Glastonbury. – We, as German publishers, are pleased that our first timid steps on the English market are made possible with such a kind assistance.

We wish the book to be useful and valuable for those who want to know and know that they don't know, being aware of the truth of the Prophetic heritage: *fawqa kulli dhī 'ilmīn 'alīmūn* – see the calligraphy on the cover –, that above every owner of some knowledge there is someone who really knows.

Wa min Allāh at-tawfīq.
And from Allāh is all success.

Lympia/Lefke, Cyprus,
Jumādah al-awwal 1434, April 2013,

SALIM SPOHR

² More biographical details about Mawlānā Firāqī see page 142.



INTRODUCTION

The Jews Challenge the Holy Prophet

AT THE TIME our Holy Prophet Muḥammad, Peace and blessings be upon him, began his preaching and inviting everyone into the fold of Islam, the unbelievers became very much perturbed because there were more and more converts to the religion of Islam. The Jews from Yemen and from Medina got together and consulted the most learned man of their times, ‘Abdullāh bin Salām.

“In Mecca Mukarramah,” they said, “a man named Muḥammad has arisen who claims to be a prophet and is calling everyone to his religion, and many people are following him. He has put together his own religious system and says that the authority of the older religions has passed, and that our holy books are now superseded by the revelation of the Qur’ān. Before its revelation, he says, our holy writ was valid, but now it has become obligatory to follow the new teaching contained in that book. Furthermore he says that the life and property of the unbelievers are lawful to the followers of that new religion, he permits them to take us prisoners and enslave our families, confiscate our possessions and turn our temples and places of worship into mosques – what shall we do?”

‘Abdullāh bin Salām said to them: “It is true and written in the Torah that in the last days a prophet will arise and his name will be Muḥammad and he will be the Seal of Prophets; at that time all previous religions will become invalid, even the divinely revealed religions of former times. At the time of his appearance all true believers will necessarily become Muslims. And it is written that his religion will spread from the East to the West, engulfing the whole world.”

Hearing these words, a group of those Jews assembled were convinced and believed, but another group remained stubbornly unbelieving. “It is impossible,” they said, “we will have to arrange for a dispute to take place. Maybe this man is the Muḥammad mentioned in the Torah, maybe he isn’t, how can we know?”

So ‘Abdullāh bin Salām said: “We will put him to a test. In our books, in the Torah and the Gospel, in the traditions handed down from Moses and Jesus there are contained a great many things that only a prophet or an extremely learned person can know. We will compile some of the most difficult questions and ask him to answer them publicly, for we know that he is an unlettered man. He has never read the Torah or the Gospels and only if he is a true prophet will he be able to answer these questions. If he fails the test, we shall force him to give up his preaching and to step down from his claims.”

They all agreed to this plan and for months they busied themselves with finding the most difficult questions for the Prophet ﷺ to answer. At last they had compiled a list of forty questions on difficult subjects, which only an exceptionally gifted person could possibly have answered correctly. Coming into the presence of the Holy Prophet they said:

“O Muḥammad, it is written in all our holy books, that at the end of times a prophet will appear who will be the Seal of Prophets and whose name is Muḥammad. The religion he will institute will remain on earth until the Day of Judgement and no new revelations will come after him. Now you are claiming to be that last prophet and are calling people to follow you, telling them that their former religious beliefs are now invalidated. You are calling upon us Jews to follow your religion, and we do not believe that you are the last prophet. What is your answer?”

When Muḥammad Muṣṭafā ﷺ heard these words, he raised his voice and quoted these verses from the Holy Qur’ān:

“Muḥammad is not the father of any one of your men, but the messenger of God, and the Seal of the Prophets: God has knowledge of everything.” [33:47]

When they heard these verses, some of the Jews believed in him and became Muslims. Others said: “O Muḥammad, we

have found in our books some questions which even the most learned among us cannot answer, now we will put them to you. If you are truly who you claim to be, then you will find it easy to answer these questions; however, if you are incapable of replying, we shall never believe in your calling.”

Before the Holy Prophet answered them, the Angel Gabriel ﷺ (Peace be upon him) came to him and said: “O Muḥammad, don’t worry, the Lord has sent me to tell you that We shall supply you with the answers to all their questions, and they will hear you and become Muslims, following your call to Islam.”

Hearing this message, the Prophet ﷺ became very glad, and performed a prostration of gratitude.

Thereafter he spoke to the Jews: “If I were to answer all of your questions to your satisfaction, will you then believe that I am the Prophet of the Last times and will you accept the faith of Islam as your religion?”

The Jews answered: “Certainly we shall then accept you as the Messenger of Truth and be of your nation. But if you cannot answer these questions, will you agree to desist from your preaching and stop calling people to your false beliefs?”

The Holy Prophet ﷺ also accepted this condition and they formally reached an agreement, being witnessed by two witnesses from either side.

Then the Jews began their questioning. These were their forty questions, and the order in which they asked, as found in the table of contents.

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The Creation of the World

“Inform us of the creation of the worlds, O Muḥammad! In how many days were they created?”

THE HOLY PROPHET answered and spoke: “Our sublime Creator created the worlds in six days. The first day is Sunday and the last day is Friday. On Sunday, He created the heavens. For this reason, if someone is intending to build a house, let him begin with the work on a Sunday and it will be a blessed undertaking. On Monday He created the moon and the stars. On the third day, Tuesday, He fashioned the creatures on the earth, in the air and in the waters and He made the angels in the seven heavens. On Wednesday He apportioned to all creatures of the land, the air and the seas their provisions and distributed their sustenance. And He created the Earth and what grows thereon and He made the waters to flow on it, according to this verse of the Holy Qur’ān:

‘... and He ordained therein its diverse sustenance in four days, equal to those who ask.’ [41:10]

On Thursday He created Paradise and the Huris (paradise maidens) and all forms of heavenly delights. On Friday Adam and Eve were created. And it was on a Friday that all the angels were ordered to bow down to Adam and they prostrated before him. On Saturday the Lord looked at what He had created and He saw that it was perfect and that everything had been made flawlessly and no imperfection remained. And it is stated in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘We created the heavens and the earth, and what between them is, in six days; and no weariness touched Us.’ [50:37]

Now Allah Almighty created this world in six days; He could easily have created it in one day, or even in one hour. But there was wisdom in His creating it in six days: the Almighty Creator is teaching His weak and powerless servants not to do things in a hurry, but to take their time. Even if it seems easy to you, don’t

rush through your work, do everything thoughtfully and slowly. This is what the Lord wishes to signify by His creating the worlds in six days.”

And the Prophet Muḥammad Muṣṭafā ﷺ, the Seal of the prophets further spoke: “Haste is from the devil, unhurriedness is from the Lord. Do not be hasty, you will regret it; be patient and you will find freedom from danger.”

What was the First Thing to be Created?

The Jews asked their second question: “*Tell us what thing was created first of all, O Muḥammad! What was it that the Almighty in His Endless Power created before all else?*”

THE LIGHT OF THE PROPHETS said: “In the beginning Allah Almighty in His Majesty created a jewel of green peridot and no one but He knows its size. Then the Lord trained his gaze onto that jewel and looked on it with a glance of awe. Under the influence of that ray this jewel became liquid and began to undulate; it turned into a sea and began to boil and churn and was moved from its depths. As it boiled it began to evaporate and a steam rose up from it. This vapour continued to rise and below it remained a thickening, coagulated mass. From the layers of vapour the Lord of the worlds created the seven heavens, and from the remaining thickened material He created seven layers which He then made into the seven earths. Now the thickness of each of the layers of the heavens and the earths was a distance of 500 years: as for the spaces separating each of them from the other, only Allah Almighty Himself knows. So the heavens were raised up to a very great height, each one measuring 500 years in thickness, And Allah Almighty revealed this verse:

‘Have not the unbelievers then beheld that the heavens and the earth were a mass all sewn up, and then we unstitched them and of water fashioned every living thing? Will they not believe?’ [21:37]

After creating the heavens and earths the Almighty Lord created an angel and He ordered that angel to lift up all the heavens and the earths. The angel bent forward his neck and with both his arms lifted up the whole of creation, spanning the east and the west. He lifted up his load till he came to rest right beneath the Divine Throne, and thus he will remain until the Day of Judgment. Having lifted his burden, the angel’s feet remained suspended in

mid-air. So the Almighty Creator ordered the angels to bring from the highest paradise a stone of red ruby. This stone was placed beneath the angel's feet so that he found his foothold on it. Now this red ruby remained suspended in the air. So the Lord brought an enormous ox from paradise, which had 4,000 feet. This ox was so huge that its horns reached from the highest of the heavens to right beneath the Divine Throne. It was much, much greater in size even than the angel carrying the heavens and the earths. They placed that red ruby stone between the horns of the ox and it was firmly grounded there. Now, however, there was nothing to support the feet of the ox. Next Allah Almighty fashioned a dome-shaped vessel the breadth of which was a distance of 500 years. They placed this vessel beneath the feet of the ox and the ox stood firm, but now the vessel was left hanging in the air. So from the Perfection of His Almighty Power, Allah created a fish by the name of Lutia. He then ordered the angels to place the vessel on the back of the fish and the angels obeyed. By the Will of Allah Almighty the vessel now stood fast, and only the fish remained in the air. Mention of this fish is made in this verse of the Holy Qur'an:

'Nūn, – By the pen and what they inscribe, thou art not by the blessing of thy Lord, a man possessed.' [68:1-2]

One day Jesus asked his Lord in prayer: 'O my Lord, I have heard that the whole world and the heavens rest on the back of a fish called Lutia, and I wish to behold that fish. Will you not show him to me?'

The Lord answered His prophet Jesus: 'O Jesus, go to the shore of the sea and cease not in watchfulness, then you will see what your Lord has created.' – So Jesus betook himself to the banks of the sea, and when he arrived he heard a sound like a roar. As he looked he saw the head of a fish rise from the waters, and it kept on rising towards the skies. The mighty sound that came from the fish was one of weeping and devout contrition, the fish was praying and reciting praises of the Lord. Thus he rose up from the waters towards the skies, for one whole day, and for the second, and the whole of the third day too, as Jesus stood watching. According to some sources he continued on like this for forty days, according to others for three days, and there was no end to this weeping fish. Finally, after forty days of watching

Jesus was no longer able to hold still and to contain his hunger and he was amazed at this enormous fish, endlessly rising from the sea. He addressed his Lord and said: 'O my Lord and King of the Worlds, what a marvelous creation is this – is this the fish Lutia on whose back rests the entire world and the heavens?'

The Lord answered him: 'O my prophet, you have asked to see the fish that bears the world on its back, but you must know that what you have just seen is only one of the seventy thousand fish that are the daily provision of that greatest fish which bears the weight of the world.'

Upon hearing these words, Jesus lost all control and fainted. When he came round he recited these words of praise: 'Praised be He, the Master, the Omnipotent, the Incomparable, the Vanquisher.' – No one can know the extent of Allah's Might and Power. We believe that what we see and know is already quite a lot, but who can know, who can tell what other things Allah has created – our knowledge encompasses only a very small part of the creation and what we have related here serves only as an example.

To return to our story, when they placed that vessel on the back of the fish Lutia, the fish remained hanging in mid air. So the fish made himself form a ring, in such a way that his tail met his mouth. Now they say that earth is round: the fish, Lutia, doubled himself up and became round as a ring, and all the seven heavens and the seven earths fit into that ring. All remained resting on his back, the seven heavens and the earths, the Divine Throne and the Preserved Tablets, the Pen of Destiny, the sun and the moon – all of creation was enclosed in that ring. After this Allah Almighty created an ocean in which the fish and all he carries are swimming, the fish has found its waters and is at rest in that ocean. But the ocean remained suspended and had no support. So Allah Almighty created the air beneath that ocean and He also created a wind. The ocean rests on the air, and the wind by the Will of the Almighty keeps on blowing and spinning everything around in orbit until the Day of Judgement, and this is the cause of everything in the universe revolving."

THE THIRD QUESTION

The Heavens and the Angels

“Tell us about the heavens and the creatures inhabiting them, O Muḥammad! Of what did the Almighty create the seven layers of heaven and what are their names?”

What are the forms of worship of the angels and how are they named?”

THE MOST ENLIGHTENED of Prophets, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā ﷺ answered them: “The Almighty Creator created the first heaven of misty vapour and its name is Berqiyās . The angels living there are in prostration, and their glorification is: ‘Praise be to the Supreme King and the Divine Sovereign.’ The name of their leader is Ismā’īl. According to another tradition it is Ra’d, meaning in Arabic ‘thunder’. He is a very awesome angel and he is charged with the care of clouds and rain. Without his leave no rain falls in any country: Every single drop is accounted for, and the angel Ra’d sends the rain clouds to every land, according to prescribed measure and divine dispensation.

The second heaven is made of pure silver. It is called Qaydūm. The angels there bow their backs in worship and their glorification is: ‘Praise be to Him to whom belongs all Glory and Might!’ The name of the greatest angel there is Mikā’īl. There is among them one group of angels called Hā’īl (the terrible). They are made half of fire and half of snow, and the fire does not melt the snow, nor does the snow put out their fire. Their song of praise is this: ‘Praise be to Him Who has united snow and fire as He has united the hearts of His servants.’ And if you look at the fire-fly you will see an example of how fire is enclosed and does not burn up its shell, and your faith will be complete.

The third heaven is made of red ruby and its name is Mārūm. The angels there are either performing prostration or bowing low or else they are standing upright in prayer. Their glorification is this: ‘Praised be the All-Holy King, the Lord of the host of angels and the spiritual kingdom.’ The name of their leader is Sheftail.

The fourth heaven is made of red gold. Its name is Aqora. The angels there pray either standing or bowing. These are their praises: “Glory be to the Eternal Living One who dieth not.” The name of their chief is Arkalun.

The fifth heaven is made of white pearl. Its name is Ma’un. This is the glorification of the angels there: Praise be to the All-Holy King, the Lord of the host of angels and the spiritual kingdom.” The name of the greatest angel there is ‘Azrā’īl.

The sixth heaven is made of topaz and its name is Raq’a. The angels there glorify their Lord thus; ‘Praised be the Lord who has created all in existence.’

The seventh heaven is made all of light and is called ‘Arībā. The angels glorify their Lord by saying: ‘Praised be Allah as many times as there are created beings and His words are numerous.’

The name of the leading angel there is Raqā’īl. In the seventh heaven there is a group of angels called Qurabiyyūn (which means: those who are brought near) and their number only Allah Almighty knows. They are of all different shapes and aspects and they never find time to look at one another. They weep constantly from fear of Allah’s wrath and they will continue to do so until the Day of Judgement. If we could hear their weeping and lamentations this whole nation would perish of an instant. The night of my ascension to the heavens (the Mi’rāj) with the angel Gabriel ﷺ, we approached the seventh heaven and from there we heard the sound of such bitter weeping and mournful imploring that I asked my companion Gabriel:

‘What is the meaning of all that wailing? Who are these unfortunate ones?’ Gabriel answered me:

‘Those are the angels called the Qurabiyyūn. They are weeping for your sinful nation and praying for forgiveness for the community of Muḥammad. These angels descend onto the earth during the first blessed nights of the holy month of Ramadan and circumambulate the Kaaba, from where they spread out all over the face of the earth, bringing down mercy unto the people. Their weeping is for mercy and forgiveness for mankind, if only they could know it.’

Within the seventh heaven there is also a sort of sea the size of which is a distance of thirty years, and therein is another kind of

angels. These angels are incessantly repeating ‘Allah, Allah’ and they, too, are weeping and praying:

‘O our Lord, forgive the people of Muḥammad, have mercy with his nation, spare them and grant them Your munificence.’

Thus they weep and pray until the Day of Judgement.”

The Divine Throne

“Tell us about the Divine Throne and its characteristics, O Muḥammad! From what has Allah Almighty created the Throne?”

THE HOLY PROPHET answered: “The Lord has created the Divine Throne of Light. The greatness of the Throne is such that beside it all the seven heavens and the seven worlds are as a dining table, or like a tiny mustard seed in the midst of a great desert. Allah Almighty has created an angel by the name of Harqā’īl. This angel has 18,000 wings. Delighting in his many wings, this angel was taken by the desire to appraise the size of the Divine Throne. Now Allah Almighty knows the secrets of all things, so He knew the ambition of the angel Harqā’īl and He gave him another 18,000 wings. Now Harqā’īl had twice 18,000 wings, 36,000 altogether, and the Lord ordered him:

‘Fly, O Harqā’īl, fly with all your might and regard the Divine Throne!’ So the angel beat his wings and began to fly and he flew for three thousand years until he grew tired and had to rest. Then again came the Divine Command: ‘Fly on!’

And again the angel shook his wings and flew on, for another three thousand years. He grew tired and had to take his rest. After he had rested awhile, the Lord commanded him as before: ‘Fly!’

The angel flew and flew until he could fly no more, and after another three thousand years he was exhausted and confused and addressed his Lord, saying:

‘O my Lord and Creator, tell me, how many times have I now circled the Throne?’ The Lord of the Worlds answered him and spoke:

‘O Harqā’īl, now you have been flying for 9,000 years and yet you have not even reached one pillar of the base of the Throne; far less circled the entire circumference.’

Upon that the angel grew very ashamed of himself; realizing the impossibility of measuring the greatness of his Lord’s Majesty and the extent of His secrets. He regretted his vain desire and

foolishness of having wanted to know the unknowable, and he repented and wept. Allah Almighty then spoke to him and said:

‘O Harqā’il, if I were to prolong your lifespan until the Day of Resurrection and were you to fly on incessantly up till that time, you would not be able to reach even the very first pillar of the Divine Throne.’

Such is the awesome Majesty of our Lord Almighty, such is His Greatness that only He Himself knows. How can any created being hope to encompass His Magnificence, or to know His glory with the mind’s limitation?”

The assembled priests and Rabbis were dumbstruck at this answer of Holy Prophet ﷺ, for they had not been able to find an answer by themselves. Then they continued their questioning with the fifth question.

The Throne-Bearing Angels

“Inform us of the Throne-bearers, O Muḥammad! What does the Divine Throne rest upon?”

THE HOLY PROPHET ﷺ answered them: “In the beginning the Lord created four angels. These angels were immensely powerful and awesome and they each had a fourfold aspect – one face in front, one face in back, one on the right and one on the left. Each face was different from the other. In the Court of the Almighty there are no angels who have been granted more honour and reverence than these four. They are the first angels to be created and they had four faces each, one facing in each direction. Their shapes and appearance were also varied. The first angel has the human form, and he is constantly praying on behalf of the race of man:

‘O Lord, give ample provisions to mankind and look on them with kindness and favour.’

That is his prayer by night and by day. The second angel is shaped as a lion and he too has four faces. Each face is praying and entreating Allah Almighty in a different language. This angel prays for the benefit of the wild animals, the beasts of prey. He prays that they might find ample sustenance, might have an easy life and find all they need. The third angel is shaped like an ox and he intercedes on behalf of the domestic animals and the pasturing beasts. He prays that their provisions may never be lacking and that they might be at ease. The fourth angel has the form of an eagle and he prays for the birds and for all winged creatures from all his four faces in different tongues.

Of all the angels the Lord Almighty created, none are more highly honoured than these four. It is they who are the Throne-bearers. For when the Lord created the Divine Throne, He placed its greatness on the shoulders of these angels. Their heads are underneath the Throne and their feet reach to below the lowest of the seven earths, and yet the burden of the Throne

of the Almighty became too heavy for them, so that they were too weak to bear it. Allah then inspired them, and the first angel began to recite:

'Subhānaka Allāhumma wa bi-ḥamdika'
and the weight of the Throne grew light on his shoulders.

Then the second angel recited:
'wa tabāraka smuka'

The third angel said:
'wa ta'ālā jadduka'

and the fourth angel completed:
'wa lā ilāha ghayruk.'

And as they were speaking these holy words, the Lord gave them the strength and the power to lift up the Throne and to carry it.

Had the Lord not inspired them to recite these words, all their efforts to lift that burden would have availed them nothing. They could not have lifted the Divine Throne one single inch.

According to another narration, the angels began to recite the following words when the Throne became too heavy for them:

The first angel said:
'Lā ilāha illā llāh,'

the second one continued:
'waḥdahu, lā sharīka lah,'

the third said:
'lahu l-ḥamd wa lahu l-mulk,'

and the fourth angel completed the phrase:
'wa huwa 'alā kulli shay'in qadīr.'

Upon the recital of these prayers the Lord of the Worlds granted the Throne-bearing angels such tremendous strength as was necessary to lift up the incredible burden of the Divine Throne: by the barakah (blessing) contained in these holy words they became able to perform the impossible.

These are the opening phrases of Muslim ritual prayer, and they mean in translation: Glory to Thee, O Allah! Praise be to Thee. Blessed is Thy Name and exalted is the Majesty of Thee. And there is no god other than Thee.

So if any of us are beset by adversity, or if we have heavy trouble and pain, let him repeat these words,

*'Lā ilāha illā llāh waḥdahu lā sharīka lah,
lahu l-ḥamd wa lahu l-mulk wa huwa 'alā kulli shay'in qadīr,
wa lā ḥawla wa lā quwwata illā bi-llāhi l-'aliyyi l-'aẓīm'*

and the All-Merciful Lord will ease his burden for him and grant him the strength to carry it. Allah has ordered us to perform our prayers, even as He has ordered the angels to carry the Divine Throne. When we begin our Prayers with the words, *'Subhānaka Allāhumma'* (the same words the angels spoke while lifting up the Throne), Allah Almighty gives us relief and refreshment, and He confers upon us the same rewards that He has promised the angels who are carrying His mighty Throne.

Now, the heads of these angels were beneath the Throne and their feet reached down to the lowest of the seven earths, and only Allah Himself knows how great a distance that may be. My companion Gabriel عليه السلام has informed me that it was a distance of 270,000 years of wayfaring. Their heads are bent forward so that they are carrying the Throne upon the nape of their necks until the Day of Judgement. Allah has commanded the entire host of angels to come forward and to give their salāms daily to the Throne-bearers in two shifts: one group salutes them in the morning, the other in the evening. This is because of the great service these four angels are rendering in upholding the burden of the Divine Throne. They are mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān in the following verse:

'Those who bear the Divine Throne and all who are near engage in the praising of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe.'

And as concerns the Throne-bearers, as long as this world endures, they will be four, in the after-life they will be eight."

The Rooster of The Divine Throne

“O Muḥammad,” they said, “tell us about the ‘Rooster of the Throne’. It is said that in the seventh heaven there is a being called the ‘Rooster of the Throne’, and from its body the blessed rain falls upon the earth. Tell us about this being, O Muḥammad!”

THE HOLY PROPHET ﷺ answered and said: “Allah Almighty has created a pillar in the seventh heaven made of green chrysolite, and on the top of this pillar He has placed a cupola of white pearl. Upon the summit of this cupola He has sat an angel which has the shape of a bird, a rooster. According to another narration it resembles a pure white rooster made of white pearl. Each of his wings consists of one thousand feathers that are made of pure ambergris. On every feather there are written three lines in green script:

the first line reads:

‘Bismi llāhi r-Raḥmāni r-Raḥīm’

(In the Name of Allah, the All-Compassionate, the All-Merciful)

the second line reads:

‘Lā ilāha illā Llāh, Muḥammadu r-Rasūl Allāh’

(There is no god but Allah, Muḥammad is His Prophet),

and the third line reads:

‘Kullu shay’in ḥālikum illā wajhah; lahu l-ḥukmu wa ilayhi turja‘ūn.’

(All will perish except His Countenance, His is the verdict, and to Him you will return.) [28:90]

Every time this bird-shaped angel spreads out his wings, there falls a rain of mercy upon all those who are dying in that hour and whose destination is paradise, as if it were a gentle spring

shower. At the hour appointed for prayer the angel beats his wings and flaps them one against the other, the way you see the rooster doing, and a rain of Divine Grace and Favour falls upon the believers on the earth who are preparing for prayer. When the prayer time approaches, that angel begins to sing. You may have observed how the earthly roosters incline their heads and tilt their ears upwards as if they were listening to something. Then they begin to flap their wings and crow. They are listening for the song of the ‘Rooster of the Throne’, which they can hear, and when they have heard his call, they inform us that the time for prayer has come.”

For this reason the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: “The snow-white rooster is my friend. He is the friend of my brother Gabriel as well, and he is beloved by Allah Almighty.”

This saying refers to a white rooster whose feathers have no other colour. It is said that a household in which a flawless white rooster is kept receives the blessings of forty households, for that white cock hears the call of the angel first of all. There is great reward in rearing such a white rooster in one’s house.

The cock’s crow is one of the three sounds which the accursed devil hates. He cannot bear the crowing of the rooster, the calling of the Adhān (the Muslim call to prayer) and the reading of the Qur’ān. These three sounds are pleasing to Allah and His Prophet, but Shayṭān flees from them and hides so as not to hear.

When that Heavenly Rooster begins to flap his wings and raises his voice, all the leaves and trees and branches in paradise’s gardens begin to sway and they are moved by a sweet turbulence as if a strong wind were passing through. All the inhabitants of those paradise gardens, the Huris and Ghilmān (the maidens and beautiful youths of paradise) are affected by the commotion and a current of deep love and reverence spreads from the sound of that voice. The paradise ladies and girls all run to the windows of their pavilions, leaning out to listen, and they ask: “Whom is this good news meant for?”

And they are answered: “These good tidings are for the nation of Muḥammad ﷺ, for the time of prayer has come.”

Everything in paradise is filled with such intense and reverent longing that no one can remain in his place, the gates of all seven

heavens open wide and Allah's mercy is spread far and wide, falling from the wings of that heavenly bird. The Huris rejoice and congratulate each other, and they say among themselves: "Let us have a look and see what our husbands are now doing in the world, are they engaged in worship? Are they hurrying to complete their ablutions for the prayer and running to pray in congregation?"

At that time a call goes out to that angel from the Lord Almighty, saying: "O bird, what are you making so much noise about? What happened that you are crying so loud?"

"Ah, my Lord," says the bird, "in the world the Muslims are engaging in the worship of Thee, they are performing their prayers in accordance with Thy commands, that is why I am raising my voice: I am asking Thy blessings and mercy upon all of them."

The Lord Almighty addresses him and speaks in His Glory: "O bird, in the abundance of My Grace I have already given to My servants the means for gaining My mercy and favour; I have ordered them to perform the five prayers daily and at each prayer time I look down upon them with the Gaze of Mercy, so that whoever is engaged in worship according to My command, him I have made exempt from fuelling hell-fire and to him I have given the promise of paradise. So, you, My good bird, keep quiet, it is enough. My Mercy forgives all sins and whosoever turns to Me in prayer will be cleansed of his faults."

The heavenly Rooster heard and obeyed and henceforth quietened down.

There are many more things to be related about the 'Rooster of the Throne', but we must be brief, as our story is long.

The Heavenly House

"O Muhammad," they asked, "what can you tell us about the Heavenly House?"

What is it made of and for what purpose? And where is it now?"

THE HOLY PROPHET, the leader of mankind, ﷺ said: "The Heavenly House was a building in the highest heaven made entirely of red ruby. When Allah Almighty created our father Adam ﷺ, He gave the angels the good tidings and said:

'I have created My representative on earth, come and prostrate yourselves before him!' The angels obeyed and made their prostration to Adam ﷺ, then they lifted him up and transported him to paradise. Iblīs was the only one who refused to show deference to Adam, disobeying his Lord's command.

Adam ﷺ was now all alone in paradise and nothing would seem fair to him. The Almighty Lord, the Knower of Hearts, then took a bit from below his left rib and created there from our mother Eve, so that she might be Adam's wife and consort. Then He ordered Adam to enjoy all the fruits of paradise with the exception of one tree, which was the wheat plant; from that he should not eat. As it is related in the Holy Qur'an:

'And we said, Adam, dwell thou and thy wife, in the Garden, and eat thereof easefully where you desire but draw not nigh this tree, lest you be evil-doers.' [2:36]

It is a long story, but by the wisdom of Allah the All Knowing, Adam forgot the warning and ate of the forbidden fruit. But even so, it was not his own willful doing, it happened according to our Lord's Will. For the Lord had decreed that Adam should be His representative on earth, and not in the heavens. He was absolved of his transgression and forgiven, but it was nonetheless necessary for him to commit it. So the angels removed Adam and Eve from the paradise they were in and brought them down to earth. Adam came down in India while Eve landed in Jeddah,

now in Saudi Arabia. This, too, was part of their punishment: they lost not only their right to live in paradise, but they also lost each other, temporarily.

Adam found himself on the summit of the mountain of Serendib on the isle of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and he began to weep broken-heartedly. So great was his misery and his contrition that all the rocks about him wept with him as well. In this manner he grieved for 200 years before Allah Almighty accepted his repentance and forgave him. As a sign of His forgiveness, Allah then ordered His angels to bring down the Heavenly House from the highest paradise onto the earth and to set it up in the place where now the Kaaba stands (at Mecca). This building resembled the Kaaba in size, but it had two doors, one facing the East and one facing the West. Inside the edifice there were three lamps from paradise and they were lit and glowing. The whole area lit up by these heavenly lights became the precincts of the sacred ground around the Kaaba, into which nowadays only Muslims are permitted to enter. According to another tradition, the Black Stone now set into one corner of the Kaaba was one of the red rubies of paradise and it shed a light of its own. Everything within reach of this light became holy ground, and the borders of its reach are the places where now the pilgrims to Mecca take their vows of dedication and don the vestments of pilgrimage.

Next Allah Almighty ordered the angels to teach Adam the rites of circumambulation of the Heavenly House, as they had been doing ever since this House was created. Now that it stood on earth, the angels of the seven heavens all descended to make their circumambulation as their Lord had commanded them to do. When Adam had learned to perform this rite and had come from Sri Lanka to Ḥijāz, his repentance found complete acceptance with his Lord. After completing the circumambulation of the House, he continued to perform all the rites of the Ḥajj (the greater pilgrimage), and he came to the place called ‘Arafāt.

Until this time, during the course of his pilgrimage, Adam had not yet encountered Eve, for she was still searching for him in Jeddah. All the while she was running back and forth between the rocky wastes and mountainous deserts, then again returning to the shores of the sea, and weeping and crying till her heart

would break. The tears she shed fell upon the oysters in the sea, and they became the seed of the pearls that grow within oysters.

Adam ﷺ having completed the rites of the Ḥajj, now stood at ‘Arafāt and there it was that he met with two-fold happiness: firstly he had at long last gained his Lord’s pardon and was forgiven his disobedience, and secondly, it was there that he beheld Eve, his long lost mate. They had to that day been apart for two hundred years. After the Ḥajj, Adam ﷺ took Eve back with him to India and they lived there. Once every year they returned to the Ḥijāz and performed the Ḥajj. When she at last died, Eve was buried at Jeddah, while Adam himself died in India and is buried there, though according to one tradition the tombs of both Adam and Eve are supposed to be in Jeddah.”

They asked him further: “*O Muḥammad, for what reason did Adam come down in India while Eve landed in far-away Jeddah?*”

The Holy Prophet answered: “Both Adam and Eve were fed and nourished in paradise, but they ate of the forbidden fruit, of the wheat grain. Now it was Eve who prompted Adam to eat the wheat, and it was the accursed devil who made her eat it. Because of this deed of Shayṭān they were both exiled from paradise. Shayṭān himself was banned forever, he was driven from the gates of Allah’s Mercy, degraded, abased. But for Eve’s yielding to the temptation of the accursed Shayṭān and for tempting Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit, she was sent down at Jeddah, a place of terrible, smothering heat – that was her punishment and the atonement for her sin. Both were separated from each other and they were weeping bitterly. But Eve was weeping because of her separation from Adam, while Adam wept from fear of the wrath of God. Eve only mourned her loneliness and her being parted from her beloved husband, she could not grasp the consequences of her sinful action. That is why she was let down at Jeddah, that bleak, inhospitable land.

Adam wept on account of his sin and disobedience to his Lord, and because he was destined to be a prophet he was sent down to Ceylon, because its climate is similar to the climate of paradise, and he would not have to suffer overly much from extreme of heat

or cold. His life was not at risk, for he was to become the first of the line of enlightened prophets and the father of all mankind. Also, they say, that the earth Adam was created of came from India, while Eve's was from Jeddah, and whichever land a person's clay is taken from, to that place he will return."

Furthermore they asked: "*O Muḥammad, where is the Heavenly House now?*"

The Prophet ﷺ answered: "Until the time of Prophet Noah ﷺ it existed on the face of the earth. People came from all over the world to perform the rites of circumambulation around it. When Allah had intended to send down the flood of perdition that Noah had prayed for, and when all the world was going to be drowned, Allah Almighty ordered His angels to transport the Heavenly House up into the fourth heaven. Now at present the Heavenly House stands in the fourth heaven and the angels circumambulate it there. It was transformed into a palace of paradise. Only the Black Stone remains now in the corner called the 'Rukn 'Irāqī' of the Kaaba. This stone alone was left of the Heavenly House after the flood of Noah for the sake of remembrance.

As the angels were carrying up the Heavenly House to the heavens, their arms clasped around the building, they fell into a swoon by the command of Allah Almighty, so that you could not know whether the angels were carrying the House or the House was carrying the angels. The task of lifting up that sacred building made them lose their senses. In the fourth heaven Allah Almighty created a Minbar (pulpit) of green emerald inside the House, and He increased the number of its doors to three. One door was made of topaz, one of green beryl and the last of red gold. And He also created a Miḥrāb (prayer-niche) of white pearl and in front of it He made a dividing curtain of many different kinds of gems. Next He raised up a Minaret opposite the middle door of the House which was all of diamond. Each Friday in the world, the day of Jumu'ah, (the weekly congregational prayer), when the Mu'adhthins are mounting the minarets of the mosques to intone the Adhān for the Jumu'ah prayer, Allah Almighty orders the angel Gabriel ﷺ to mount that minaret of diamond and to give

the call for prayer. The angels of all the seven heavens can hear his voice and they all congregate around the Heavenly House in the fourth heaven.

Then the angel Mikā'il mounts the pulpit and delivers the sermon (Khuṭbah) as do the Khaṭībs in every mosque in the lower world. When the Khuṭbah is over he descends from the minbar and the angel Isrāfil leads the assembled angels in the performance of the Jumu'ah prayer. After the last words of the prayer, Gabriel ﷺ rises up and says to the angels:

'O my brother angels, bear witness to what I am about to say: All the reward Allah Almighty is writing for me for having called the Adhān on this day I am making over to those sons of Adam who today have called the Adhān for the sake of Him Almighty from the minarets of the mosques of the world.'

And after this Mikā'il ﷺ gets up and says: 'O congregation of angels, bear witness to my words: The rewards of today's Khuṭbah I grant in charity to the Khaṭībs of the world who have read the Khuṭbah this day in the Mosques of the world for the sake of Allah's good pleasure.'

Then Isrāfil also stands and addresses the angels: 'O angels, bear witness that I am giving all rewards that the Almighty has granted to me for leading the Jumu'ah prayer to all those Imams of the world who have led the prayers today.'

All other angels then join in and say: 'We donate all rewards of our Jumu'ah prayer to those Muslims in the world who have prayed this Jumu'ah prayer with good intent and purity of heart.'

Then the Almighty Lord speaks to them and says:

'O communities of angels, are you trying to be more magnanimous than your Lord? Know, then that I, from the abundance of My Munificence have decreed a portion of Mercy for every servant in My court whose forehead touches the ground today in the Jumu'ah prayer, and also for those of My servants who were not able to attend the congregational prayer today (the feeble, the ill, the women). I have given countless rewards to all who have honoured this day of Jumu'ah and who have prostrated themselves reverently in worship.'

As it is written in the Holy Qur'ān:

'By the Mount and a book inscribed, in a parchment unrolled' . [52:2]

Beneath the Heavenly House there runs a river of light. The angels come to bathe therein and to perform their ablutions in that river. They don their Iḥrām (garb of pilgrimage) and perform the circumambulation of the House.

Until the very last day the angels are continuously circumambulating the Heavenly House, there is not one hour in which their circuit ceases.”

And that is the answer to the question about the Heavenly House.

Description of Paradise

Thâey said: “*Tell us about paradise, O Muḥammad! Of what did Allah Almighty create Paradise and what is its description? Where is it situated now?*”

THE HOLY PROPHET, the Pride of Creation ﷺ, replied: “The Almighty Creator, exalted be He, created paradise from Light, and He created it eight-fold. It is now situated in the seventh heaven. And even as the seven heavens are separated from each other, so also are the eight divisions of paradise distinct and separate. Each one is at a higher level than the preceding one. The highest of all is the Firdaws-i A’lā, the Highest Paradise, the loftiest garden of paradise.

The name of the first paradise is Dār as-Salām, the Abode of peace. The second is called Dār al-Qarār, the Abode of Constancy. The third paradise is named Dār al-Khuld, the Eternal Abode. The name of the fourth is Jannat al-Ma’wā, that of the fifth Jannah, the Gardens, the sixth paradise is the Jannat an-Na’īm, the Garden of delights, the seventh Jannat al-‘And, the Garden of Eden, and the eighth is the Firdaws-i A’lā, the loftiest garden.

Each paradise is created from a different sort of gem. Dār as-Salām is made of ruby, Dār al-Qarār of pure gold, Dār al-Khuld of white silver, while Jannat al-Ma’wā is made of pearl. Jannah consists of aquamarine, Jannat an-Na’īm of garnet and Jannat al-‘And of emerald. The Firdaws-i A’lā is made of a sea of Light. For this reason the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: ‘If you desire paradise, ask for the Firdaws-i A’lā, because its roof touches the Throne of the All-Merciful.’


The gates of paradise are made of various kinds of precious stones, engraved and embossed in exquisite manner. The length and width of each gate measures a distance of five hundred years of wayfaring. Upon each gate is written:

‘Verily, I do not punish him who says “*Lā ilāha illā Llah, Muḥammadu r-Rasūl Allāh*”.’

Allah in the perfection of His Divine Grace will not refuse any of His servants who even once repeats these words of faith. He admits him to whatever place He has prepared for him in paradise, without question or reckoning, and He makes him satisfied on that Last Day of Days.”

The Spring of Kawthar and the Ṭūbā Tree

“*Tell us, O Muḥammad,*” they said, “*about the spring of Kawthar that runs through Paradise, and about the Ṭūbā tree! What are they made of and what purpose do they serve?*”

 UR HOLY PROPHET, the most excellent of Creation ﷺ, answered and said: “The stream of Kawthar that runs through paradise has been created for me, even as it is revealed in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘*Surely we have given thee abundance (Kawthar).*’ [108:1]

The length of this river is 300 farsakh (parsangs: 1 farsakh is about 3 miles). It springs from below the Divine Throne whence it flows to the Firdaws-i A’lā. The waters of this stream rush along as swift as an arrow released from a mighty bow, they are whiter than snow, sweeter than sugar to the taste and smelling more pleasant than musk and ambergris. Whoever drinks from this spring will no longer know thirst after the first draught, nor will he taste death, only life eternal.

The banks of the river are made of gold and its bed is of musk and amber, the pebbles of the stream being of pearls and coral. This river runs into a pool, the pool of Kawthar, which is inlaid with many sorts of precious stones and filled with coral and pearls, and along its sides are arranged many cups and vessels for drinking, the number of which exceeds the number of the stars. On the Day of Judgement the whole nation of Muḥammad will assemble and be given to drink of these waters – the prophets and saints, the Muslims of former times and of our day – everyone will drink from it, and how great will be their joy and refreshment!”

“*And who will be the first of hell to drink from this water of paradise?*” they asked.

“The poor and destitute from among my people,” said the Holy Prophet, “those who had nothing at all of the pleasures of this life, they will be the first to drink.” – “The Ṭūbā tree,” he continued, “is my abode, and it is made of gold.”

The wise have said: “Just as there is no place on earth where the sun doesn’t shine, no corner which the light of the sun does not reach, so in all the eight gardens of paradise there is no castle, no palace or pavilion, no place at all which the shoots of the Ṭūbā tree does not reach. Each one of its twigs is full of every existing type of fruit. The roots of the Ṭūbā tree point upwards, its branches hang down. In every house, in every room, in every corner of paradise there is a branch of this marvellous tree. Whatever you may wish for grows on that tree, be it silver or gold, strings of pearl or coral, diamond rings or glittering bangles – everything grows from its branches. That is why when we say: Ṭūbā to those people, Ṭūbā to such and such a person, we are saying what a fortunate person, how happy those people, what felicity!”

This is the meaning of Ṭūbā. Whatever you may wish to eat of, the branches of the Ṭūbā tree will instantly provide you with it, be it apples or cherries, or mangoes.

The shoots of the tree are made of coral and underneath its boughs grow roses and sweet flowers. If one of the inhabitants of paradise wishes to see his friend or beloved, he grasps hold of the nearest branch of the Ṭūbā tree, and instantly the angels appear and prepare one of the Burāqs (winged mounts) for riding, with golden bridles and silver-spangled saddles, and they mount him thereupon. Should a person wish to behold the splendour of his Lord, the angels set him upon one of these Burāqs and lead him through the streets of paradise, exclaiming

“O fortunate ones, good tidings to you, O Believers! The Lord has invited you to a banquet to display before you His Glory and Majesty!”

They lead them to the guesthouse of the Lord where they partake of their Lord’s ineffable favours and divine grants, and where they know happiness beyond description. Then they are taken back, each to his own place.

And there is a lot more to be told about the Ṭūbā tree, but in accordance with their question, this much will do for an answer.

The seven earths and their inhabitants

“O Muḥammad,” they asked, “Allah has created seven layers of the earth: what are their names and who are their inhabitants?”

THE MOST ENLIGHTENED of Prophets ﷺ spoke: “Allah Almighty created the earth in seven layers, one below the next, just as He has created the heavens and the paradise gardens one above the other. Each layer He has separated from the other by a stratum of air, the thickness of which is 300 years of travelling.

The first earth is made as a dwelling place for the sons of Adam; it is our earth, the world that we know.

The second earth is an underground storehouse for the world’s treasures and there are various creatures buried in it, as, for example, the people of ‘Ād who are buried by a fiery rain, as from the eruption of a volcano.

The third earth is populated by a race whose faces resemble the faces of dogs, whose hands are like the hands of humans and whose ears are like the ears of oxen, while their feet are as the feet of sheep. Their nature and properties are, however, like those of the angels. Not for one instant do they disobey their Lord, their submission and obedience are perfect. For them also there will be a Day of Judgement; as for all of mankind and for the Jinn, there will be questioning and reckoning, punishment and reward.

The fourth layer of the earth Allah Almighty has created as a mine of sulphurous rock: it is full of the stones that will be the fuel of hell-fire and will make its flames burn stronger. Each one of these stones is as great as one of the world’s greatest mountains. So it is written in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘O Believers, guard yourselves and your families against a fire whose fuel is men and stones ...’ [66:7]

Our Lord has confirmed the instructions of our Holy Prophet ﷺ; there can be no doubt. This is a warning also for you, O Muslims, to beware! Allah Almighty has prepared such a vast store of these hell-fuelling rocks whose stench alone you could not bear! Were a piece only the size of a dirham (a small coin) to fall upon our earth, all would perish, no living thing could bear the horrible, disgusting fumes arising from it.

“The fifth earth is filled with scorpions. Each one of them is as big as a camel; their tails being as great as big-linked chains. The poison gland of each contains 300 batman (1 batman: 2-8 oke) of poison. One drop of that poison would suffice to poison the whole ocean and all living beings within it would perish.

In the sixth earth are kept the souls of those destined for hell. When they are taken from this world by the avenging angel, they are brought to this place which is called ‘Sijjīn’ and imprisoned therein until the Day of Judgement. It is mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘... the book of the libertines is in Sijjīn: and that shall teach thee what is Sijjīn? A book inscribed ...’ [83:6]

The seventh earth is the dwelling place of Iblīs, the accursed devil. There he lives with all those who follow him. He sits on a throne, surrounded by all the creatures of darkness who are his boon companions, and they amuse themselves by telling each other stories of all the evil deeds they have done, and how much harm they have inflicted upon the sons of Adam. They boast and pride themselves of their fell deeds and their success in inciting men to commit acts of disobedience, crime and treachery. The one who excels most in perversity becomes the most high-ranking deputy of Shayṭān, Allah’s curse be upon him.”

May Allah Almighty in His perfect Beneficence grant the nation of Muḥammad safety from the evil plotting of the devils. Amin!

Hell and its divisions

“Tell us about hell and its divisions, O Muḥammad!” they said. “What are the hells created of and who is destined to dwell therein? What are their names?”

OUR PROPHET, the pride of Creation ﷺ, answered them: “The Almighty God created Hell from His own anger, from His Divine Wrath. It is situated at a place 70 years away below the lowest earth.

In each hell the punishment is more terrible than in the preceding one. Each one is named separately.

The first grade of hell has two names; firstly Jahannam, and secondly Hawliyah.

The second hell is called Asfal, according to the words of the Holy book:

‘Surely the hypocrites will be in the lowest reach (dār al-asfal) of the Fire ...’ [4:144]

Also the second grade of Hell is called Ḥuṭamah, as it is mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘No, indeed; he shall be thrust into the Crusher (Ḥuṭamah); and what shall teach thee what is the Crusher?’ [104:3]

This is the station of Pharaoh and tyrants like him.

The third hell is called Saqar, as it is mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘The day when they are dragged on their faces into the Fire, taste now the touch of Saqar!’ [54:49]

This is the station of the misbelievers and apostates.

The name of the fourth hell is Lazā.

‘Verily it is a furnace (lazā)’. [70:15]

It is the place for perverses and those who have committed major indecencies and dishonorable actions.

The fifth hell is called Sa‘īr. As it is written:

‘If only we had listened or understood, then we would not be among the companions of Sa‘īr!’ [67:10]

This is the place for the Sabeans and the Christians (i. e. the evil-doers from among those peoples).

The sixth hell is called Ghayyah. As it is mentioned in the Holy Book:

'And they will meet with destruction (ghayyah)'. [19:59]

This is the hell for sorcerers and for frivolous musicians.

The seventh hell is called Jahannam, as it is mentioned:

'I shall assuredly fill Jahannam with jinn and men altogether.'
[11:120]

This hell is reserved for those from the nation of Muḥammad who departed from this world unrepentant. This then is the order of the divisions of hell, beginning from the lowest station:

- I Hawliyah
- II Ḥuṭamah
- III Saqar
- IV Lazā
- V Sa'ir
- VI Ghayyah
- VII Jahannam

In the seventh hell, Jahannam, the unrepentant of the nation of Muḥammad will remain for a certain length of time, according to the gravity of their sins. When they have attained to repentance and when it has been accepted, their punishment will cease. But what is the heat of the coolest of hell-fires? It is like a pair of burning sandals that your feet are thrust into and on account of which your brain begins to boil, so that the teeth will glow shining red with the heat. When that person has been burnt and cleansed of all his sins, he will be taken from that place and brought to paradise, where first he will be bathed in the waters of Kawthar: then he will be given to drink from those waters also and he will be completely purified. Only on his forehead there will remain one line: 'Freed from Hell.' In everything else he will be indistinguishable from the other inhabitants of paradise, but for those words written upon his forehead and at that he will feel great shame. As in the world a prisoner who is released from prison feels shame and a lingering feeling of guilt. In the end Allah

Almighty in His endless Mercy will erase that blemish also from his forehead so that he is in every way perfect and blameless, and he may be ushered into eternal felicity.

This is what pertains to the lightest degree of hell whose fires are cooler than the fires of all other hells. But would even one dirham's worth of the wood fuelling that hell fall upon the earth, all living things within the radius of one farsakh would be annihilated, utterly destroyed! A dirham is no larger than a date stone.

Now in that hell Jahannam there are 70,000 cities (how many there are in the other hells, only Allah Almighty knows!) and the Prophet ﷺ has seen them and related in his vision: In each city there are 70,000 houses, and in each house there are 70,000 halls. In each hall there are 70,000 storerooms and in each storeroom there are 70,000 chests. In each of these chests there are 70,000 different kinds of punishment, none of which resembles the other and each is more painful than the next. Whoever falls into that hell will be punished in those terrible and manifold ways. May Allah Almighty guide us towards His Mercy and make us secure from His hells, and in Him we seek our protection, Āmīn.

The Angel of Death

“O Muḥammad, the Angel of Death is called ‘Azrā’īl. Tell us about him, what is his description and what are his duties?”

THE HOLY PROPHET ﷺ replied: “The Angel of Death is an angel who resides in the fourth heaven and who, by the command of Allah Almighty, is charged with the task of the taking of souls.

In the night of the Mi’rāj (the night journey of the Prophet Muḥammad) the Angel Gabriel ﷺ came to me and summoned me to follow him. When we came to the fourth heaven we beheld an awesome, majestic angel seated on a dais, with an immense tablet beside him. The angel unceasingly regarded the tablet, never lifting his gaze from it.

I asked Gabriel my companion ‘Who is this?’ and Gabriel answered me: ‘This is ‘Azrā’īl the Angel of Death, O Messenger of God. It is Allah’s order to him that he look to no other place, that he regard nothing but those inscribed tablets before him.’

Then he spoke to the angel: ‘O ‘Azrā’īl, this person standing before you is the Saviour of both worlds, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ Messenger of God; up, rise to your feet! All angels in the heavens are expecting this important visitor tonight, the beloved of God, Ḥabībullāh, has come to see you, rise for him.’”

Hearing this news the angel ‘Azrā’īl ﷺ arose and gave his Salāms! He paid his respects a hundred million times and venerated the Holy Prophet. Then he took him aside and said:

“O Beloved of Allah, forgive me, I didn’t know it was you, I did not see you, I wasn’t looking. Only when Gabriel ﷺ told me it was you did I look up and see you – I beg your pardon for my lack of attentiveness and respect.”

“I answered and said to him:

‘O ‘Azrā’īl, here you dwell in the fourth heaven: how is it that you take the souls of the mortals, how do you know which one of the millions of human souls you are to take?’

‘Azrā’īl ﷺ answered: ‘O Messenger of God, what you see here before me are the Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz, the Preserved Tablets (on which the destinies of all men are written), and it is this tablet I regard incessantly. It informs me of the moment when the lifetime of any living being on earth has come to an end, be it of mankind or of the beasts.’

Now there was also a tree growing in front of that tablet, and I asked the angel ‘Azrā’īl ﷺ what was the meaning of the tree. He said:

‘This is the tree of life. You see it is covered with myriads of tiny leaves, smaller than the leaves of the olive tree and much more numerous. Whenever a person is born on the earth, the tree sprouts a new leaf, and on this leaf is written the name of that person. It is by means of this tree that I know who is born and who is to die. When a person is going to die, his leaf begins to wilt and dry, and it falls from the tree onto the tablet. Then this person’s name is erased from the Preserved Tablets. This event happens 40 days before the actual death of that person; we are informed 40 days in advance of his impending death. That man himself may not know it and may continue his life on earth full of hope and plans, but we here in the heavens do know; we have that information. Allah Almighty has said:

‘Your sustenance has been written in the heavens and promised to you.’

The moment we see that leaf wilting and dying we mix it into that person’s provision, and from the fortieth day before his death he begins to consume his leaf from the tree of life without knowing it. Only forty days then remain of his life in this world, after that there is no provision left for him in it.

On either side of that person stands an angel in attendance, waiting only for a sign from me. The angel on the right is the angel of mercy, and he is radiant as the sun. The angel on the left is the avenging angel, the angel of wrath, and he is equipped with pitch black tar and wrappings of darkness. These angels wait only for a sign from me, and when the time has come, I signal to them. It takes only the twinkling of an eye to reach them – they know the signal. If the dying person was a believer, I send to him the angel of mercy, the angel to the right. He will come to him gen-

tly, holding shrouds and wrappings from paradise and softly and delicately extract his soul, bringing it to paradise. He will bring it to the stream of Kawthar and rinse it therein – in brief, the soul of the believer will be shown the delights of paradise forthwith.


However if that dying person has been rebellious and obstinate, and dies without repentance, then I will send the angel of wrathful aspect to take his soul. This angel will wrench his soul from him with might and under terrible torment and drag it down to the place called Sijjīn, that lowest layer of the earth where it will be imprisoned until the Day of Judgement.’

Then the Angel of Death went on to say: ‘O Muḥammad, O beloved Messenger of God, you are the intercessor for the sinful, the erring. Do not forget me in your intercession on that Day of Judgement. If I have committed any wrong, may my Lord forgive me through your intercession: perhaps I have at times been mistaken, perhaps I have not performed my duties well – pray for me, intercede for me on that day, O Muḥammad!’

Such were the words of the Angel of Death who has not laughed or smiled since the day of his creation, so great is his attention and dedication to his task. ‘Azrā’īl, along with Isrāfil, Mikā’īl and Jibrīl are among the great ones of the angels, they are the archangels who are as leaders and messengers to the host of angels, as the prophets are to the sons of man.”

Munkar and Nakīr

“O Muḥammad, what can you say about Munkar and Nakīr? What tasks have they been created for?”

 UR PROPHET, the Pride of Creation ﷺ answered and said: “The Lord Almighty created two servants by the name of Munkar and Nakīr. These angels are always present at the death of a person, whoever he may be. After the dead one has been laid in his grave and the funeral procession has departed from the graveside, they will not have gone further than forty steps when these two angels enter the grave of the deceased. They begin to question the dead person. If he has been a good person, they come in a pleasant and agreeable form, but if he has been an evil one, they appear in a horrific, frightening shape, with eyes like glowing coals and a voice like the rolling thunder. In their hands they hold fiery rods so heavy that all the power contained in the whole world could not lift them up.

If the deceased has been a believer, Munkar and Nakīr come in a pleasant form and begin their questioning:

‘Man rabbuka wa man nabbiyyuka wa mā dīnuk?’ meaning, ‘who is your Lord and who is your prophet and what is your religion?’ The believer will be able to give the correct answers to these questions. He will say: My Lord is the Lord of the worlds, my prophet is the Prophet Muḥammad Muṣṭafā ﷺ and my religion is the noble religion of Islam, my book is the Glorious Qur’ān ...

Then they will ask ‘What is your creed and your affirmation of faith?’ The believer will answer: ‘I witness that there is no god but Allah Almighty, and that Muḥammad is His servant and Messenger. I believe that the Prophet ﷺ has brought the truth from our Lord Allah Almighty and he has left the Qur’ān for our guidance; I have based my life and my actions on its principles, and my worship according to the instructions of our Prophet Muḥammad Muṣṭafā ﷺ and on what he has revealed of the way, that has been my life’s aim ...’

Then the angels expand the grave of that believer until it reaches the size of the garden of Iram. The grave is not as we perceive it, a narrow hole in the ground, it is now open towards the heavens, wide and spacious.

Then a person appears to the occupant of that grave, of fair mien and demeanour and exquisitely scented. He gives Salāms to the dead one and says:

‘Blessings be upon you: our Lord, exalted be He, has made you one of the fortunate ones whose days are full of bliss and heavenly delights. Come with me!’ He takes him by the hand, smiling, and leads him to paradise. The deceased one wonders at this, and asks that fair one: ‘But who are you? In all my life in the world I have seen no one as fair and comely as you, I do not know you, who are you?’ The beautiful shape answers him: ‘I am the embodiment of your good deeds. Whatever you have enacted in the world of good and God-pleasing deeds, my Lord has collected them and formed thereof a being as you now see before you, so that I might now be your wayfaring companion. I will remain with you until the Day of Judgement.’

If a dead person, however, has passed away unrepentant and persistent in his unbelief, disobedient and neglectful of his Lord’s commands, Munkar and Nakir come to him in his grave and begin their questioning in a terrible, threatening tone of voice.

‘Who is your Lord, who is your Prophet and what is your religion?’ they will ask him.

That person will answer: ‘I don’t know,’ because during his lifetime he was unconcerned with such matters and would know nothing of Allah or His Prophet ﷺ, took no interest in religion or the life to come. Now he will reply to every question of the angels: ‘I don’t know.’

Then the angels will begin to beat him with their fiery rods in such a manner that were they to give such a beating to the mountains, these would sink seven fathoms below the earth. The occupant of that grave cries and lets out such yells of pain, which the animals in the world can hear, but mankind and the *jinn* cannot. When the beasts of the earth hear these screams, they curse that person in his grave, about whom it is written in the Holy Book:

“... and they are cursed by Allah and by those who curse them ...”

When the angels ask him about the Prophet who was sent to his nation, again he will answer “I don’t know.”

Then they will open the grave towards hell whence scorching winds and bitter cold come to torture him until the Day of Judgement. Also a person appears to him, of terrible ugliness and loathsome to behold, exuding a disgusting stench. This one is full of mischief and poisonous words, and he attaches himself to him and begins to torment him in every way.

The dead person says: ‘Go away, who are you? I have never in my life seen you before, what have I done to you that you mistreat me so?’

That shape answers him: ‘I am your evil deeds which you committed while in the world without repenting of them. My Lord has collected them and joined them together in this form that you now see. I am nothing but your own doings.’

All of that dead one’s denial, his ignorance of the truth and rejection of the teachings of the prophets and the wise, of the realities of heaven and punishment – all of these the Lord has amassed and fashioned into that horrible shape which now appears to that disbeliever to torment him until the Last Day. Then the owner of that grave begins to weep and cry, and he moans in despair:

‘Ah, would that I had never been born. Ah, would that I had repented, that I had believed.’

But, alas, his repentance comes too late, it is no longer accepted, he has earned his punishment.”

This is the answer to the question about Munkar and Nakir.

The Trumpet of Isrāfil

“Tell us about the Trumpet of Isrāfil ﷺ, O Muḥammad ﷺ, what does it look like and what is its purpose?”

THE MOST EXALTED of prophets, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā ﷺ replied: “On the Day of Judgement Allah Almighty will order Isrāfil ﷺ to blow that trumpet. The length of the trumpet is one year’s way; it has one mouthpiece and its body is divided into seven trunks.

Upon the first sounding of the trumpet all good things are lifted and taken away from the earth; the Qur’ān is withdrawn, and all manner of good character, dignity and honour, mercy and blessings are removed from the earth. No one will have power to do any good in the world.

If one intends a good deed, he cannot do it, if he wants to give good words, he is laughed at and called a liar, who has ever heard of such foolish things, they will say. The memory of all heavenly teachings is erased from people’s minds, no more belief or knowledge in spiritual things remains, corruption and perversion reach such a high degree that good will be seen as bad, and bad as good. Lies, stealth, dishonesty, unchastity, injustice and dishonourable deeds will take the place of the law, and chaos will reign. This will be the effect of the first sounding of the Trumpet of Isrāfil ﷺ.

Then Allah Almighty’s Command goes out a second time to Isrāfil ﷺ and he blows again. All beings on the earth and in the seven heavens hear this sound and lose their senses. All of mankind, all the angels and the beasts fall down on their faces and faint, believing the Day of Judgement has come upon them. This is described in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘For the trumpet shall be blown, and whosoever is in the heavens and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom God wills.’ [39:66]

The sound of that trumpet will be so awesome and terrifying that all beings will lose their consciousness. The earth will begin to roll and heave, the stars will fall from the heavens. Every black hair, even that of the children of that time, will turn white in an instant from the terror of that trumpet blast. And all will believe the Day of Judgement has come while they are yet alive. The mountains will jump from their places and turn into dust, rising as clouds over the earth. The waters of the oceans will dry up, the sun and the moon will lose their light, all will be plunged into abysmal darkness. This is in the Holy Qur’ān, where it says *‘No indeed! When the earth is ground to powder ...’* [89:21]

As the wind carries away the chaff, so mankind will be blown around by those cataclysmic storms, powerless, without control.

Such will be the second blowing of the trumpet. It will herald the signs of the Judgement Day. All life in the seven earths will perish at that time, all that is beneath the Divine Throne will become lifeless, as if it had never been.

Of all beings only eight angels will remain, these are the Muqarabūn, the angels closest to the Divine Presence. They are by name Jibrīl ﷺ, Isrāfil ﷺ, Mikā’il ﷺ, ‘Azrā’il ﷺ, and four Throne-bearers, Allah Almighty will then command ‘Azrā’il the angel of death to take the souls of those archangels as well, and He says to him:

‘All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid.’ [55:26]

Now only ‘Azrā’il remains of all created beings, and the Almighty Lord asks him: ‘O ‘Azrā’il ﷺ, who is left alive?’ and ‘Azrā’il ﷺ answers Him: ‘O my Lord. Thou alone and Thy weakest slave are left.’ Then the Lord Almighty says to ‘Azrā’il: Have I not spoken in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘All that dwells upon the earth is perishing, yet still abides the Face of thy Lord, majestic, splendid.’ [55:26]

Hearing those words, the angel of death also takes his own soul and tastes death at his own hand. Thereafter not one living soul remains. In all the heavens and the earth there is only the Oneness and Unity of the Almighty Truth.

In this state the world remains for forty years, not one creature is alive, breathing, moving – nothing at all. Then Allah Almighty speaks these verses: ‘To whom belongs the dominion on this day?’

But there is no one there to answer Him: this is my house, this is my property, my garden, my field. No one remains to dispute His absolute ownership and the Lord answers His Own Majestic Self: 'It all belongs to Allah, the Only, the Subduer.'

Now Allah in the Perfection of His Munificence wishes to bring all of creation back to life, and He speaks these verses:

'Blessed be He in whose hand is the Kingdom – He is powerful over everything.' [67:1]

So in His Omnipotence Allah Almighty causes an ocean to come into existence below the Divine Throne, and this is the Sea of Life. From this sea it begins to rain onto the earth, and it rains for forty days and forty nights, so that the world is filled with water from the east to the west. This is the water that all life is created from, from the very beginning up to the end: all of mankind, the beasts, the angels, the Huris and Ghilmān, all that ever was, all that flies in the air, or crawls over the earth or below it, everything is recreated from this water.

The entire creation, which had died and turned into dust, rises up again on the surface of those waters, as plants grow out of the earth. All has been resurrected in body and is as yet lifeless, without soul, waiting.

First of all, Allah Almighty returns their souls to the eight angels called the Muqarrabūn, who were the last living beings to have died. And He orders Isrāfil to blow into his trumpet yet another time, the third blowing of the trumpet. The trumpet of Isrāfil ﷻ has seven horns. When he blows on the first horn, all the angels and the inhabitants of paradise, the Huris and Ghilmān, all the heavenly creatures will come alive. When his breath reaches the second horn, the Prophets' souls will be returned to them; on the third horn sounding, the saints and holy men of high station will be returned to life. When the fourth horn sounds, the rest of mankind will come to life, and as the fifth horn rings out the Jinn and the unbelievers will arise; when the sixth horn is blown the devils and their helpmates come to life, and finally, on the blast of the seventh horn all the animals of the wild, the beasts, the birds and all other forms of creation will be resurrected and swarm forth. All these souls will be blown out of that mighty trumpet and the Lord will order them all to find the bodies belonging to

them and to enter their former shapes. Each and every one of them will find the body belonging to him formerly and enter it; then they will all rise to their feet and stand in attention. The Almighty addresses them with a mighty call:

'O My servants, in My Might and Glory I have looked upon you and restored you all to life again.'

And the entire creation will answer with one voice and say: 'Praised be He Who is perfect in knowledge about all of His creation, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.'

Then the Balance will be set up and the Day of Judgement will begin. Those are the secrets of the Trumpet of Isrāfil," said the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

THE FIFTEENTH QUESTION

The Balance and the Day of Judgement

And then the Jews proceeded to ask him the fifteenth question “*What about the Balance of the Judgement Day (the Mizān), O Muḥammad ﷺ, what is it made of and how will be its use?*”

THE PRIDE of both worlds, the Holy Prophet ﷺ answered and said: “The Mizān (Balance) is a pair of scales which Allah Almighty has created for the weighing of the deeds of His creation. It is written in the Qur’ān

‘Then he whose scales are heavy – they are the prosperers: and he whose scales are light – they have lost their souls.’ [23:104]

On the Day of Judgement this Balance will be in the hands of the archangel Mikā’īl. One of its scales will be of light, the other will be of darkness. On the side of light all the deeds that the right-hand angel has recorded will be weighed, and the deeds recorded by the left-hand angel on the scale of darkness. Every person has committed good deeds as well as bad ones; the good deeds are written down by an angel as well as the sins; the angels make no mistakes. The Holy Qur’ān says

‘And who so has done an atom’s weight of good shall see it. And who so has done an atom’s weight of evil shall see it.’ [99:6]

Whoever has done good worth the weight of a mustard seed will find it in his book, and whatever evil he has wrought, and be it the weight of a poppy seed, he will find that recorded too. One by one all men will be called forth to the Judgement of the Balance, and everyone will be so occupied with himself that he will not know of his neighbour, nor will he ask after his father, brother or son. He will be led to face the Balance of the Mizān. The noble Scribes (the recording angels) will bring the recordings of his sins, all the accumulated misdeeds that the angel has recorded during that person’s lifetime, and they will appear as mountains, compared to which the good deeds on the scale of

light shrink into nothingness. Whereupon that person gives up all hope in his Lord’s Mercy and says:

‘That is all I’ve got, there is nothing else to put in the balance, so I am surely bound for hell. I have no more hope, Hell is my lot’ and he despairs. All of a sudden, a little piece of paper comes fluttering down from above and falls into the scale of light; this little piece of paper tilts the whole mountainous scale of misdeeds in its favour – it appears to be heavier than the whole mountain of sins. Upon this the Divine Decree is issued:

‘Lead this servant of Mine to Paradise.’

The whole assembly is astonished and wonders what may be the secret of that little bit of paper.

They are told: ‘Nothing happens without cause; this servant was saved from hell for a reason. So all draw near to see what is written on that slip of paper’, and this is what they behold:

‘As this My servant has once in his lifetime in the passing Dunyā repeated the words ‘*Lā ilāha illā Llāh, Muḥammadu r-Rasūl Allāh*’ with sincerity and purity of heart, I shall not give him over to the torment of hellfire; for that he has once attested to My Unity and honoured My Holy Prophet, I shall let him taste the abundance of My Mercy and Favour. For his having affirmed his belief in My Existence and be it but once, I have forgiven him all his sins and made him deserving of paradise.’ So speaketh the Lord. Some people affirm their faith during this life, some only when their life is about to fade away, on their very deathbed.

Allah, make us of those whose lot it is to believe while in the midst of this life, and make us worthy of enacting meritorious deeds. If he who only once in his entire lifetime repeats the words ‘*Lā ilāha illā Llāh*’ will receive as his reward a space in paradise ten times as great as the known world, and not a finger’s breadth of that space will be empty, what then will be the reward of one who repeats these words many times throughout his life? Only Allah Almighty knows.”

This then is the answer to the question about the Mizān.

The Bridge of Şirāṭ

“After the weighing of deeds in the balance of Mīzān comes the passing over the Bridge of Şirāṭ. Tell us, O Muḥammad ﷺ, about that bridge, what is it like and what is it created for?”

THE HOLY PROPHET ﷺ replied: “The Şirāṭ is a bridge that will be erected over Jehennam on the Day of Resurrection. Everybody will have to pass over that bridge, it is impossible to enter heaven or hell without passing over the Şirāṭ.

Allah Almighty has created Hell out of His Wrath and Divine Anger. The stench of Hell was very bothersome to the angels, and they came crying to their Lord, entreating Him to make something as a cover for those hells, for until that time Hell was an open pit, visible to all. From it arose the most noisome fumes and terrible sounds of wailing, and moaning, so that the holy angels could bear it no longer. So they humbly pleaded with their Lord, and the Lord in His great Kindness and Mercy showed the angels mildness and favour, and from His Almighty Power He created a snake. The name of this snake is ‘Ghayish’, and its size is known to the Almighty alone. Allah then ordered the snake: ‘Swallow up the hells!’ and the snake opened up its mouth wide and swallowed them. Having obediently done this, it began to feel very ill, sick to its stomach. Ghayish the snake then opened his mouth so wide that a bird might fly for three thousand years and not reach from one lip to the other, and the stench that exuded from its belly was of a deadly sort. Then the snake raised up its head and said to the Lord: ‘O Lord, I cannot breathe from nausea; permit me to take one clean breath.’

The Lord then ordered one of the Lords of Hell to whom He gave a whip the length of which is known only to the Almighty to beat the snake Ghayish, and the guardian of hell began to whip the snake and to inflict punishment on him. For a second time Ghayish raised up his head to plead with his Lord, to forgive him his sins, to forgive him whatever trespasses he had become guilty

of unawares, and while he was gazing upwards at the Throne, he beheld a line of writing underneath the Throne of the Merciful which reads:

‘Lā ilāha illā Llah, Muḥammadu r-Rasūl Allāh ﷺ.’

‘O my King,’ he then said, ‘I have seen a name written beside Thy own Divine Name underneath Thy Throne of Majesty, and I have suddenly felt a great surge of Love for that name. Forgive me, Lord, for the sake of that blessed name Muḥammad ﷺ, for I am Thy weak and powerless servant, show me of Thy Grace and Mercy, for the sake of Thy beloved Muḥammad ﷺ!’

Then Allah Almighty ordered the guardian of Hell to leave off whipping the snake and He spoke: ‘O, Ghayish, I have forgiven you on behalf of your mention of the name of My beloved Muḥammad ﷺ, and I permit you to take your breath twice a year.’

So the snake Ghayish takes his breath twice a year each time he exhales, it is a breath from hell: once it is a torrid and scorching breath, and the other time it is a freezing and bitterly cold breath, for hell is both hot and cold. Twice a year we feel this breath, and we are reminded of hell: once in the heat of the summer when there blows a life-extinguishing hot wind, and once in the winter when the icy gales howl and we cannot bear to be unprotected.

Now, when all is prepared for the Day of Judgement, Allah Almighty orders the snake Ghayish: ‘Open wide your mouth!’ Ghayish will open up his mouth and all the seven hells will come out from his inside. From the hairs growing on his lower lip, the Zabāniyah (the myrmidons, those who thrust the damned into hell) take one and stretch it over the hells, in the form of a bridge. This hair from the snake’s mouth is the bridge of Şirāṭ, and all nations shall pass over it on that fearsome day.

Proof of this is found in the Holy Qur’ān where it is said:

“Hast thou received the story of the Enveloper-Ghāshiyah?” (Ghayish is derived therefrom) [88:1]

Furthermore it is written:

“Yet he has not assaulted the steep: and what shall teach thee what is the steep?” [90:11]

The length of the bridge of Şirāṭ is three thousand years: for one thousand years it rises, for another thousand years it is level

and for the last thousand it descends. The avenging angels drive people onto the bridge with whips made of fire. Those destined for hell fall into it from the top of the bridge.”

Our leader, the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ stands at the side and is watching. He says to the Lord: “O Lord, have Mercy! There are believers among them, and everyone according to his deeds!” The believers will be separated from amongst the crowds. Each one will pass over the bridge at his own speed, according to the amount of good he has done; some will pass over like a flash of lightning, some as a bird flies, others will pass over as the water flows, while others crawl along slowly on their knees and yet others again slide along even more slowly on their stomachs. Those destined for hell will tumble headfirst into it – May Allah grant us protection from His Anger!

Those passing over the Ṣirāṭ like lightning will travel for one day and one night. Those passing at the speed of a bird in flight will take one year. Some others will take one thousand years to get across, and one day in the Sight of Allah is as thousand years in our world. As it is written:

“To Him the angels and the Spirit mount up in a day whereof the measure is fifty thousand years.” [10:4]

All people will be passing over the Ṣirāṭ at their own speed, and as they labour along, their heads bowed low, they say: “O Allah, Almighty Lord, You have promised us of Your bounties; we ask nothing other than to arrive at Your Court in safety and to reach Your Divine Presence alone.”

After a while there appears before their eyes a lovely spot of green, a charming glade of deep shadow and restful boughs, with myriads of colourful flowers below. They look up and say:

“O Lord, grant us from your overwhelming Mercy some respite in the shade of those trees, give us a resting place there, just a little place to call our own, and we will be contented and ask no more.”

Allah Almighty then addresses His servants and says to them: “O My servants, have I not received your solemn vows that you wish for nothing else but to dwell at My Court? Why is it that you are now forsaking your promise?” So they are shamed and continue on their way.

When they have gone another stretch of the road, they behold paradise and all its splendour, the luscious growth of the marvellous gardens, such beauty as they have not been able to imagine. Now they sit down for a while and are overcome by the beauty and pleasantness of paradise. In spite of themselves, they again ask their Lord: “O Allah, this is exactly what we want, we desire no more, this is to our hearts perfectly satisfactory.”

Beauty deprives man of willpower. Again they are addressed by their Lord: “Why do you not hold fast to your promises?”

So they ruefully renew their vow, saying: “O Lord, we renew our pledge, we want nothing but to enter your Divine Court.”

Then the Lord says to them: “O My servants, you have arrived, come, enter now those gardens of promise.”

So they pick themselves up and hurry to enter paradise and to taste of its delights, and to take their rest. Upon entering the gardens they will behold the ineffable beauty and hear the song of the heavenly songbirds, and they are overwhelmed with amazement, gazing in wonder.

Again Allah Almighty addresses them, saying: “O My servants, what has befallen you that you are looking about in bewilderment and remaining yet on the outskirts of your heavenly homeland?”

They answer: “O Lord, we are ashamed of having broken our word, that is why we dare not proceed any further; twice we have given You our word and we have not held to it. Now we feel ashamed, and yet we cannot help feel hopeful of Your Limitless Mercy towards us. We cannot express our remorse yet we are still hopeful You will lead us to Your Divine Court.”

Then the Lord says to them: “Whatever you have desired, I have given it to you, from My limitless Bounty, I have fulfilled all your wishes. Be now happy and contented with Me, for I am your Lord.”

They reply: “O Lord, we are satisfied, we have attained our hearts’ desire.” The Lord then orders the angels to bring paradise clothes and ornaments, and to lead forth the Burāqs (heavenly winged steeds) to take these latecomers to their appointed stations in paradise. They are brought to their special places, clothed in most precious raiment and anointed with costly oils. The Huris

and Ghilmān come to greet them and receive them with platters of light, that are filled with precious stones which they scatter about, as we do with grain on wedding occasions. They place themselves at the service of the newcomers, leading them into their palaces while showing them great honour; they help them off their mounts and seat them on splendidly decorated thrones, covered in silk and brocade, and place before them various sorts of delicious food in vessels of gold and silver, studded with precious gems. The arrivals lift their bejewelled chalices in a toast of gratitude; their cups are filled with the 'pure wine' of paradise and they say:

"We have drunk of the water of Kawthar, and we shall make merry with the water of life, and abide in eternal bliss for ever and ever, thanks be to the Lord, the Almighty Creator of endless Bounty and Favour!"

The Prophets and other Messengers

"O Muḥammad ﷺ, tell us about the prophets and messengers who were sent to mankind; how many of them were given scriptures of Divine Revelation?" they asked of the Holy Prophet.

HE ANSWERED them: "Our Lord Almighty has sent to the world 124,000 prophets in all, beginning with our father Adam ﷺ. 313 of them were given Scriptures of Divine Revelation. These prophets are also referred to as Messengers, and to them the angel Gabriel ﷺ appeared and delivered the Divine Message. There have been 312 messengers, including myself there are now 313. Gabriel appeared to these messengers with clear evidence and revealed to them each a Holy Book. (This distinction is in Arabic between 'Nabiyy' – Prophet, and 'Rasūl' – Messenger. A Rasūl is also a Nabiyy, prophet, but in addition he is a messenger, as explained above.) To the other prophets Gabriel did not appear, but they may have seen visions or dreams, or heard invisible voices, informing them of Allah Almighty's Commands.

Of these 313 messengers, 28 were specially distinguished, and 18 of them are mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. It is written:

'And We elected them and We guided them to a straight path.' [6:87]

And He has made reference to eight others in other Surahs of the Holy Qur'ān. All twenty-eight are mentioned, beginning with our father Adam who was the first man and the first prophet, and I am the twenty-eighth prophet mentioned in this final revelation, the prophet of the last times.

Of the 28 prophets mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān seven were messengers, which means they were given revealed scripture. The first was Seth, the second Idrīs (Enoch), the third Abraham, the fourth Moses, the fifth David, the sixth Jesus, on all of whom be peace, and the seventh myself, the Prophet of the Last Age. To


these seven, scripture was revealed in the following proportion: of 100 pages 50 were given to Seth, 30 pages to Idrīs, 10 pages to Adam ﷺ and 10 to Abraham; to David was given the Zabūr (the Psalms), to Jesus the Injil (the Gospels), to Moses the Torah and to me the Holy Qur’ān. The revelation of all these Scriptures began during the month of Ramadan; on the first of the month the Torah was revealed, on the seventh day the Psalms (Zabūr) the Gospels on the thirteenth day, and the Holy Qur’ān was sent down on the twenty-seventh day of the month of Ramadan. This event is written in the Holy Qur’ān itself:

‘... the month of Ramadan, wherein the Qur’ān was sent down to be a guidance to the people, and as clear signs of the Guidance and the Salvation.’ [2:182]

Allah Almighty has created me the most outstanding of all prophets and He has made the Holy Qur’ān the most comprehensive guidance of all the seven revealed Scriptures, and He has honoured my nation more than any nation that came before. On the Day of Judgement no people shall enter paradise before the people of my nation. And of all nations my nation will excel in their heart’s purity and the quality of their Worship. They will also be the most numerous of all nations that have gone before them. This is a grant from the Almighty, the All-Merciful.”

One who gave Counsel to King Solomon

“What creature was it that gave advice to the Prophet Solomon ﷺ?”
the Jews then asked the Holy Prophet.

 UR ENLIGHTENED PROPHET ﷺ answered them and spoke: “It was neither man nor Jinn who gave advice to the Prophet Solomon ﷺ, it was the ant. It is written in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘... an ant said: Ants, enter your dwelling places, lest Solomon and his hosts crush you, being unaware.’ [27:18]

Allah Almighty had given Solomon ﷺ possessions in rich measure and dominion over the world as He had never given to anyone before him, nor after him. Whenever Solomon rode out with his army to set up camp his following occupied an area of 100 farsakh (1 farsakh: 3 miles in length and in breadth). When he set up his royal court, 25 farsakh square were taken up by his men, 25 by the wild beasts accompanying him, 25 by the snakes and dragons in his service and the remaining 25 were filled with the birds and other manner of creatures that were among his following. Now, Solomon, the ‘Prophet-king’ had a large carpet which covered an area of 4 farsakh in length and breadth.

Whenever Solomon ﷺ wished to hold his court he placed 200,000 golden chairs on that carpet for his courtiers and Wazirs from among mankind and the Jinn. There were also 70,000 mihrābs (prayer niches) in one corner of the carpet. In each of these mihrābs stood holy men and ascetics who had renounced the world and were always engaged in worship. Their prayers and supplications were always acceptable to the Divine Presence and had they prayed for the mountains to be moved their prayer would have been answered. There were also 1,200 minbars (pulpits) upon that carpet of Solomon ﷺ and in each one of these minbars stood a very wise and learned person who led a life entirely in

accordance with his teachings; every day they would preach from the vast store of their knowledge. The winds were subservient to Solomon and they carried to him the words of these wise men, and he listened and knew them all.

Solomon ﷺ himself sat on a throne and performed his duties as a ruler. All creatures of the world lined up in a row before him, the birds and winged creatures forming a sort of canopy above him with their wings. The throne of Solomon was made of red gold and it had four corners in each of which grew a golden tree with leaves fashioned of emerald and chrysolite. Every tree bore a golden statue of the Humā-bird. At each foot of the throne was a golden lion, and around its base, there curled a golden dragon. Whenever Solomon would sit on his throne to hold court, the Humā-birds opened their beaks and let out streams of musk and amber scent that filled the air and delighted all those present. When two parties would appear before the king for judgement of their case, the dragon at the base of the throne would attack the one whose claim was unjust. This dragon could distinguish between right and wrong, justice and injustice. The lions also raised their paws and hit their tails on the ground when they recognized the culprit. In this way truth became known from falsehood, plain for anyone to see.

In spite of being ruler of a vast kingdom, the Prophet-king Solomon also worked at a profession; he wove baskets from the fronds of the date palm and sold them. He lived off these earnings and used them to buy barley, have it ground and baked into bread, and with this barley bread he used to break his fast every evening. He owned a rug, which at night he would unroll and lay himself to sleep on. In the morning he would again busy himself with the job of ruling his kingdom. So even though he possessed silver and gold in great measure and sat on a priceless throne, he never lived in a kingly fashion, and never exhibited any pomp about his person.

At his side stood a guardian angel in whose hand was a fiery sword with which he would drive off all rebellious Jinn and giants who attempted to do harm to Solomon ﷺ. The angel would kill any creature which raised its hand against Solomon ﷺ and in this way he was able to maintain his power over all his subjects. The

fiery sword of that angel would instantly turn to ashes any that it struck. For this reason all the Jinn and fairies found it preferable to become his servants.

The Prophet Solomon was gifted with understanding the tongues of all creatures. One day they came to him and asked:

‘O illustrious king, Allah has given you such a mighty kingdom and all the riches in the world, why is it that you persist in this basket-weaving to make a living for your family?’

He answered them: ‘I am nothing but a slave and the son of a slave of my Lord. All this kingdom and all this power are as nothing to me.’

And he wept. Solomon always fought the disbelieving and rebellious, calling them to the true religion and the worship of the one God, Allah Almighty.

On this glorious carpet there was one place which served as a kitchen, and one place which stabled the horses. The Jinns and fairies took huge boulders, placed them on the carpet and made them into cooking pots. So big were these stone pots that each one of them held 100 batman (1 batman: 2-8 oke). Also there were big bowls, each one of them the size of a small pond. It is written in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘...fashioning from him whatsoever he would, places of worship, statues, porringers like water troughs, and anchored cooking pots. Labour, O House of David in thankfulness, for few indeed are those that are thankful among My servants.’ [34:12]

Around these huge bowls were arrayed smaller pans and vessels for everyone to eat from.

The Prophet Solomon had 1,000 wives and 700 slave girls. The giants among the Jinn had made a palace for all these women, within which they lived, each in separate apartments, and each did her own work and cooking. This palace stood on 1,000 pedestals. These pedestals were of gold and at their base each stood one servant from among the Jinns. Whenever Solomon wished to travel, these Jinns lifted the whole palace and all its inhabitants up on their shoulders and transported it to wherever the king wished to go. The wind would raise up the whole carpet when a journey was intended, and it was done in such a way that nobody on it was in any way disturbed in what he was doing. The cooks cooking

in their kitchen, the holy men praying in their prayer-niches, the Lords and Wazirs of fairies and mankind at court, the children at their play – everybody continued to do what they had been doing before the carpet took flight in the air. The people on the earth would stand and watch the court of Solomon fly by. Thus Allah speaks in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘And to Solomon the wind, strongly blowing, that ran his command unto the kind that We had blessed.’ [21:81]

The winds would carry Solomon ﷺ over a distance that would take a wayfarer six months to cover: all the way from Jerusalem to Kabul.

‘And to Solomon the wind; its morning course was a month’s journey, and its evening course was a month’s journey.’ [34:12]

By the command of Allah Almighty the wind carried him over a distance of one month and returned him the same day.

One day as the Prophet Solomon was passing over the land of Hġjāz (Arabia) he espied there one ant. The ant also saw the prophet and his armies passing by and it spoke to its fellow ants:

‘Go and enter your dwelling places so that Solomon’s soldiers will not trample on us.’ [27:17]

The wind carried the words of the ant back to the Prophet Solomon ﷺ who ordered: ‘Bring this ant before me!’ The ant itself was lame and it came limping along. Solomon asked it why it had spoken these words, for ‘don’t you know,’ he said, ‘that no harm comes to anyone from a prophet or from his armies save to the unbelievers?’

The ant answered Solomon, the prophet: ‘O, Messenger of God, you speak the truth. But I am the king of the ants, they are in my charge, I am responsible for their welfare, they are confided to my care. If one of your men had by mistake stepped on one of my soldiers, he would have fallen from his station of obedience through his unawareness, and this was what I wished to avoid by ordering my armies under the ground.’ The Prophet Solomon ﷺ smiled at these words of the ant, as it is said in the Qur’ān:

‘But he smiled, laughing at its words and he said: My Lord, dispose me that I may be thankful for Thy blessing.’ [27:18]

He spoke to the ant: ‘O ant, you have spoken wisely. Give us more advice from the fount of your wisdom!’

The ant replied: ‘O Prophet of God, your noble name is Solomon. Do you know what is the meaning of this name?’ Solomon said: ‘Tell it to me.’

‘Solomon,’ answered the ant, ‘means ‘free from defect’, ‘safe’. The Almighty has created you perfectly and free of fault, and it is for you to protect Allah’s creatures from injustice and harm. And why do you think that Allah Almighty has made the winds subservient to you? It is in order to show you that this world is like the wind: in one instant it is past and gone. All the might and the power of the world is like the wind; it passes away and nothing remains of it. Or do you see any trace of the wind? That is how it will be from the beginning to the end. He is a true servant of his Lord who is constant in his worship and his obedience, and whoever entreats his Lord for forgiveness for his sins and wrong-doings – even those committed unawares – he who always tries to do justice and who is proud, even if he is made the ruler of the world, for only the humble of spirit will be admitted to the court of that King who is the Ruler in all Eternity.’

This was the advice of the ant, who was neither of mankind nor of the Jinn.” This then was the question about King Solomon ﷺ.

There is yet another story about Solomon and the ant. Once when Solomon ﷺ was King, holding his court, all the great ones from among the nations came to him with their greetings and their congratulations on his felicity, bringing with them all manner of precious gifts to show their respect and gratitude for his just and wise rule. The king of the ants in a far away country also heard of Solomon’s might, and decided to go to him to pay his respects. So as not to go empty-handed, the ant thought for a long time what sort of a gift he could bring to the king; at last he chose to bring him a nice fat leg of a cricket. So he set out on his way, dragging that big cricket shank many times his own size along with him. With much trouble the ant made his way, which was very long, and the cricket leg was very hard for him to carry. The winds brought King Solomon news of this ant, saying “On the far side of the sea, beyond the high mountains the king of the ants has set out to visit your Majesty, bearing a heavy gift for you.”

Solomon commanded the wind to pick up that ant gently and to bring it into his presence without delay. So the wind picked

up the ant with its cricket leg and set it down upon the throne of Solomon. The ant spoke to Solomon in a loud little voice, and it said: "O, Messenger of God, I have come to offer you my condolences."

"What!" exclaimed Solomon, "everyone is coming to congratulate me on my good fortune, how is it you are offering condolences instead?"

The ant replied: "Ah, Messenger of God, you have been burdened with such a heavy burden, what else can I do but condole? With the responsibility for such a vast community, such a great kingdom, you will be answerable in the Presence of your Lord for every injustice, every little mistake in judgement that you may have committed; how can you know what you will be called to account for? That is why I have come to commiserate with you rather than to congratulate you on your power and sovereignty."

Then Solomon asked the ant: "Why have you come all dressed in black?"

The ant replied: "That is the manner of those offering condolences, so, I too, have worn black today. And what is it that you have brought along with you? I have brought a present for you, O Prophet of God."

Then Solomon the Prophet-king ﷺ smiled, and he said: "What is your present, O ant?"

"It is a nice, fat leg of cricket which is a feast to my people."

"That may well be," said the prophet, "for you ants a cricket leg may well be worth feasting, but for us of mankind, what value could it have?"

The ant then spoke: "O Prophet of God, whatever the Lord has sent to you, never regard it as too small or too unfitting for a single instant; for if the Lord blesses that gift, He may make it increase and unfold to such an extent, that even your whole army would not be able to finish it up. For whatever your Lord has sent you, be grateful. This cricket leg is counted among the choice delicacies with my people, its every part has a different flavour and deliciousness: the skin has a taste of its own, its meat is of superb quality, the fat is so soft and nearly sweet, the bones and the marrow within them are our greatest delight – there is ever so much to be said about this cricket leg!"

While the Prophet Solomon ﷺ looked on, indeed, the cricket leg had grown to the size of a giant's thigh, and he ordered his cook to put in their pots and to cook a meal of it. When it was ready everybody ate of it, the court and the entire army, all the wives, children and whoever was of the royal household. In short, thousands and thousands were fed and made a feast of it, until they were filled and could eat no more. Still there was plenty left over, by the abundant grace of the Almighty Provider.

From this we may learn that whatever effort we make for the sake of Allah Almighty, Allah gives us increase and completes our action for us, just as that ant who set out on an impossible task, trying to cross those high mountains and vast oceans bearing an astoundingly great weight. Of its own it could never have accomplished that task, but Allah sent the wind to meet it and to give it transport and to help it attain its goal. So it is with our worship: even if we are only able to do very little, in time our Lord will requite us with great rewards for having tried to draw near Him with our failing strength.

Then Solomon ﷺ spoke to the ant. "O king of the ants, give us some more of your wisdom, leave us with some of your good advice!"

Spoke the ant: "O Prophet of God, be contented with what you possess, do not desire what is not given to you. This world is of a passing nature and the hereafter is everlasting; exert yourself for the sake of this world just enough to get by and invest your strongest efforts for the life to come."

This was the advice of the ant to the Prophet Solomon and the ant was neither of mankind nor of the Jinn.

Those who came to the world without parentage

“O Muḥammad,” they said, “tell us about what came into this world without having been born.”

THE HOLY PROPHET, the Crown of Creation ﷺ replied: “These were six. The first was our father Adam, the first man and the first Prophet. Adam was created from clay without having father or mother. He was given soul and the angels were ordered to bow down before him. Then they brought leaves from the heavenly gardens and clothed him therein, and on his head they placed a crown of flowers. They sat him on a throne and tied him fast to it with a belt, and carried him on their shoulders to his dwelling place in the garden of Eden.

The second being to come into the world without parentage was Adam’s wife Eve. Adam, being alone in the Jannah (paradise garden) without any company of his own kind, grew sad and morose. So Allah Almighty sent a state of sleep upon Adam (who hitherto had not known sleep) and He created Eve. He ordered the angel Gabriel to take from his side one of his short ribs, and from this rib Eve was created. The operation caused Adam no pain, for had the creation of Eve been in any way distressful to Adam, never would there be the love and companionship between men and women in the world as we know it. Thus Eve was created from Adam’s rib; and the Lord commanded the winds to comb her hair and to decorate her with a crown on her head, to clothe her with beautiful gowns of silk and brocade from paradise, and they placed her on a throne alongside the throne of Adam.

When Adam awoke from his swoon, he discovered sitting beside him a lovely lady of most charming aspect. Now Riḍwān, guardian angel of paradise, came up to him and decided to test Adam ﷺ a bit. Because Adam had been taught the names of all things by his Lord, *‘and He taught Adam the names all of them.’* [2:29]

he knew more than the angels. But Riḍwān wanted to put his knowledge to the test. So when Adam awoke from his sleep, he asked him: ‘Who is this person beside you?’ Adam answered him: ‘This is a woman, she is my wife.’ ‘What is her name?’ asked Riḍwān. ‘Her name is Eve.’ ‘And why is her name Eve?’ asked the angel. ‘Because she was created from the living,’ answered Adam (in Arabic Eve is ‘Ḥawwā’ which is derived from the same root as Ḥayy, the living). ‘Whom was she created for?’ the angel continued to ask. ‘She was created for me, of course,’ said Adam, and the angel was amazed at how Adam knew all these things from within without having been informed of them by any outward source.

The third being to come into the world without earthly parentage was the camel of the Prophet Ṣāliḥ. Allah Almighty created it from a stone. Ṣāliḥ was preaching to his people and they refused to listen to him, denying the Divine Guidance. On a particular day, which was one of their feast days, they were busy decking out their idols in the most splendid fashion, honouring and decorating them by every means. The prophet Ṣāliḥ ﷺ rose against them and said: ‘O foolish people, what are you doing this for? Why do you give so much honour to these dolls which you have fashioned with your own hands while you fail to acknowledge the works of your Creator, the only true God who alone is powerful to create and destroy?’ His people said: ‘If you are really the Prophet you claim to be, prove it! If all you say is really true, bring us some miracle that we can see, that will make us understand your refusal to worship the gods of your fathers whom we worship!’ Ṣāliḥ ﷺ asked them: ‘What sort of a miracle?’ They pointed to a big rock and said: ‘Make that rock turn into a camel, and let it be a big camel, with black eyes, of reddish hue and curly-haired, and let it be a she-camel with young. When we see this miracle performed, then we will believe in your preaching.’ So the Prophet Ṣāliḥ ﷺ stood up and prayed to his Lord and said: ‘O Lord, from your glorious Might and endless Power, make the wish of these unbelievers come true, so that they might believe in You and have proof of Your Existence!’

Before he had even finished his prayer, that rock began to heave and groan as a woman in childbirth. All the unbelievers turned around and marveled at the sound, and as they looked

on, the rock split in two. From one of its halves emerged a camel just as they had described it. And as they were yet watching, this camel gave birth to a calf, which began suckling without delay. In front of their eyes it began to grow until it was the same size as its mother.

However, even witnessing this miracle did not suffice for the people of Šāliḥ to become believers, they persisted in their stubborn denial, and their punishment is well known.

The fourth creature to come to the world without being born was the ram of Abraham عليه السلام. When Abraham was ordered to sacrifice his son Ismā‘īl عليه السلام he obediently prostrated before his God and said: ‘O Lord, Thy will be done,’ and he went straight away to Ismā‘īl’s mother Hājar and said to her: ‘O Hājar, bathe the lad and comb his hair, dye his hair, and hands with henna and his eyes with Kohl, put on his best clothes; I am going to take my son with me to visit a very close friend of mine.’ So Hājar did as he bade her to do, then Abraham took Ismā‘īl by the hand to go, but without Hājar’s knowledge he also took with him a knife and some rope. As he was leaving, Hājar called after him: “O Abraham, don’t stay out long with my son, already I am sick with longing for him! I cannot stand being separated from him for very long.”

Abraham took the boy and led him to ‘Arafāt. While they were away, the accursed devil came to Hājar and said to her: ‘Do you know where Abraham is taking your son?’ ‘He is taking him to see a close friend,’ said she. ‘O no, he is taking him away to sacrifice him!’ ‘Impossible,’ said Hājar, ‘we do not know of human sacrifices in our religion.’ ‘He has seen a dream,’ said the devil, ‘which he takes to be the truth; he believes Allah is ordering him to slaughter his son, but all this is the work of the devil.’ Our mother Hājar said: ‘If he has seen a dream, it is the truth, no doubt; and if that is what our Lord has decreed, then we will act in accordance with it.’ And she chased the devil away from her doorstep. After this failure, the devil caught up with Abraham on his way and he said to him: ‘Who has ever heard of such a thing, a father going to slaughter his own beloved son? You have seen a dream inspired by the devil, who intends to turn you away from your Lord.’ Abraham recognized Shayṭān the accursed, and chased him away. Finally, the devil accosted Ismā‘īl, thinking he might

prevail upon the child, and said to him: ‘Your father is leading you to a place where he is planning to cut your throat!’ ‘O no,’ said the boy, my father is taking me to visit a close friend of his.’ ‘What for then does he carry with him a knife and a length of rope? In truth, he is going to slaughter you.’ Then Ismā‘īl picked up a stone and threw it at the devil.

After a little while, the devil tried to persuade him again, saying to himself: ‘This lad is but a child, him I will be able to mislead.’ He again spoke to Ismā‘īl, and again Ismā‘īl عليه السلام chased him away with stones. Three times in all he hurled stones at Shayṭān: This happened at the place where to this day the pilgrims perform the rite of ‘Rajm’, the symbolic stoning of Shayṭān during the pilgrimage. The last stone he threw hit Satan in the eye, after which he finally gave up and left them.

When they arrived at ‘Arafāt, Abraham spoke to him: ‘O my son, our All-knowing Lord has ordered me to sacrifice you, my beloved son, and I know I must obey.’ Ismā‘īl عليه السلام replied:

*‘O my father, if this is the Lord’s Will,
even if I had a thousand lives I would sacrifice them all for His sake;
do as you were told to do. My father, do as thou art bidden; thou shalt
find me, God willing, one of the steadfast.’ [37:104]*

Then Abraham bade his son lie down, and taking his knife in his hand he said to Ismā‘īl: ‘O my son, surrender to your Lord.’ Ismā‘īl answered: ‘O father, better to tie my hands and feet, lest I twitch under the knife involuntarily. And take care that no blood splashes on your clothes. Cut my throat with one quick stroke of the knife, lest pity enter your heart and you will not be able to carry out your Lord’s command. When you return to our home please give my Salāms to my bereaved mother and tell her not to forget to pray for me, for she will not see me ever again.’ On hearing these words from his son, Abraham’s heart was broken and he began to weep. Ismā‘īl said to him: ‘Quickly father, do what you were bidden, for the sake of the Lord Almighty.’ Abraham عليه السلام raised his knife to cut Ismā‘īl’s throat with one quick stroke, but the knife would not cut. As is stated in the Qur’ān:

*‘When they had surrendered and he flung him upon his brow, we
called unto him, Abraham thou hast confirmed the vision; even so We
recompense the good-doers. This is indeed a manifest trial.’ [37:105]*

Abraham عليه السلام tried again and again, 70 times in all, but the knife refused to cut. At last he waxed angry and in his exasperation he flung the knife at a big stone, and the stone was cut into two parts, so sharp was the knife. So Abraham عليه السلام voiced his anger at the knife and said: 'Look at you, you are sharp enough to cut that stone into two, yet you cannot manage to cut through the soft flesh of my son? What is wrong with you?'

By the will of God the knife was given a voice to speak, and it said 'O Abraham, why was that fire of Nimrod unable to burn you?' 'Because my Lord had ordered it to be cool and not to burn me,' answered Abraham:

We said: *'O fire, be cool and safety for Abraham!'* [21:69]

Had He only ordered for the fire to be cold and not added to His Command for it to also be safety for Abraham, Abraham would surely have frozen to death in the midst of that fire.

The knife then spoke: 'O Abraham, for your sake the fire was ordered only once to be cold; since you have laid your son in this place, the Command not to cut a single one of his hairs has come to me seventy times from the Lord Almighty.'

Then Abraham عليه السلام beheld the angel Gabriel عليه السلام coming from afar, and he was calling: '*Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar, Allāhu Akbar, Lā ilāha illā Llāh, Allāhu Akbar!*' and he sensed that they were soon to be saved. Ismā'il added: '*Wa li-llāhi l-ḥamd.*' (God is the greatest, there is no God but Allah, and to Him belongs all praise – this is the call of the pilgrims everywhere on the Day of 'Īd, the festival of the sacrifice which completes the Ḥajj).

The angel Gabriel had brought with him a ram and said to Abraham 'O Abraham, take this ram and slaughter it in Ismā'il's stead. This ram has been brought from paradise where it pastured in preparation for this very day, and it was created within a time span of 400 years. This ram was not born as ordinary sheep are, Allah Almighty has created it specially for this day which is to be a feast-day from now on.'

The fifth thing into come to the world without being born of it was the staff of Moses عليه السلام. Moses became a prophet and began calling Pharaoh and his people to the true religion. Pharaoh was stiff-necked and refused to believe in the message. One day he was discussing with his Wazirs and ministers what measures could

be taken against Moses, because Moses had become a nuisance to him, not leaving his doorstep for a whole year and bothering him day and night. The ministers said: 'Moses is a magician, we can fight him only with the help of other magicians.' This was a time when much magic was rampant in the world and only a true prophet could conquer them all. So Pharaoh ordered all the sorcerers to come and assemble before him. Messengers were sent out to the far corners of the earth to call them together: to Babylon and Kashmir, China, Manchuria and Mongolia, to India, Abyssinia and Zanzibar, to Morocco and France, to Iran, Turan and Russia, to the West and to the East – and they gathered all the wizards and witches from every land in one place. In all there were 70,000 magicians assembled, and 400 of them were outstanding in the ranks of their art. The greatest of them was blind. Pharaoh appointed one day for them to meet with Moses. 'Your tryst shall be upon the Feast Day,' said Moses.

'Let the people be mustered at the high noon.' [20:62]

Once a year Pharaoh proclaimed a great day of feasting and sent out messengers one month in advance to call folk to a great gathering on that day. This was to take place on a great open field on which they erected a tall marble column the height of which was 300 arshin (1 arshin – 27 inches). This column was inlaid with gold and precious stones and in the top they placed a moon made of gold, crowned by a great jewel, which shone in the dark and lit up the plain by night. On the appointed day, Pharaoh set out his troops in splendid array, with a marching band and drums making a great clamour and clanging of arms like thunder in the sky. In their midst marched all the magicians and wizards.

Moses and Aaron stood there awaiting them clad in their sheep wool cloaks and felt caps. Pharaoh pointed to them and said: 'That is Moses and his brother Aaron.' They told their Grand Wizard about him who asked them 'What is Moses wearing?' for he was blind. They answered truthfully: 'He is clad in a woollen cloak and a felt cap.' The chief magician then said: 'Then he is a true Prophet.' Moses stood leaning on his staff. A messenger came to him to ask who should display his art first, Moses or the magicians. Moses exhorted them to follow the straight path and told them they could be the first to throw their staffs. They listened

to him and did as he said which was counted to their benefit; it was the seed of faith and obedience in their hearts. So they threw their staffs and ropes and whatever they had with them into the middle of that great assembly place, 700 camel loads full in all and with the heat of the sun and the craft of their magic arts these all turned into snakes and dragons, spitting fire, breathing smoke, writhing and crawling about. When Moses beheld this sight he became perturbed and was frightened, not of the magic power of the magicians, but because he feared that the people would not be able to distinguish between this sorcery and a true miracle. If he brought forth a snake, they had also brought forth snakes – what was the difference?

Then revelation from his Lord reached him:

'Cast down what is in thy right hand, O Moses,' [20:71] and Moses cast down his staff.

'Then Moses cast his staff and lo, it forthwith swallowed up their lying invention.' [26:44]

Moses's staff, by the Will of the Almighty, turned into a terrible dragon with 70 feet and standing 70 arshin high. It opened its mouth, which was like a cave with teeth as great as elephant tusks, and from it fell a fiery rain upon Pharaoh and his men. This dragon swallowed up all the snakes and other illusions the magicians had conjured up, and it swallowed all the trees and stones which were on that plain. Then it turned to attack the magicians themselves who all fled in terror. The army of Pharaoh broke up into terrible confusion and fled the field, terrified and defeated. Seeing himself deserted, Pharaoh himself turned and fled to his palace, onto the highest tower on which there was a roofed shelter, and he locked himself into that enclave, quaking with fear. The dragons killed everything within sight and pursued those who fled into the city.

Moses and Aaron were left alone in the field. They turned to leave and when they reached their quarters among the Children of Israel, Moses received a Divine Command to take hold once again of his staff. By that time the dragon had reached the palace of Pharaoh, was taking it between its jaws and beginning to crush it. His mouth was opened 80 arshin wide, and the palace between his jaws was as a box of matches. Pharaoh in his fear

began to scream at Moses, saying: 'Stop him, hold him up, we will believe in you and follow you if you save us from this monster, we will even let the People of Israel go!' So on the Command of the Almighty, Moses picked up his staff and it instantly regained its former shape.

The magicians were all waiting for this moment, expectant of what would appear: for had it all been magic, all would have now returned to its former state and no trace of the devastation remained, but it was not so. Nothing was as it had been, their sticks and ropes were gone and they had disappeared. The magicians understood that this was a true miracle, and they came before Moses ﷺ all together and accepted his guidance and his religion.

'... so the sorcerers were cast down, bowing themselves. They said: we believe in the Lord of all Being, The Lord of Moses and Aaron.' [28:46]

All of the 70,000 sorcerers turned towards Moses. When Pharaoh saw this, he waxed exceedingly wroth and said to them:

'Who gave you leave to believe in Moses before I ordered you to do so? Certainly he is the secret head of your sect, and you have learned all your arts from him. For your disobedience to me I will punish you. I shall assuredly cut off alternately your hands and feet, then I shall crucify you all together.' [26:49]

The magicians replied: 'The punishment you can inflict upon us concerns us only in this world; when we die and have passed beyond death we will be safe from your tortures. But we will not turn away from our belief for the punishment of the hereafter is forever and abiding.' And they accepted Pharaoh's judgement. However, there is another tradition, according to which Moses prayed to his Lord on behalf of the reformed magicians that He might forgive them and spare them for their having turned to righteousness. Allah alone knows what truly occurred. Let them serve us as an example, that no harm will come to him who turns to Allah Almighty, he will be safe from punishment in the life to come.

The sixth creature to come into this world without birth was the bat. The Almighty had sent the Prophet Jesus ﷺ to the world to lead unto the straight path those who had gone astray. The unbelievers said to him: 'If you can perform a miracle for us we

will believe in you and your Prophethood.’ Jesus said to them: ‘What sort of a miracle do you want? By the Will of the Almighty I shall demonstrate to you His Power.’ The unbelievers asked for all sorts of miracles like the healing of the dead:

‘I will also heal the blind and the leper, and bring to life the dead, by the leave of God.’ [3:142]

Allah Almighty made all these miracles come to pass through the blessing invested in Jesus’s prayers. Still the most stubborn of the unbelievers would not accept his prophethood and said: ‘You are but a magician, a sorcerer.’

One day when Jesus was preaching, the unbelievers approached him and said: ‘Perform for us a miracle, so that we might believe in you. ‘What miracle do you want this time?’ he said to them.

They said: ‘Fashion for us a bird from this lump of clay. A bird with no feathers, covered with skin; and let it have teeth like a wild beast and prominent ears. Let it fly in the air like the birds, but bear young as mammals do and suckle them. Let it be as a man who laughs and have a flow of blood after the manner of women.’

Jesus said: ‘And if by the leave of God I fashion for you such a strange bird, and Allah gives it a soul and it flies away, will you then believe and follow me?’

‘Yes, we will!’ they promised. So Jesus took up a lump of clay and made for them the shape of the bird they desired, and he blew on it; the Almighty gave it life and it flew off.

‘I will create for you out of clay as the likeness of a bird; then I will breathe into it, and it will be a bird, by the leave of God.’ [3:43]

This was the sixth body which came into the world without being born.”

There is another story about Jesus and the bat. One day four beings came to Jesus. One was the sun, the other was water, the third was the wind and the fourth was the snake. They each spoke to Jesus and said: “O Messenger of God, pray on our behalf that Allah may grant us our desire.”

“What is it that you wish for?” Jesus asked them.

The sun said: “I am tiring of having to shine on the world day after day; I ask of my Lord to let me shine one day, and not shine on the next day.”

The water said: “I have to flow by day and by night. Please ask my Lord to make me flow sometimes, and at other times not have to flow.”

The wind asked: “I must blow day and night; ask the Lord to let me blow only sometimes and at other times not to blow at all, or to blow as strongly as I like.”

And the snake said: “I am tired of having to crawl along below the earth; let the Lord give me a pair of wings and fly about as the birds do in the air.”

Jesus told them: “Wait awhile and let me think.”

At this moment the bat came to Jesus and said to him: “O Prophet of Allah, whatever the Lord has created, He has made it to be in perfect order and in the very best way. If things were to become as these creatures wish it to be, the order of the world would be overthrown. If the sun were to shine one day and not the next, there would remain no life on earth, for all living things depend on light and the heat of the sun. If the sun were to stay shining on one place for a very long time, everything there would burn up and die. No, the Lord has made the best arrangement, don’t pray for this to come to pass. The water, also, which constantly flows, were it to stop flowing at one place, this place would become flooded and all life there would be drowned. The places it didn’t flow to would dry up, turn into deserts and all life would perish. Again, everything would lose its balance. As for the wind, if it ceased to blow, life would be disturbed, and if it blew too long and too strongly, all would be swept away and carried off. Our Lord has superior knowledge of how things should be arranged. As concerns the snake: even though it is confined to its holes in the earth, mankind is still not safe from its mischief and malice; what then, if it flew around in the skies like a bird, who could save himself then from its venom?”

Jesus understood that the bat was right and he did not pray for the four supplicants. Whereupon, those four turned into bitter enemies of the bat. The sun swore that it would burn and break the bat’s wings if it caught it flying about; the water vowed it would not let the bat drink, it would drown him if he tried; the wind swore to blow strong and hard and break the bat’s wings to pieces; and the snake threatened to bite off its head wherever it

would chance upon a bat. The bat heard their words and grew fearful and came to Jesus, crying: “O Prophet of God, I came to you with my advice because I wished well for mankind and wished to prevent harm. Now I have made four terrible enemies for myself, and I am only a very small, weak creature, I seek help!”

Jesus prayed to the Lord for the bat, and the Lord revealed to Jesus ﷺ: “I have created the bat in such a manner that it never need see the sun, it flies only by night. As for the wind, it need not fear, its wings are made only of a piece of skin that the wind can have no effect upon. It will also have no need of drinking water; in its stomach there is a special place in which it collects the liquid it has taken from the fruits that it has eaten every time it feels thirst. It will supply its need from the storage tank within it, never will it have to alight to drink water. And as for the snake, the urine of the bat will be poisonous to the snake, any snake that comes in touch with the bat’s urine will die, and the snake shall fly from the bat’s smell.”

This story is about the bat, and it also contains a lesson for the sons of man: Man, too, has four enemies who are trying to destroy him in the same way the enemies of the bat tried to harm it. These enemies are the Nafs (his lower self), Dunyā (worldliness), Hawā (vain desire) and Shayṭān. But by perfecting his faith man may gain safety from these terrible enemies; if he nourishes his faith, Allah Almighty will send him protection from his enemies just as He sent protection from its enemies to the bat.

The Staff of Moses

Then they asked the twentieth question: “*Tell us about the staff of Moses, O Muḥammad, where did it come from and what did it look like?*”

THE PRIDE OF CREATION, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā ﷺ replied:

“The staff of Moses originated in paradise, and its top end was forked. The Prophet Adam ﷺ had cut it from one of the trees in paradise. When he was expelled from the gardens, he brought with him three things: one was the staff of Moses, the other was the signet-ring of Solomon and the third were two leaves from the trees of paradise which he and Eve used to cover their nakedness.

‘... and they took to stitching upon themselves leaves of the Garden.’

[20:19]

When Adam ﷺ came down to the earth one of the leaves of paradise was eaten by four animals. After eating the leaf, these four animals each manifested very remarkable properties: one of them was the musk deer which inhabits the province of Hatay; another was the whale from whom ambergris is obtained; the third part was eaten by the silk worm which spins pure silk, and the fourth part was eaten by the bee which produces honey and wax. All of these substances are for us reminders of paradise.

The other leaf was distributed throughout the world, and from it sprang all the loveliness on the earth, all the sweet-scented flowers and useful healing herbs – this came from the gift of the second leaf of paradise.

The secret of King Solomon’s power over all creatures, including the winds and the unseen beings, lay in the seal of the ring which had come to him from our father Adam ﷺ, from paradise.

The third gift from paradise was the staff of Moses. This stick Adam kept with him as long as he lived in the world. Then it was passed down to his sons until it finally came to Shu‘ayb (Jethro). Moses came to stay with Shu‘ayb after he had fled from Egypt, and he was shepherding Shu‘ayb’s flock. Shu‘ayb had given him

his staff and said to him: 'Do not go near the valley of Zinhar. There lives a mighty dragon who will do harm to you and your flock. Whoever has gone to that valley, has not returned.'

Moses looked after Shu'ayb's sheep. One day it happened that the sheep took the road towards that valley and nothing that Moses did could dissuade them from going that way. All he could do was to follow his sheep. They went straight to that valley of Zinhar and began pasturing there. The Lord sent upon Moses an irresistible drowsiness and he fell into a deep sleep, with his staff by his side.

Meanwhile the frightful dragon awoke and came out of his hole. He saw Moses and the flock and prepared to attack them. By the leave of Allah Almighty that staff came alive and turned into a very huge dragon that fought the dragon of Zinhar and defeated him. After this it returned to its former shape and lay down at Moses's side. When Moses awoke, he saw his sheep peacefully grazing but his staff was covered with blood, and when he looked about him, he saw bits and pieces of the dragon's body scattered about; signs that a fierce battle had been waged. Moses thanked his Lord from the bottom of his heart, and upon his safe return with his flock, he informed Shu'ayb and all his family of what had happened. Everyone went out to see the slain dragon, and they saw that Moses had told the truth, so they thanked the Lord and brought sacrifices. Now Moses knew about the miraculous powers of his staff.

Whenever Moses felt hungry, he just planted his stick in the ground, and an instant it became a tree on which hung many tasty kinds of foods. When he felt thirsty, he struck his staff against a rock and from it would gush a spring for him to drink from. If he came to a well, the water level of which was too low to reach, he would let down his stick and the water would rise to the top of the well. When he grew tired, he would mount his staff like a horse and ride it; if he was travelling by night, the staff would light up his way for him like a lantern. When he came to a great expanse of water, a river or lake, the staff would become as a bridge for him to cross. When he fell asleep, the wonderful staff would perform guard duty for him ... and its miracles were very many.

For a long time Moses ^{عليه السلام} shepherded Shu'ayb's sheep. Then one day he received the revelation from his Lord to go to Egypt and to call Pharaoh to the true religion. Moses ^{عليه السلام} took leave of Shu'ayb and set out on his way to Egypt. He arrived in Egypt and knocked with his staff on Pharaoh's gate, and the palace was shaken as if by an earthquake and its roof cracked open."

The rest of this story will be told in its own place, *inshā'a llāh*.

The Stone of Moses

“O Muḥammad, tell us also of the Stone of Moses,” they went on to ask.

THE HOLY PROPHET ﷺ answered: “The Stone of Moses came from the Jabal Qubays (a mountain in Mecca, overlooking the Holy Mosque) and it was the size of a shield. The manner of manifestation of its miraculous powers was as follows: It was the custom of the Children of Israel to take their ablutions in a state of complete nakedness, without covering their shame. Moses differed from this custom in that he always chose a secluded place for making his ablutions and was never seen by his people without any clothes on. So the rumour spread among the people that Moses did not show himself to anybody because of some blemish on his body; that he had something shameful to hide. Allah Almighty chose to show the Children of Israel that His blessed Prophet was without any spot or fault and let this incident take place.

One day Moses ﷺ was returning from the mountain Ṭūr (Sinai) where he had been speaking with his Lord, and he was ordered by Allah to take a bath of ritual purification. So he went to a secluded spot, far from the people, and took his bath. He had left his clothes lying on a rock. When he had finished bathing he wished to get dressed, but by the will of Allah Almighty the rock came alive, and began to move away, taking along Moses’s clothes. Moses was forced to follow the rock and run after it, but however quickly he ran, he could not catch up with it.

The rock did not stop moving until it rolled into the midst of the encampment of the Children of Israel, where it came to a stop. In this way all the people could see that there was not a thing amiss with the blessed body of their prophet. Moses hurriedly took his clothes off the rock and covered himself, then he picked up his staff and struck the rock twice. Each time he struck it, a breath came out of that stone. Then Moses was addressed by his

Lord: ‘O Moses, take that rock with you wherever you go! You will need it yet.’

From that day on Moses always took the rock with him, until one day they were deep in the desert and had lost their way. They were exhausted from hunger and thirst, and knew not what to do, as it is written in the Holy Qur’ān:

‘Said He, then it shall be forbidden them for forty years, while they are wandering in the earth.’ [5:29]

The Children of Israel were left in the desert for forty years. They came to Moses in desperation, and Moses prayed to his Lord. Allah then revealed to him: ‘Strike the rock that you carry, as you did before, with your staff.’ So Moses placed the rock on the ground and struck it with his staff, and by the Grace of the Almighty Lord, there sprang forth from it twelve springs of cool, refreshing water, as it is written:

‘And when Moses sought water for his people, so We said: ‘Strike with thy staff the rock’: and there gushed forth from it twelve fountains and all the people knew now their drinking place.’ [2:57]

These twelve springs turned into twelve rivers all running in various directions. The People of Israel were made up of twelve tribes, each tribe composed of 50,000 men. Each tribe took its place at one of the streams and drank their fill, gave drink to their animals, bathed and washed their clothes therein, was grateful and rejoiced. When the time had come and the People of Israel were freed at last from their sojourn in the desert, Moses picked up his stone, and everything became as dry as it had been before.

This is the miracle of the ‘Stone of Moses’.”

THE TWENTY-SECOND QUESTION

Moses and Pharaoh

“Tell us the story of Moses and Pharaoh, how did Pharaoh end?” they asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

“And what was that place of which it is said that it saw the sun only once, and will never see it again until the Day of Judgement?”

THE BLESSED PROPHET, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā ﷺ told them: “The place that saw the sun only once was the bottom of the Sea of Ṭūr. This is how it happened: After Moses ﷺ left Egypt with the children of Israel, Pharaoh got up and pursued them with his mighty army. They were heavily armed and decked out with all sorts of war gear, and around their horses’ necks they had fastened golden ornaments and trappings, so great was the wealth of Pharaoh. As they rode along, the sun’s reflection on their metal gave off a blinding light. Moses and his people reached the shore of the sea. Then they perceived that they were being followed by Pharaoh’s hosts. Moses comforted his people and told them not to worry as Allah the All Merciful would surely take care of them.

Among the Children of Israel there was a young man, a prophet by the name of Yūsha‘ bin Nūn. To him the people ran and implored him to undertake something. Yūsha‘ then went to Moses ﷺ and entreated him to make supplication of his Lord to save them from Pharaoh’s armies. Moses then prayed to his Lord, and the Lord said to him: ‘Strike upon the sea with your rod twelve times.’

Moses stepped to the shore of the sea and struck it in twelve different places, as the Lord had bidden him do, and behold, the sea parted in twelve places. The waters rose up on either side as mountains, leaving between them twelve passageways. It was at this time that the bottom of the sea saw the light of the sun.

Now there were twelve tribes of Israel and they were to pass each on a separate way through the sea. This prospect disturbed them, so they asked Moses to find some way that they could com-

municate with each other during their passage through the sea. Moses prayed again to his Lord and was told: ‘O Moses, make a sign to the sea with your staff in two places.’

So Moses made a sign in two places, and windows opened in the walls of water through which the Children of Israel could see each other and know of each other’s progress through the sea. When they had reached the other shore safely, Pharaoh and his army had reached the near bank. Seeing that the sea had inexplicably parted and was piled up on the sides as high as mountains, Pharaoh turned his soldiers and said to them: ‘Look how the sea has parted for me and stands in attention before my majesty; it has made way for me and for my armies to pass through dryshod.’ And he cried with a loud voice: ‘I am your Lord most high! God forbid!’

All the army heard his words and they fell down on their faces before their king. Suddenly, however, fear took hold of Pharaoh, and he decided to turn back. At that point Gabriel ﷺ appeared, mounted on a white mare. Pharaoh’s horse was a stallion. When the stallion picked up the scent of that mare, nothing could keep him from following her, he became out of control. Pharaoh could do nothing to stop him and the horse took off after the mare by the force of its instinct. Both horses ran straight towards the sea and the whole army followed them. Those trailing behind and hesitating were forcefully driven in by the angels, who had taken the forms of their sergeants.

Moses ﷺ was watching all this from the other shore, and he wished to strike the sea again with his rod that it might close in upon them, but he was told by his Lord to do nothing but watch. As he looked on, it all began to happen of its own accord, the mountains of water began to close in and collapse on top of the armies, drowning them all at the bottom of the sea:

‘And leave the sea becalmed, they are a drowned host.’ [44:24]

Then all at once there came a voice like the thunder of the heavens and the people of Moses grew very afraid. Moses said to them: ‘Do not fear, it is the voice of the angel Gabriel. The Lord Almighty has destroyed Pharaoh.’”

That is the story of the place the sun reached only once and that it will never see again until the Day of Judgement.

THE TWENTY-THIRD QUESTION

The Table that descended from Heaven

“O Muḥammad,” they asked next, “tell us the story of the table that was sent down to Jesus. Who ate from it? And what happened to those who did not eat from it?”

THE HOLY PROPHET ﷺ replied: “In the time of Jesus the people came to him demanding miracles before they would believe in him. One day they asked for a table full of food to be sent down from heaven. At first, Jesus refused to pray for such a thing, but they persisted. So at last he ordered them to fast for forty days, then he would pray for such a table to be sent down for them, and they would eat from it. But the rich among them did not want to fast, and said ‘We will only believe in you and do as you say if you bring down this table laden with different kinds of food, and if it disappears again into the skies after we have eaten, only to return again for the next meal.’ Only the poor agreed to hold the fast. They said:

‘We desire that we should eat of it and our hearts be at rest, and that we may know that you have spoken the truth to us and that we may be among its witnesses.’ [5:113]

So Jesus ﷺ stood up and prayed, then he raised his hands and made supplication:

‘O God, our Lord, send down upon us a table out of heaven, that shall be for us a feast for the first and the last of us, and a sign from Thee. And provide for us; Thou art the best of providers.’ [5:114]

Before he had completed his prayers, there came a heavenly call, saying: ‘O Jesus, I will send you the Table from heaven, but know, those who do not believe after this sign will be punished as no one has ever been punished before.’ Jesus told the people of his Lord’s words and of His anger and the threat of His punishment, and they accepted these conditions. Then before everyone’s eyes, a table began descending from heaven until it came to rest on the

ground in front them. It was covered with a white cloth. Jesus raised his hands in a prayer of gratitude and said: ‘O Lord, make this table a mercy for us, and do not cause it to be a punishment.’ Then Jesus turned to the people: ‘Place someone from your midst,’ he said, ‘and let him uncover what our Lord has presented us with.’ They answered ‘That is your business, nobody can do it but you.’

So Jesus ﷺ uncovered the spread, while intoning the words: ‘In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate’. Everyone crowded around to see what was on the table, and they saw one fried fish, five loaves of bread and one glass of vinegar. Also there were some olives on a plate, and different sorts of vegetables. Jesus invited the people to come and eat of the food presented to them in this miraculous way. They, however, were still not satisfied, and wanted to see yet another miracle before they could consent to believe in Jesus. So Jesus ﷺ ordered the fish: ‘By the will of God, come to life again!’ Instantly that fried fish came back to life, stood upright on his tail fin and opened his mouth – and the people drew back in fright. Then Jesus got very angry with them and reproached them for their hard-heartedness and unbelief. ‘First you demanded miracles of this kind, then when your Lord in His Grace showers these blessings upon you, you run away like frightened children and will not accept them!’

They said: ‘O Jesus, it is not our custom to eat food that has dropped from the sky.’ Jesus said: ‘Know then, that this heavenly meal is not meant for you at all; it is for the faithful servants of our Lord who are grateful for the favours of their Lord. This meal is for the poor and the hungry among you, the ill, the weak and those who are sorely tried – for them this meal has been sent by their Lord as a solace.’

These poor ones came forward and ate at the table, and in the aftermath, the poor attained to wealth; the sick regained their health, and everyone’s condition was greatly improved. On that day 1,200 people ate of the heavenly food, and everyone ate his full. After they had eaten, the table rose up and disappeared in the heavens. The next day at the time of the meal the table reappeared, laden as before. This time the people agreed to eat from it, seeing that the food of the day before had done no harm to anyone. Jesus ﷺ told them to be patient for another day and to

let the poor have another feast, on the following day they could have the heavenly meal. And, if Allah Almighty should continue to provide that table, they should have the meal on alternate days. So on the second day, again the poor and weak ate of the wonderful meal, after which the table rose up once more and disappeared.

The next day was the turn of the rich to eat, but on this day the table did not make its appearance as before. The day after, it reappeared for the poor to eat their fill. And so it continued, for forty days, the table came every second day when it was the day for the poor to eat: the rich never had their meal, because they had initially refused it. So it went for forty days, then the table came no more. Those who had not eaten of the heavenly food then said: 'This is nothing but sorcery, an evil magician's trick.' The Lord then revealed to Jesus that the punishment for these stiff-necked people has indeed drawn nigh, and Jesus ﷺ said to his disciples: 'The punishment of the Lord is about to come; do not sleep this night, spend it with me in wakefulness and prayer.'

'If Thou chastisest them, they are Thy servants; if Thou forgivest them, Thou art the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.' [5:117]

There were three hundred people who followed Jesus at that time, these were obedient and did not sleep that night but stayed up with their prophet and prayed. As for those who had called Jesus a sorcerer, they went to bed unheeding of Jesus's words, and when they awoke the next morning, they had been turned into monkeys and pigs. They roamed about their own houses, and their wives and children fled from them, not knowing them. But they were able to recognize each other. When people asked them: 'Aren't you such-and-such a person?' they could not answer, they communicated only by signs.

For seven days they dwelt among their people, then they betook themselves to the wilds and roamed the hills and deserts. This was the punishment for those who had not heeded the warnings of Jesus ﷺ; Allah Almighty has never punished any people in this manner before, or ever again. To disregard the commands of the Almighty has consequences, so take heed, O ye possessors of vision!

The Prophets who were put to death and came back to life

"O Muḥammad, who were the prophets who died and were brought back to life?"

THE PROPHET MUḤAMMAD, the pride of Creation ﷺ replied: "These were the three prophets, Yūnus (Jonah), 'Uzayr (Ezra) and Jerjis.

Once the Prophet Ilyās (Elijah) ﷺ was fleeing from folk who intended to kill him, and he hid himself on a mountain where he immersed himself in the worship of his Lord. Now there was at that time a woman, nursing a young child, whose name was Aminah. Her son's name was Yūnus (Jonah). There were two prophets called by their mother's names; Jesus, son of Mary, and Yūnus, son of Mattā. This woman had served the prophet Ilyās for six years. In the seventh year, her child Yūnus died. She was so distraught that she ran to the wilderness to mourn, and she was led to the hiding place of Ilyās whom she had formerly served. Again she took up her service, but her sorrow was so great that she wept by day and night for her beloved son. Ilyās the prophet ﷺ felt compassion for her and prayed one night to his Lord that He might restore Yūnus to life.

'And Jonah too was one of the envoys.' [38:139]

Thereafter he lived on the earth for a very long time, and his story is well known.

The ‘Gardens of Iram’ built by Shaddād

“Who were the kings who claimed to be God? And tell us about the earthly paradise created by Shaddād (the gardens of Iram)?”

THE HOLY PROPHET ﷺ replied: “There were four such kings: one of them was Nimrod, another was Pharaoh, after him was Nebukadnezar, and lastly there was Shaddād bin ‘Ād. All these four made claims to be gods.

Shaddād the son of ‘Ād created a famous garden which was his vision of paradise. The king ‘Ād had two sons who succeeded him to the throne, but they were bad men and evil kings. After their father’s death they opened the treasury, conscripted a huge army and fell upon all the surrounding kingdoms, pillaging and ravaging and plundering all countries, until they had extended their region from East to West. After establishing this kingdom, the one brother, Shadīd, died, leaving all to his brother, Shaddād. Shaddād became the sole ruler, but he was very proud and began to make claims of godhood. The Holy Qur’ān says about the likes of him:

‘No indeed; surely Man waxes insolent, for he thinks himself self sufficient. Surely unto thy Lord is the Returning.’ [94:6]

All his wise men and learned advisors counselled him against these arrogant claims and said: ‘O Shaddād, there is a Creator above you who is All-Powerful over life and we are but His creatures. If He wills, we live, if He wills, we die. He is the Creator of the heavens and of the earth, and all things are subservient to Him.’

‘Blessed be He in whose hand is the Kingdom – He is powerful over everything – who created death and life, that He might try you which of you is fairest in works.’ [67:1]

Shaddād in his pride and self-conceit said: ‘Let him be the god of the heavens then; I will be the god here on earth. I can also give life and death.’ To demonstrate this ability, he had one

hundred prisoners brought before him, and fifty of these he killed, and fifty of them he set free. The wise men said: ‘Allah Almighty created the heavens with paradise full of ineffable delights and indescribable beauty which the true believer shall enjoy in their life after death, after the Day of Judgement. And in it shall be what you desire for yourselves and what delights the eye and you shall abide therein for ever. And He also created the hells for the likes of you, Shaddād, and for the rebellious, disbelieving folk who shall be punished therein with terrible torment.’

Shaddād replied: “He may be the god of the heavenly being; my reign is over the creatures of this world. He may promise a paradise in the other world; I will create one now for my creatures in this life.”

So he ordered the building of a worldly paradise, similar to what Allah Almighty has described in the Scripture of the paradise in the Hereafter. Shaddād called together 10,000 of the best artisans and builders at his court, and ordered them to find a place of perfect climate, of sweet water and clean air, complete with fragrant flowers, green meadows and shady grove, and to build there a paradisiacal city, the likes of which the world has never seen. The architects and builders set out to look for such a place, and they combed the far corners of the earth until they came across just such an area on the borders of the land of Shām (the region around Damascus). The air there was pleasant and fresh, sweet, clean waters flowed down from the mountains, and all was as agreeable as could be imagined.

They informed the king of the location, and Shaddād ordered 70,000 architects to build 700,000 houses in that place. The builders said: ‘We will need 100,000 times 100,000 pieces of gold and silver, diamonds, rubies and garnets, emeralds, pearls, turquoise, olivine and corals, and many other precious stones to build this paradise, among them luminous stones which shine with a light of their own. Also we will need hundreds of thousands of gallons of rose oil, jasmine oil, oil of lilies, of cloves, of narcissus, violets and the like. And as building materials we need wood, and marble and sand.’ Shaddād said to them: ‘The whole world is under my command; go then from end to end and take what is necessary for your task.’

So they set out and went from country to country and took from people whatever they needed. They confiscated their gold, their jewels, their most precious possessions and began sending them to the intended building site. The fishermen of Rūm (the Greeks) were ordered to fish for pearls and for mother-of-pearl, the diamond mines of India were exploited, as were the gemstones of China and Kashmir; garnets from Khurazan, the jewels of Khatan and Ceylon, all the costly scents and spices of China and Malaysia, the cloves, cardamom, cinnamon, saffron and many more things were all taken by force from their owners and carried off. From the Western countries they fetched all sorts of fine coloured glass and manufactured wares, and they brought marble from Italy.

Again they set out and collected as much timber as they could find, among it oaks, cypresses and pines, cedars, mahogany and boxwood, teak, sandal and elm. They cut them on the thirteenth day of Teşrin (October, November), so they would not easily rot over time. Also they collected from the mountains around Damascus, the Yemen and Shiraz many tons of roses, and they extracted their precious oil, and distilled rosewater in such quantities as to fill running streams. And they brought precious, embroidered stuffs from China, Persia and Greece and piled them all up in one place. Then, when all the materials had been assembled, the builders began their work. At first they constructed a mighty fortress with one thousand gates. They went on to build many palaces and pavilions, villas and mansions, all of which were inlaid with silver and gold, and their draperies were of heavy brocade. Into the mortar they mixed musk and amber and rosewater. The window frames were inlaid with gold, beautifully carved, and the ceilings of the rooms were studded with priceless gems. The stairways were made of silver and gold and decorated with pearls, diamonds and rubies. In every corner of these palaces there were incense burners that gave off the fragrance of musk and amber, frankincense and myrrh to delight the senses of those who dwelt therein.

Then they built golden pools with fountains of silver, and they placed within them fishes made of various kinds of shining jewels that caught and reflected the sunlight so that they dazzled

and sparkled in a charming fashion. Gardens were planned, and resting places, which were furnished with precious carpets. Onto the trees they hung leaves of emerald, peridot and garnet, and they fashioned fruits of rubies and topaz and beryl. Flowers there were in flowerbeds made of precious stones, and they had the shapes of roses, carnations, lilies, violets, jasmine, hyacinth and narcissus. The birds that flew in these gardens were made of silver and gold, embellished with gems. These birds were hollow inside, so that when the wind blew on them, they each emitted a different whistle, and it was a great pleasure to hear their song. In the alcoves they placed gem-studded seats and benches, and along the roads of this bejewelled city there were running streams. The banks of these streams were made of gold and marble, and they were planted with many different kinds of trees; cypress and cinnabar, willow and poplar that shaded the benches beneath them with their branches, so that the rays of the sun would not trouble those taking their rest. In brief, the marvels of this artificial paradise were beyond description. And its wonders were many, and the tongue falters and the pen fails to describe all the precious things they built. This city is mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān where it is said:

'Hast thou not seen how thy Lord did with 'Ād, Iram of the pillars, the like of which was never created in the land.' [89:5]

And they named the city of Shaddād 'Shahristan Baghi-Iram', the City of the Gardens of Iram.

All in all it took one hundred years to complete the construction of that city. When it was done, the builders came to Shaddād and asked him what else he wished to have built. He said: 'Build me therein a fortress made all of silver, in its midst a palace of gold with pleasurable pavilions of gem-studded walls, and in the middle place a throne made of rubies and emeralds. The corners of that throne should be shaped as golden peacocks and Humā-birds, and make their beaks of coral and their eyes of garnet. Their feet should be made of olivine, and their feathers of pearls, emeralds and rubies. Then fill their bellies with incense of amber and musk, so that when the wind blows through them, the fragrance of their breath will fill the air to delight all those present. And make the windows of pearls, and place them in such a way, that the rays

of the sun will fall through their crystal and ignite the burners. Around my private palace build one thousand mansions for those who are my closest associates, and make these of solid gold. And the stables for the animals, make them of silver. Forget not to build 10,000 kitchens wherein the food for all the inhabitants of paradise will be prepared.' And the builders went and fulfilled all the king's wishes as he ordered.

Then word was sent out to all the far provinces of Rum, Circassia and China, of India, Abyssinia, Kashmir, Turkestan and Arabia for the most handsome youths and most beautiful virgin girls to be brought to the king's palace where they were instructed in the arts of music and dance, and they were taught to play all sorts of musical instruments: flutes and rebabs and cymbals. These were to be the Huris and Ghilmān of the paradise of Shaddād. They instructed them in these arts until each one of them had become a master of perfection. Then Shaddād sent out his messengers and envoys, to have all the world come and gather at the site, for he was going to show them paradise. So word went out to the world that the 'god' of the earth was going to open his paradise.

All the criminals and mischief-makers from all over assembled, and in the morning Shaddād formed a great procession with cymbals and drums to lead the folk into paradise. They tied the throne of Shaddād onto two elephants, and his accompaniment were 100,000 Huris and Ghilmān, along with several 100,000 soldiers. Thus they approached the gates of the paradise garden, until they were only one farsakh away from it. Shaddād then ordered a halt and decreed that everyone should spend the night in that place and enter the garden in the morning.

But in the night, Allah Almighty sent one of His angels, and that angel let out a mighty cry which took away the souls of all those assembled there. So not one of them ever reached that precious garden, and Allah then hid it from the view of the world."

The Jews then asked the Holy prophet: "*Will nobody ever see that paradise?*"

The Prophet ﷺ answered: "After my time there will be one person of my nation by the name of 'Abdullāh who will witness those splendours. He will be a person of reddish complexion, short stature, knit brow and having a black mole on his face. This person will reach the garden, and he will carry home with him one camel-load of jewels and pearls from there. But at the end of times Allah Almighty will lift the veil from peoples' eyes and they will openly behold all the marvels of that paradise of the King Shaddād."

Prophet David

“O Muhammad, tell us about the heavenly scriptures that were revealed to the Prophet David ﷺ.”

THE HOLY PROPHET ﷺ answered them: “King David ﷺ and his wife vowed that if they were to be given a son, David would leave his kingdom to him. A son was born to them, and they named him Solomon. But subsequently nine other sons were born, and they remained in confusion as to which of them should inherit the kingdom. The All-Knowing Lord sent to David a written leaf from paradise, as well as the ring that Adam ﷺ had brought with him, and all creatures were made subservient to the owner of that ring.

On that heavenly leaf were inscribed eleven questions, and Gabriel ﷺ appeared to David ﷺ and said: ‘Gather all your sons before you, and put these questions to them; whichever of them is able to answer them all correctly you shall set him to reign in your place, and to him you shall also bequeath the ring that has come to you, for your appointed hour is approaching.’

David called all his sons to him and asked them the eleven questions, but none was able to answer them except Solomon.

These were the questions:

FIRST: What is the most deficient and useless part of man?

Solomon answered: ‘His Nafs!’ (his lower appetitive nature).

SECOND: What is the most bitter thing in the world?

Solomon answered: ‘It is poverty!’

THIRD: What is the sweetest thing in the world?

‘The sweetest thing is wealth and possessions,’ answered Solomon.

FOURTH: What is the most mischief-creating thing in the world?

Solomon said: ‘Women!’

FIFTH: If man stays away from it, it means safety to him. What is this?

Solomon answered: ‘The world, worldliness!’

SIXTH: What is more lofty than the skies, though it may exist in the world?

Solomon said: ‘A just king. The justice of a ruler is higher than the skies!’

SEVENTH: Which thing is harder than rock?

Said Solomon: ‘The hearts of those who are patient with their poverty!’

EIGHTH: What is better fuel for the fire than dry straw?

Solomon answered: ‘Greed and avarice!’

NINTH: Are there more men than women?

Solomon said: ‘There are more women, for the men who are under the command of women are also counted as women!’

TENTH: Which is greater: the number of the dead, or the number of the living in the world?

‘The number of the dead,’ said Solomon, ‘for the living soon will be dead as well.’

ELEVENTH: Are there more ruins in the world, or more intact buildings?

Solomon answered: ‘There are more ruins, for whatever is standing now, will soon be ruined, and pass away.’

This is how Solomon gave answers to all the questions his father put to him, and Allah Almighty commanded David to give him his ring and his reign, and Allah knows what is hidden and what is manifest.”

The tomb of Prophet Solomon

They asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: *“Tell us about the tomb of Prophet Solomon; where is it located?”*

THE HOLY PROPHET, the Light of the Worlds ﷺ replied: “The tomb of Solomon, the prophet-king ﷺ is on his throne. Wherever his throne is, there is also his tomb. This is how it came to be:

Solomon ﷺ ordered the building of the temple at Jerusalem. When the building was about to be completed, Solomon came and stood watching the builders at their work, leaning on his staff. The Command went out from the Almighty for the Angel of Death to take the soul of Solomon at the very place he was standing. The angel took his soul, yet the lifeless body did not fall over, it remained leaning against his staff and stood looking life-like and uncorrupted. Nobody knew that the soul of Solomon had already departed from the world. All the workers under his command, men, jinn and fairies continued to do their work convinced that their king was overseeing them for quite a number of days.

Finally a little woodworm attacked the staff of Solomon and began to hollow it out from the inside, and after some time, the stick broke in two and fell to the ground. The unsupported body of the king now also fell over, and this was how they learned of King Solomon’s death. The giants and fairies took and carried him onto his throne and set it on an island in the seventh sea. On this island was a mountain in which was a cave wherein they placed the body of Solomon ﷺ, seated on his throne. There he remains to this very day.”

Prophets who were raised to Heaven

They asked: *“Who were the prophets who ascended to the heavens without having tasted death?”*

THE HOLY PROPHET answered: “The first of these prophets was Adam ﷺ. Allah Almighty created Adam and He created for him a mount of white musk on whose back Adam would ascend to the heavens and visit paradise.

The second was Idrīs (Enoch) ﷺ, the third was Jesus ﷺ, the fourth one myself. Allah Almighty ordered my ascent to the heavens on the night of Miraj and sent the Angel Gabriel to fetch me and to show me heaven and hell.

The fifth prophet was Moses’s brother Hārūn ﷺ (Aaron.) When Aaron’s death was approaching, Allah Almighty ordered Moses ﷺ:

‘Take Aaron, your brother, with you to a certain place in the desert.’ Moses and Aaron betook themselves to the designated place. There they beheld a gigantic tree on which were suspended all the various fruits that are found in the world. In the shade of that tree they saw a bench. Aaron, who was very old, said to Moses:

‘O my brother, let me sit and rest just one minute on that bench!’ Moses consented, Aaron lay down on the bench, and Allah Commanded the angel ‘Azrā’īl to quickly fetch Aaron’s soul. The angels came and transported the bench up to the heavens, Aaron lying upon it. Moses remained all by himself and wept, then he returned to the Children of Israel.

Seeing him returning all alone, they asked him about his brother, Aaron. Moses answered them and said: ‘Aaron, my brother, has passed away; the angels have taken his body away, up to the heavens.’

The people of Israel, always sceptical, said:

‘What do dead bodies have to do with heaven? You must have killed him yourself!’

Upon this Moses became very aggrieved and he prayed to his Lord to free him from suspicion. The Lord revealed to him:

‘Say to the People of Israel to go to a certain place in the desert, and let them see what they will find there.’

So Moses led the people to that place in the desert, and as they stood there, a bench was seen being lowered from the skies, and on it was the body of Aaron. Moses asked of his dead brother:

‘O my brother, who murdered you?’

‘No one has murdered me,’ replied the body, ‘I have died a natural death at my appointed hour.’ When the Children of Israel heard this answer, they repented and asked forgiveness for having accused their Prophet of such a crime.

Then Aaron عليه السلام and the bench disappeared again up into the heavens.”

Prophets who are still alive on earth

“O *Muhammad*,” they said, “*who are the prophets who are still alive, be it in the heavens or on the earth?*”

THE HOLY PROPHET answered: “There are four prophets who are still alive, two of them on the earth, and two of them in the heavens. Idrīs عليه السلام and Jesus عليه السلام are in the heavens and on the earth remain Khidr and Ilyās (Elijah) عليه السلام.

The story of Idrīs (Enoch) is this: One day Idrīs (Enoch) was praying in the Holy Mosque while the weather was exceedingly hot. He prayed and spoke to his Lord:

‘It must be a terribly difficult job to look after the sun; the angels in charge of it must have a very hard time. I pray Thee to give strength and good faith to the angels upon whom this service is incumbent.’

Allah heard this prayer of Idrīs عليه السلام and on its strength He blessed the angels and gave them more patience and power. The angels were most grateful and took a special liking to Idrīs, the prophet عليه السلام, and they asked for permission for Idrīs to visit them. An angel invited Idrīs to come and see him in the skies, but Idrīs said:

‘O my angelic friend, how is that possible? How will you take me up into the heavens to show me the sights? I am a mere mortal.’

The angel replied: ‘Without special permission it is indeed impossible. Ask your Lord, that He grant you leave and I will take you around and show you all the wonders of the heavens.’

So Idrīs عليه السلام set himself to praying, and his prayer was accepted by his Lord. The angel came and took Idrīs with him and showed him all the seven paradises and hells. Then he intended to set him down again on the earth. At that moment the Divine Command came for ‘Azrā’īl to take the soul from Idrīs. The angel who was befriending him said:

‘O my Lord, I have taken Idrīs from his people while he was in good health and full of life. If he now dies during this journey to the heavens, all his people will shower me with curses and blame me for his death – please do restore him to life by Thy infinite Grace and Mercy.’

Allah Almighty accepted the prayer of the angel: ‘Come, let us stroll about paradise for just another moment, it was so delightful there.’ So they went about the gardens for a while, and Idrīs was unwilling to leave.

The angel said: ‘Come, Idrīs, it is time to go. Your people are missing you, those you have left behind are weeping for you. Come along!’

But Idrīs answered: ‘I don’t want to leave this place any more. I have tasted death, I have seen hell and I have crossed the Širāt; now I have found my place, and this is where I want to stay for evermore.’

Then the angel was also addressed by his Lord, who spoke: ‘It is true, Idrīs has passed into his eternal abode. Leave him there.’ The angel obeyed his Lord’s decree and went back to his duties.

But with Jesus’s ^{صلى الله عليه وسلم} ascension to heaven it was as follows. The Jews had decided to put Jesus to death, and they took him and tied him and spoke to him:

‘You are Jesus, aren’t you, who raises the dead and cures the blind and heals the sick; if you were truly who you say you are, you would not have fallen into our hands, helpless and bound.’

They nailed together two beams and wanted to crucify Jesus on this cross, and they went off to fetch a criminal whom they were going to crucify alongside. Allah Almighty ordered Gabriel:

‘Go, free Jesus, My prophet, from his chains, and take him up to the fourth heaven.’ And so it was done.

In the morning the Jews came to take Jesus away to be crucified. Now there was one scoundrel among the Jews who went ahead by himself in order to taunt and torment Jesus before the others came to nail him to the cross. This one went in, but found Jesus not there, and he went out to his men to tell them the news of Jesus having fled. Now Allah Almighty made his face resemble the face of Jesus, and as soon as he stepped out of the house, the crowd attacked him, stoned him and beat him with sticks.

And they killed him, and congratulated each other on the feat. When they examined the body, they discovered that it was the body of their own leader, and they kept this fact a secret. They secretly buried that accursed one and went away. The Muslims of that time (the disciples and followers of Jesus) mourned for their prophet and finding out where they had buried the body, they began to visit the grave of that evil-doer.

In that time there lived a woman by the name of Miriam who was troubled by an affliction. One day Jesus was passing by her house and she sent her people out to call him in, so that he might heal her. Jesus passed his blessed hands over her, and from that hour she was healed. This woman believed in Jesus from that day on. Now, Allah Almighty ordered Jesus in the fourth heaven to make known to his disciples his true state and condition, and to instruct his followers and to appoint deputies who might carry the teaching to the four corners of the earth.

So Jesus was let down again onto the earth, and he descended on the summit of a mountain of that area. From his prophetic light that mountain top lit up and shone over a great distance. That very night, Miriam was weeping at the grave she believed to be Jesus’s when she chanced to look up and saw the illuminated mountain. According to a different tradition, this woman was the mother of Jesus whose name also was Miriam. Suddenly that light began to move from the mountain peak, as Jesus was walking down from there towards the place where Miriam was standing. She recognised him and fell down on her knees, thanking her Lord for his deliverance.

Jesus said to her: ‘O Miriam, the Merciful Lord has saved me from their evil and rancorous plotting; they have killed their own leader thinking he was me. Go now and inform all those who are mourning for me and give them the glad tidings. Tell them to come to this meeting place, the Almighty Lord has a message for them.’

So the good woman went and gave the good news to all the disciples of Jesus whose hearts were gladdened, their sorrow lifted, and they thanked the Almighty for His Grace. Secretly they all assembled in that place, kissed Jesus’s blessed feet, and they were exceedingly glad. Jesus gave them advice and instructions, and

told them to spread out over the world, and he gave authority for each one of them to be his deputy in a certain country, and to teach there the ways of truth. After this the angels came and again transported Jesus up into the fourth heaven. From there he will descend once more onto the earth at the end of times and will establish a rule of justice and peace. That will be a time when the wolf will run with the sheep and there will be no enmity between them. Jesus ﷺ will also marry one of the daughters of the leaders of my nation at that time and his life will be forty years, after which age he will die. He will lead my nation in prayer, and he will be buried in the grave beside my own. After him will come one Khalifah (Calif, deputy) from my house (family) who will rule the nation until the time is fulfilled.

There are also two prophets who have remained alive in the world; one of these is Khidr, the other one Ilyās (Elijah). Khidr was one of the close companions of the great king Dhu l-Qarnayn. Dhu l-Qarnayn and he roamed the earth in search of the water of life. It was Khidr's lot to find it, and thus he remains undying on earth until the Last Day. He is the helper of those in dire straits, at sea or upon dry land. Ilyās also remains living on earth, and once a year, at the time of the Ḥajj, they both meet.

Once the unbelievers plotted to kill Ilyās, and he fled from them and hid himself in a cave for one whole year. At last he began to feel constrained, and his heart was heavy, so he ventured forth into the city, to the house of a certain woman whom he knew. He stayed at her house and worshipped there. This woman had a son who fell ill, and Ilyās prayed for him, so he recovered. There was also a certain person named Al-Yasa' (Elisha) who served Ilyās (Elijah) and always accompanied him. But the unbelievers continued to trouble Ilyās and to offend him so that he found no peace and could no longer tolerate them. He prayed to his Lord and said: 'O God, deliver me from their hands and make me secure from their evil.'

The Lord heard his prayer and ordered him to go to a certain place in the desert. There he would find an ass, and if he mounted it, he would be secure from his persecutors. Ilyās did as he was ordered, found the ass and mounted it.

Then Al-Yasa' came running after him, calling:

'O Prophet of God, what about me? What are your instructions for me?' Ilyās could no longer answer him, for the ass had already covered a good distance, but he had a kelim (small rug) with him, which he left behind for Al-Yasa', meaning to say:

'This is my prayer carpet; I give it over to you, making you my representative and deputy while I am gone.'

So the prophethood passed over to Al-Yasa' as it is written in the Holy Qur'ān:

'Remember also Our servants Ismā'īl, Al-Yasa' (Elisha) and Dhul-Kifl; each is among the excellent.' [38:48]

The Lord Almighty gave Ilyās an angelic nature, and he remains on earth in a state of constant worship. He comes to the succour of the shipwrecked and those drowning in the sea.

These are the four prophets who did not die and who remain alive in the heavens and on the earth."

THE THIRTIETH QUESTION

'Uzayr and his son

“O Muḥammad, who were these people: the father was 40 years of age, while the son was 120 years old?”

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied: “These people were ‘Uzayr (Ezra) and his son. This was their story: ‘Uzayr was of the Children of Israel and lived among them at a time when their disobedience had reached new limits. They were entirely led astray, heeded not their wise men and prophets and even sought to kill them, choosing the accursed devil for their leader. The Lord was angered against them, and He sent Nebukadnezar, the king of Babylon out as a punishment for them. His armies fell upon their lands, destroying many of their people and leading the rest of them away in bondage, among them the Prophet ‘Uzayr. They laid the temple at Jerusalem (Masjid al-Aqṣā) to waste and killed all the 1,000 pious rabbis who were studying the Torah there. Then they desecrated the temple and filled it up with filth. They conquered the lands of Shām and Egypt, and whomever they spared, they led him off into slavery to Babylon. ‘Uzayr and his son were also led off into exile and served there for a while, later his masters set ‘Uzayr free.

Now, ‘Uzayr had an ass which he mounted and turned towards the land of Shām (Damascus). He rode night and day until he reached the region of Shām. He came to a village which had been destroyed in the war, but its trees were still fresh and fruit-bearing. ‘Uzayr dismounted from his donkey and began to gather some of the fruits, which were grapes and figs. Then he sat down in the shade of a tree to rest, musing to himself:

‘I wonder what this village was like before it was destroyed. If Allah gave me that knowledge, I would bring this village back to life and restore it to what it once was.’ He sat there for a while, thus pondering to himself, then he lay down under the shade of that tree and fell asleep. The Almighty gave orders to the Angel ‘Azrā’īl ؑ to go and take ‘Uzayr’s soul, as well as the soul of his

donkey. Allah Almighty then hid both bodies and what they had eaten from the sight of the world, and Allah is Powerful over all things.

Shortly after ‘Uzayr’s death, the king of Babylon, Nebukadnezar, also died. Another mighty king rose against him and attacked his lands with his armies, and took from him the provinces of Persia and Babylon, and led off 300,000 men into slavery. The king Nebukadnezar was killed in these battles. Subsequently the lands of Shām were repopulated, and the villages were rebuilt, and life took its course.

After one hundred years had passed, Allah Almighty granted ‘Uzayr’s wish, to see that village repaired and inhabited as it had been. He sent back to him his soul, and ‘Uzayr awoke underneath that tree, as if from a sleep. He looked about and saw that the ruins he had seen were repaired and he was very surprised.

‘How can it be that all this had been going on while I slept a little hour, how wondrous that it is all repaired within so short a time? Am I awake, or am I perchance still asleep and dreaming?’

He looked to the place where he had tied his donkey and there he saw the scattered bones of the animal. This made him sad and he gathered up the bones in one place to bury them. But when the bones touched each other, they began to connect in order and to cover themselves with flesh and veins and nerves, and within the hour the donkey was restored to its original shape. Then an angel appeared and blew into the nostrils of the donkey, and by the Will of the Almighty its soul returned to it, and it began to bray.

Then Allah Almighty addressed ‘Uzayr through His angel and asked him: ‘O ‘Uzayr, how long do you think you have been sleeping under that tree?’ ‘Uzayr looked up at the sun and thought that perhaps he had slept for one whole day, for at the time he had fallen asleep the sun had been lower than when he awoke. Then the angel Gabriel ؑ told him:

‘O ‘Uzayr, you have slept for one hundred years; you have been lying here as a dead one, and Allah Almighty has restored you to life once more.’

‘Uzayr looked around and saw that the fruits he had gathered had all rotted away, and as he looked on, they suddenly regained their former freshness and form. Then ‘Uzayr fell down and

prostrated himself before his Lord, overwhelmed by amazement and gratitude.

Thereafter he mounted his ass and rode towards Shām. He found that city repaired and built up, but he saw not one person whom he knew, they all had died from the passage of time. He came to his own house, and there he saw an old, old woman who was blind. He asked her: ‘O mother, is this not ‘Uzayr’s house?’

‘What do you know of ‘Uzayr,’ she retorted, ‘it is now one hundred years since he has vanished from the living world.’

‘Uzayr answered her: ‘I am ‘Uzayr himself, I have been asleep as dead for one hundred years, now Allah has returned my soul to me, and I have come back.’

The woman said: ‘‘Uzayr was a prophet whose prayers were acceptable to the Divine Presence – if you are truly ‘Uzayr, pray that my eyesight may be restored, and that I might behold you and see if you speak the truth.’

‘Uzayr then prayed over her and passed his blessed hands over her eyes, and by the Will of the Almighty the blind woman once again could see. At once she recognized ‘Uzayr and fell down at his feet, saying: ‘O ‘Uzayr, do you not know me? I am the wife of such-and-such a man whom you know.’

‘Uzayr asked ‘Is there nobody else left who knows me?’

The woman sent out word to the townspeople and they all assembled, but there were only a few very, very old people who had known ‘Uzayr during his lifetime a hundred years ago, and they were all confounded in amazement at the power of the Lord.

They called for ‘Uzayr’s son, and he came: an old, old man of 120 years of age. With a snow-white beard and bent double with age he came into the presence of his father who had not aged a day in the past hundred years. He fell down at his father’s feet and kissed them, then he related to him all that had befallen during the century of ‘Uzayr’s absence from the world of the living and they spent the remainder of their days in each others’ company.”

Those who spoke from their mothers’ wombs

Next they asked him: “*O Muḥammad, what can you relate about those who spoke out of their mothers’ wombs before they were born?*”

THE MOST ENLIGHTENED of Prophets, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā ﷺ answered them:

First of all there was Jesus ﷺ who spoke from his mother’s womb. During the months of her pregnancy, whenever Miriam’s heart felt constricted, or when she felt depressed, Jesus would speak to her from within her, giving her words of comfort and encouragement in a voice she could hear. Whenever she was engaged in work, Jesus would recite to her from the Holy Scripture.

Then there is the story of Jurih (Arabic: Jurīj). Jurīj was a monk, and he was one of those holy ones whose prayers are answered by Divine Favour. One day when Jurīj was engaged in his devotions, his mother called to him from the house, but not wishing to interrupt his devotions, Jurīj failed to respond. His mother was angered against him and cursed him. Her prayer was heard and this is what happened:

There was a woman in that time who had an unlawful relationship with a certain shepherd, and after a time she found herself pregnant by him. When her pregnancy became obvious, her people questioned her: ‘Who is the father of your child?’ She lied and said: ‘I was passing by the hut of Jurīj, the monk, and he lusted after me and used force, and that is how I got pregnant.’

They brought the woman before the king where she repeated her false accusation. The king sent out his soldiers to fetch Jurīj, and they went and brought him before the king, heaping insult and offence upon him. The king said to him:

‘What story is this I hear, O Jurīj? You are known to be a holy man, and now this foul fact is revealed about you?’

'I seek refuge in my Lord, the Almighty, O King,' answered Jurīj, 'this is a slanderous accusation; I have never done such a thing. Protect me, my Lord, take me to my mother's cottage and ask her if I have not been an obedient son.'

The King gave permission to obtain his mother's testimony and then led Jurīj to his mother's house. He said to her:

'O my mother, you called to me while I was performing my prayers, that is why I did not answer you at the time. You were angered against me: please forgive me now and relieve me of your curse, my situation has become difficult.'

His mother saw his plight and quickly forgave him. Jurīj returned to the king and said to him:

'Lay your hands on the stomach of that woman and say: 'O unborn one, who is your father?'

The king did as Jurīj told him to do, and the unborn baby spoke from within his mother's womb in the clearest speech that all around could hear: 'My father is a shepherd in such-and-such an area. This ascetic is without blame.'

Then the king gave honour to Jurīj and sent him away in peace."

This story shows that the prayers of parents over their children are heard and answered in the Divine Presence, and it is important to seek their pleasure and to answer their demands, so as to find safety from hell-fire on the Last Day.

The Prophet Jerjis

They asked: "*Tell us about the Prophet Jerjis ﷺ, O Muḥammad!*"

THE Holy Prophet ﷺ replied: "In the city of Mosul there once lived an infidel king whose misdeeds and misbelief were many and who was an idol worshipper. He had one idol which was his favourite object of worship. One day Shayṭān the accursed, entered that idol and spoke through its mouth to the king: 'O my servant, you have been remiss in your worship and you have failed in your service to me.'

The king replied: 'O my Lord and Master, I am your weakest slave, I serve you day and night as much as my strength permits me.'

Shayṭān said: 'I have given you such a kingdom and power over all these people, you must now order them to worship me alone and to light their fires in my name.'

The king bowed down before the idol and said: 'I hear and obey your command!' and he went out from the temple of idols.

He ordered his wazīrs and magistrates to go out and call all the people to a grand gathering before the king at Mosul. Then he had ten times 100,000 camel-loads of firewood carried to one place and when they lit it, there sprang up a fire so high and bright that it illuminated the far boundaries of his kingdom. It was as one of the fiery valleys of hell. Then they decorated that chief idol with ornaments of gold and silver and ordered everyone to file past the idol and to prostrate before it. Whoever obeyed was let go, but who so refused, was thrown into the pit of fire.

There was one person among the subjects of that evil king by the name of Jerjis. He was a wealthy, renowned merchant as well as being a God-fearing man, learned and wise, and a firm believer in the Unity of Allah Almighty. One day it came to his mind to go and pay his respects to the king, and to present him with some costly gifts from his store, perchance to give him guidance. So thinking, he set out for Mosul. His way took him by

the place where the henchmen of the king were forcing people to bow down before the idol and throwing those who refused into the pit of fire. When he saw this, Jerjis was gripped with zeal for his religion, and he thought to himself:

‘I will try to put an end to this heinous practice of idolatry, even if it costs me my life. If they put me to death, I will have died the death of a martyr and will have gained heavenly rewards and the pleasure of my Lord Almighty.’

Having decided on this course of action, he took stock of all his worldly assets, distributed them all in charity to the poor and the dervishes and men of God. Then he came into the presence of the idolatrous king.

‘O, tyrant,’ he said to him, ‘you have strayed from the truth; how far will you yet go in your depravity and corruption? Do you not fear your Lord? You have set up an idol of stone that does you neither good nor harm, and has no power to avert any calamity that Allah sends down upon you, and you are throwing the faithful servants of the Almighty God into the fire? Leave this nonsense and come to the true way; acknowledge that you are but a creature and a weak servant of the Almighty God Who has created the heavens and the earth and rules them with All Might and Majesty. Leave the way of Shayṭān the accursed devil, and stop persecuting the believers – turn back, before it is too late!’ In this manner he preached to the king.

Upon hearing these words the unbelieving king flew into a rage, and ordered his soldiers to arrest Jerjis. They grabbed him and led him to a tree to which they tied him, then they tortured him by raking his blessed body with an iron rake till his flesh came off and fell to pieces. As they were so torturing him, he cried out praises of his Lord in a loud voice and was saved from the cruel punishment for he felt not a thing; by the Mercy of the Lord no pain reached him. Then they took him and chained him in the dungeons and starved him there giving him no food or drink at all, and on his stomach they placed a huge stone. When night fell, Allah Almighty ordered an angel to bring food and drink, from paradise to Jerjis. The angel removed the stone from Jerjis’s stomach, undid his chains and fed him the heavenly meal. The angel sat with him throughout the night in blessed converse, then,

towards the morning he let Jerjis out of his prison and returned to the heavens.

Jerjis went straight before the Padishah and repeated his call to the way of truth, again trying to impress the evil-hearted king to leave his misguided path.

‘Who let you out of prison?’ roared the king, when he saw Jerjis.

‘He Who was before you were and Who brought you into existence.’ explained Jerjis.

Again the king flew into a rage, worse than before, and he ordered Jerjis to be arrested a second time. This time they nailed him to a piece of wood, and his body was torn to shreds which they threw to the lions. But the lions would not touch any of it. At eventide, Allah Almighty gave Jerjis life again and restored his body, then He sent an angel to stay near him until the morning. He went back before the king another time and addressed him:

‘O you misguided oppressor, leave behind all this evil and accept the truth: There is only one true God, Allah Almighty, Who has brought everything into existence when it was not, and He is your Lord of all the Worlds!’

Again the tyrant was beside himself with fury, and he said:

‘Light a big fire in the public square and set on it a big pot of water to boil, then throw him in and cook him in it, so that once and for all we will be rid of the pest!’

This they did and when they had boiled him thus, there came upon Mosul a mighty earthquake that ruined many houses and destroyed a great number of lives. But still the tyrant would not heed the warning.

After having been cooked and turned into steam, Jerjis was once more restored to life. In the morning he returned to the place of the king who was seated at his morning meal. Jerjis preached to him, but the king said:

‘If you truly are such a prophet as you claim to be, then ask of your Lord to turn these chairs and this table back into the trees that they once were.’

Jerjis replied: ‘Although I am ashamed before my Lord to make such insolent demands after all He has done for me, yet in order to allay your doubts and to set your mind at rest, I shall comply with your request this one time.’

And he raised his hands in prayer, and instantly all the chairs, tables and stools were returned to their former green growing state, they became blossoming and fruit bearing trees. Seeing this miracle a number of the king's retinue believed and embraced the faith.'

The king however said: 'I will not believe in your claim to prophethood until you perform yet another miracle. Restore the dead to life and let them give testimony of the truth of your contention, that your religion is the true way and our gods are false ones, then I may believe in you.'

Jerjis answered: 'O possessed one!' but they grabbed him and took him to their graveyard. There he raised his hands in supplication, and prayed for the dead to rise and testify. He had not yet finished his prayer when the graves began to heave and the ground opened up, and 17 dead persons raised their heads from the ground, nine men, five women and three children. The dead turned towards the king and spoke to him:

'O Padishah, Jerjis speaks the truth, he is the Messenger of God, and we have accepted his religion. Follow his way, it is the way of truth, do not throw your soul into the fires of hell, come to the belief of the one God who has created all there is and ever will be and bow down before Him!'

When the doomed king heard these words from the dead, he said: 'O Jerjis, you are truly an accomplished magician!'

In spite of all he witnessed he would not believe from the hardness of his heart of which the devil had taken possession. He then spoke to his Wazīrs: 'O my counselors, what do we do in this matter next?'

The Wazīrs said: 'In a certain place there lives a blind woman with her lame son. Let us imprison Jerjis in the house of that woman and leave him there to starve.'

So they took him to the woman's house and locked him in there. Jerjis said to the woman: 'O mother, have you nothing to eat in the house?'

The woman replied: 'The king has ordered us not to give you anything to eat or drink, and we, too, shall perish of starvation.'

Jerjis said to her: 'If I am able to cure you of your afflictions, will you believe in the one true God and follow his prophet?'

'Yes,' said the woman.

So Jerjis said a prayer and the eyes of the blind woman were healed and so was the lameness of her son, and they both embraced his faith and became Muslims. Now in front of the woman's house there stood a dead tree. The moment the woman and her son were healed and embraced religion, that tree sprang to life again and, gave fruits. Many people came to witness this miracle and they became believers when they ate of the fruits of that tree.

One day the king happened to pass by the house of that woman and he saw the formerly dead tree fresh and he wondered greatly at that. Asking the people how this had come about, he was informed that a certain Jerjis was imprisoned in the house and that due to his blessed presence the tree had sprung back to life. Upon hearing this, the king was beside himself with rage and he called Jerjis to come out of the house. He ordered Jerjis to be nailed to the ground with iron nails, and this they did, until Jerjis's body was once more torn to bits. They burnt the remains and blew the ashes to the winds. Then the king returned to his palace and took to his business, rejoicing with his companions that they had finally rid themselves of that bothersome nuisance.

But in the night that followed, Allah in His Omnipotence again put Jerjis's physical body together and restored him once more to life. He went before the king and this time his body resembled an angel in its beauty and loveliness. Seeing him thus, the king was very astonished, and wondered what sort of being had come before him, man or angel.

'Do not wonder at my angelic shape,' said Jerjis to the king, 'my Lord in His Glory and Munificence has given me this form, to show you thereby His Power and Might over all things. Come, repent of your evil ways and join the fold of the believers, before it is too late.'

The king said: 'I am not quite finished with you yet, there is one matter I would like to settle. If you accept this last condition then I will follow you after all.'

'All right' said Jerjis, 'what is it?'

'I want you to spend the night with me at my palace, and in the morning go down to the temple and bow yourself before the

greatest of my idols who is my god, then I will bow before your god.'

Meanwhile he thought to himself: 'If I can make him do this, he will fall from his station.'

Jerjis spent the night at the palace in worship and intense prayer, and the wife of the king observed him. Her heart was filled with intense love of God and she became a Muslim. She went to her husband, the king, and said: It is Jerjis who is on the true path, and it is our religion that is false. The king, on hearing these words from his wife, was enraged, and ordered her to be put to death forthwith. They slaughtered the woman and she attained the ranks of martyrdom and went in to paradise. Then the king gave orders to decorate the idol and to deck it out with splendid ornament, and they brought the thing to the main public square, where the king said to Jerjis: 'O Jerjis, now make true your promise.'

Jerjis stepped up to the idol, stamped the ground with his blessed foot and broke it to pieces.

'O idol,' spoke Jerjis 'now show us your true face.'

When the idol lay there smashed to bits, a gigantic Jinn came forth and tried to escape. Seeing the Jinn, Jerjis reached out his hand and grabbed him.

'O you gigantic mischief maker,' said Jerjis to the Jinn, 'for how long have you been in the idol, sitting there, whispering evil inspirations and leading people astray? Now you are finished, your time has come!'

The Jinn fell down before Jerjis and: 'O Messenger of God, release me, have pity. I repent of my mischief and I promise that I will never fall back on my word. Never again will I enter that idol, and if I do, then you may do with me whatever you will, I shall accept your punishment.'

The Jinn repented, and Jerjis forgave him and set him free. The king however said: 'O Jerjis, you have destroyed our most beautiful and most cherished idol which we have been tending for years; this is the last straw!'

Jerjis then realized that the king had no inclination whatsoever towards the truth and that he would not be reformed, so he prayed to his Lord for his destruction. Thereupon, descended a fire from

heaven, which consumed the evil king and all the disbelieving people with him."

And this is the story of the prophet who was put to death four times, and four times restored to life by the Power of the Almighty, exalted be He.

Jonah in the belly of the whale

They asked: “*Tell us about Jonah in the belly of the whale. What was his story?*”

THE HOLY PROPHET ﷺ said: “Allah Almighty once ordered a big fish to swallow up Jonah ﷺ in the sea, and He spoke to the fish:

‘O fish, I have entrusted Jonah, My prophet, to you, and one day I shall ask him back of you. I have not made you swallow him for the sake of punishment, and I ask you not to hurt him.’

So for forty days that fish swam in the sea with his mouth wide open, not even swallowing water. Allah Almighty made his belly transparent like a vessel of glass, so that Jonah ﷺ could see and admire all the wonders of the deep sea as they floated by. Jonah turned towards the Qiblah in the fish’s belly and prayed. All the creatures of the sea came swimming up to the fish carrying the blessed prophet within him, and he heard and learnt their various forms of praise and glorification of the Lord. Jonah’s voice from the depths was heard by the angels in the heavens, and they spoke to the Lord:

‘We hear a human voice of praise coming from the sea.’

The Lord informed them that it was the voice of Jonah, His Prophet, imprisoned in the belly of a great fish. Then angels prayed and interceded for Jonah ﷺ and the Lord Almighty answered their prayer and ordered the fish to set Jonah ﷺ off at the shore of that ocean.”

The Prophet Dhu l-Kifl

“O *Muhammad,*” they said, “*tell us about the prophet named Dhu l-Kifl.*”

THE HOLY PROPHET, the Pride of Creation ﷺ answered: “Dhu l-Kifl was one of three brothers, sons of a king. Two of them were of the pious and learned among the Children of Israel, and the third was a transgressor of the law and an evil-doer. One day their father, the king, passed away, and his throne became vacant. The two pious brothers were disinterested in the affairs of the world and renounced the kingship, so the subversive brother ascended to the throne, much to the sorrow of the people he ruled. For many years he ruled them harshly and unjustly, a great burden on his people. Then, one day Dhu l-Kifl went to him and spoke:

‘O my brother, how long will you continue on this misguided path, when will you accept your responsibility before the Almighty and stop being a slave to your base desires and a tyrant over your people? You have given yourself over to being ruled by your lower soul, which has turned you into a perpetrator of injustice. Reform your ways, and fear the Wrath of your Lord!’

The king replied: ‘Yes, my brother, you are right. There is no evil and forbidden deed that I have left undone. I have done so much evil that the Lord will never forgive me, no matter how much repentance I perform.’

His brother, the holy messenger Dhu l-Kifl, answered him and said: ‘O my dear brother, speak not thus, do not cut off your hope in the mercy of your Lord. He is most merciful and forgiving, and sinners there are many in the world. Only the unbelievers are cut off from hope in His Mercy. Know then that the Lord is forbearing and gracious to an unimaginable degree, and that His forgiveness is without measure.’

The king heard these words, and they touched his heart and he said: ‘O my brother, please go to a certain ascetic on my behalf

and explain to him my condition; if he confirms all you have told me, I shall repair to his hermitage and enact my repentance there under his guidance.'

Dhu l-Kifl went to that hermit and told him the story, then he came back to his brother, the king, and related to him the words of that holy man. He said: 'O my brother, if someone commits a sin and vows not to repeat it, that is counted as his repentance – howsoever great his sin may be.'

On hearing this from his brother Dhu l-Kifl, the king renounced his throne and distributed all his wealth to the poor and needy, and he went to stay with the hermit, and he served him and worshipped his Lord with the utmost sincerity. When it was evening, two plates of food were set before the king and the hermit. The ascetic said: 'Good news to you, O king, Allah Almighty has accepted your repentance.'

'And what is the sign of this?' asked the king.

The hermit said: 'This food is sent from paradise; every evening there is one plate of it, this night there are two, one for me and one for you. It means that your sustenance has been sent from the heavenly dimensions, and that your repentance is acceptable to the Divine Presence.'

The royal penitent fell down on his knees and prostrated himself in gratitude before the Almighty, and his heart was healed. He stayed with this hermit for some time, and they worshipped together in peace. One day the king said to him:

'O my friend! I wonder, is there anyone from among the beloved servants of the Lord who is higher in rank and Divine favours than your holiness?'

'Yes, there is,' replied the hermit, 'in a certain place there lives an ascetic more advanced than myself.'

The king then got up and asked the hermit's permission to go and to seek out that holy man, and after taking his leave he went to the place the first hermit had described to him. He found the ascetic sitting at the foot of a tree, engaged in perpetual contemplation and worship of the Divine Majesty. He gave Salāms to the man and sat with him. The ascetic asked him about his condition and the king told his whole story from the beginning. Then they busied themselves with prayer and glorification of God until the

evening. At nightfall the ascetic picked two pomegranates from the tree under which he lived and gave one of them to the king. He said to him: 'O Emir, good tidings to you, you have become one of the acceptable servants of the Lord, and this pomegranate is the sign for that. Every night there used to be one fruit on this tree for me, tonight there are two, this is your provision from the Divine Presence.'

So the Emir stayed with this ascetic for a certain time; he lived and worshipped with him, until one day it occurred to him to ask:

'O my friend, can you tell me, is there perhaps one of the beloved servants of my Lord who is more advanced and accomplished in his asceticism than you?'

'Indeed there is,' replied the ascetic, 'on such-and-such a mountain there lives a holy person whose station is higher than mine.'

The king then said: 'O my friend, do not forget me in your prayers and may your high station protect me; your company has rekindled in me the extinguished light of my faith.'

Thus he took leave of that holy man and went to the mountain on which the third hermit lived. He arrived there to find an ancient man with a long white beard drowned in light and in the contemplation of the Divine Mysteries, never separated from the Eternal Presence for a single moment. When the old hermit had completed his devotions, the king approached him softly and gave his Salāms. The ancient sage pointed to a place beside him and when the king was seated, he asked him about his life's quest. The king told him his story in full detail, then they engaged in worship until it was evening.

All around the old hermit there sprang up a patch of green herbs and from the cliffs there gushed forth a living spring. The hermit said to the king:

'These herbs are my food and that water is my drink. If you are content to share with me what my Lord has provided, be my guest, and let us eat.'

The king gladly agreed, and the old man brought him a bundle of those herbs whose taste he found sweeter than anything he had ever tasted, and their scent was finer than musk. He stayed with that hermit for a lengthy time, and they were constant in their worship.

The time came when the king felt death approaching and he said to the hermit: 'O my father, I have one request to make of you, do you accept to fulfill my wish?'

'And what may that be?' inquired the old man.

'I have upon my person a certain piece of writing; when I have gone to the other world and you find that paper on me, please bury it with me.'

And before long he surrendered his soul in the presence of the old hermit. When he was preparing his body for burial, he found the piece of paper on him, and it read:

'O servants of the Almighty Lord, there is no one more ignorant and disobedient than myself among all the creatures. Now I go to face my Lord with my face blackened. O my Lord, I have no hope and no protection, other than Your All-Pervading Mercy – forgive me and grant me Your pardon.'

Reading this note, the hermit broke out into tears, washed and wrapped the king's body in its burial garments and prepared his grave, in which he laid him together with the paper.

And may Allah Almighty have Mercy on them and on us all."

The people of ar-Ras

"O Muhammad," they said, "inform us of the Companions of ar-Ras."

OUR HOLY PROPHET ﷺ replied: "These were the people of Antakya. In the time of Jesus when God revealed his prophethood to him, he sent out emissaries to all regions to call people to the religion and to the way of truth. His messengers also came to the region of Antakya and reached the city. The king of the city was called Qatahan. The messengers told him about the appearance of a prophet and about his preaching. This king was cruel and unjust and had each of them punished for their preaching with a beating of 500 stripes. Then he had them imprisoned.

This news came to the Prophet Jesus ﷺ and he sent one of his companions by the name of Sham'un (Simon) to that area to help his friends. Now Sham'un came to this king's land and presented himself before him, but the king took a liking to this man whose form and manners were pleasing to him. He admitted him into his company and associated with him by day and by night for some time. Sham'un did not reveal himself to the king as a companion of Jesus ﷺ and according to one tradition, he wore the garb of one of their priests. One day he was talking familiarly with the king, and he said: 'O my king, the news has reached me that two men have come to you with a message from a prophet by the name of Jesus. Have you seen or spoken to these men?'

'O yes,' said the king Qatahan, 'I have, and I have thrown them in prison.' 'And what is their religion all about?' asked Sham'un, feigning ignorance.

'I really don't know,' answered the king. 'I punished them without asking any questions.' 'Why don't we give them a chance and put them on trial, questioning them about their prophet and his teaching?' suggested Sham'un.

The king found this agreeable, and the two disciples of Jesus were fetched. Sham'un asked them: 'Who are you? Where do

you come from? Who has sent you? And what is your religion?' They answered and said:

'He who sent us is the true Messenger of the Almighty God in whose hands is the sustenance and provision of the entire creation.'

Sham'un said: 'What proof have you of his prophetic mission?' meaning, what miracles has he performed.

They said: 'He has healed the sick, restored the dead to life and given sight to the blind; he has made dead trees flower and bring forth fruit.'

Sham'un asked further. 'Is this person here with you now?'

'No,' they said, 'we have come as his messengers, but we are authorised by him, and our prayer has the same power as if it were his own.'

So Sham'un said to the king: 'Have a blind man brought and we shall put their claim to a test.' They brought a man who had been blind from birth, and Sham'un asked the messengers: 'Can you make this blind man see?'

They answered: 'If God grants us leave, we may.'

'Let us see then what you can do,' said Sham'un, and the messengers raised their hands in prayer, and, lo, the blind man's eyes were opened to the world.

Then Sham'un said to the king: 'O king, why don't you have the idols that you worship brought, and we will have them perform this same miracle if they have the power to do so.'

The king had to admit that his idols could not perform any such miracle. They could neither hear, nor see, nor speak. But the king wanted to see yet another miraculous proof, and asked the messengers to bring a dead one back to life. They went to a grave and prayed over it, and in an instant the grave opened and the dead person in it was revived, stepped forth from his grave and spoke to the king:

'O Qatahan, be wise and believe in the words of these messengers who have come to you, they are sent by a true prophet, there can be no doubt. Regard me and my condition: it is now seven days since I have gone from the world, and I have been suffering grievous punishment for my false beliefs and my worshipping of the idols and turning from the truth.'

Then the gates of heaven were spread open, and the angels poured down heavenly light on the three messengers, and they were arrayed in gowns of splendour by the Lord Almighty. The king saw this and asked Sham'un: 'So you are also from these people of Jesus?'

'Indeed,' replied Sham'un, 'all three of us are messengers of the truth.' But in spite of this mighty demonstration of the prayer of the Lord only one person in that town of Antakya embraced the faith, and that person was Ḥabīb, the carpenter. In the presence of the king he affirmed his belief in the messengers of God. The king interrogated him and threatened to have him torn to pieces if he did not return to the religion of his fathers and turn back from the way of the messengers of Jesus. But Ḥabīb said:

'I will not turn away from the truth, no matter what you do to me.' The king then had him put to death, and Ḥabīb's pure soul flew straight to the mansions of paradise. The executioners hung parts of Ḥabīb's body at every gate of the city. The three messengers were also slain and their bodies were left before the gates of the city. The Lord's Anger then descended upon the town, and it was utterly destroyed.

These were the companions of ar-Ras."

The people of Ukhdūd

“O Muḥammad, tell us about the companions of Ukhdūd; who were they and what was their story?” the Jews asked next.

THE MOST HIGHLY honoured of prophets, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā ﷺ answered and said: “The Ukhdūd were a certain tribe which lived on the borders of Bahrain and Yemen. They were a tribe of sorcerers and magicians. One of them had a son, and he sent him every day to study with a sorcerer so that he might learn his art from him. Every day the apprentice would go out and return in the evening to his father’s house.

On his daily course he would pass one of the followers of the religion of Jesus, who always sat by the roadside, intoning in a loud voice the verses of the Injil (Gospels). One day the boy approached him and said:

‘O my father, what is it that you are always reciting, the sound of which has moved me to the quick of my soul?’

‘It is the word of God,’ said the dervish.

‘When you say God,’ replied the boy, ‘which one of our idols do you mean?’

‘God is He who brought all of creation into existence from nothingness: the sun, the moon, the stars, the whole world and all that lives upon it,’ answered the follower of Jesus.

‘O father,’ said the boy, ‘teach me this way, it seems to me to be the highest.’

And the dervish saw that the boy had a capacity for understanding and he agreed to instruct him, pledging him to the strictest secrecy. Every day now the boy spent with the old dervish and received the teaching of truth while his parents believed he was going out to his lessons in magic and sorcery. One day when he was again on his way to sit with the dervish, he passed by a great congregation of people, and he rushed up to see what all the commotion was about. On approaching he

saw that a huge, ferocious dragon had appeared which blocked off the road and permitted no one to come near or pass by. He thought to himself:

‘This is a chance for me to see whether the teaching is really true. If it is truly and rightly guided, then I will be able to slay that dragon by throwing a stone on him.’

So he picked up a stone, and, pronouncing the name of God, hurled it at that terrible beast, and by the Command of Allah Almighty the stone hit it on the head and the monster was slain.

The boy said: ‘*Al-ḥamdu li-llāh*, God be praised, I am on the right path, the Path of Truth!’

He went to the dervish to tell him the story. The dervish said: ‘*Māshā’a llāh*, good tidings to you my boy, you will yet perform great deeds in your lifetime for the sake of Allah Almighty, but say nothing about me.’

Now among the tribe of the Ukhdūd there was a great Lord, and he had a nephew of whom he was exceedingly fond, a strapping youth of handsome mien who, however, had been born blind. News came to him of the apprentice’s deed, and he had him called into his presence and asked him:

‘Is it truly you who threw that stone which killed the dragon?’

‘Yes,’ said the boy, ‘it is true; by the will of the Almighty I was able to slay that monster.’

‘If this is really true, pray for me that my eyes be healed, and that I might be made whole.’ said the blind youth.

‘If Allah gives light to your eyes, will you then believe in Him who is the Sole Creator of all beings?’

The nephew said: ‘Yes, I will believe.’

And the boy prayed over him, and Allah Almighty gave light to his eyes so that he could see. He went with this news to his uncle, and the chief called the healer into his presence, and asked him:

‘Are you the one who slew the dragon with a stone’s throw and who healed my nephew’s eyes?’

‘Yes,’ said the boy, ‘it was God who empowered me to do these things, the God in whose hands is the Power of Creation and Provision for all creatures in the heavens and in the earth.’

The king of this tribe flew into a rage and said: ‘Why have you left the religion of your fathers and are following this crooked

way? Return to the old ways, or else we will inflict upon you painful punishment!’

The boy said: ‘Do what you must, but I will not turn away from the truth and from the belief in the One God.’

The wazīrs of that king then said: ‘The cause of all this trouble is one old dervish who taught the boy all his crooked teachings.’

So the old man was brought before the king and they put him to death by quartering him.

Then the executioner was ordered to strike the boy with his sword, but the sword would not cut. They led him to the foot of a great mountain, and when they got there a great rumbling was heard, the mountain shook and quaked and all the folk were buried beneath the stones. The boy however emerged unharmed and went back to the king, exhorted him to accept the teaching of the truth and to affirm the Oneness of God.

‘How did you escape from the hands of the executioner?’ asked the king.

‘Allah Almighty has protected me from them and destroyed them instead.’

Thereupon the king flew into another rage, and ordered a big stone tied around the boy’s neck and for him to be sunk in the sea. When they were out on the sea, a storm arose so that the crew of the ship could see no more. Everyone perished except the boy who drifted ashore in the wrecked vessel and again went to see the king. ‘How is it that you are here again, where are all the men who were to drown you in the sea?’

‘They were all drowned,’ answered the boy. ‘Come, give up your stubborn opposition and accept the truth before the Wrath of God comes upon you, too.’

The king grew a little thoughtful upon reflecting these events, and he had to acknowledge that all those who set out to kill the boy were destroyed in his stead. The light of faith began to enter his heart, so that he and all his tribe entered into the way of truth and were saved from the Lord’s Anger. These were the Companions of Ukhdūd.”

About the seas

“*Tell us about the origins of the oceans, O Muḥammad!*” asked the learned men of the Jews.

THE HOLY PROPHET of the Last Times ﷺ replied: “The origin of the oceans was the flood of Noah. Allah Almighty ordered the great flood in the time of Noah, in which all the world was to be drowned. He ordered all the waters of the earth to rise and all the underground streams to flow to the surface. The angel Gabriel came to Noah and taught him to build his ark. While he was busy with its building, the unbelievers used to come to spite him, and they used his ship to defecate in, dirtying it. It so happened that they were stricken by a terrible skin disease which caused them much itching and stress, and they found no cure for it at all. One day when again the whole tribe had been to defecate in the ark of Noah one man was delayed and remained behind, and it happened that he slipped and fell into that pool of excrement. He managed to climb out of it and went home to wash himself. Having cleansed himself, much to surprise he found that all parts of his body which had been touched by that filth were healed and cleansed of the disease. He greatly wondered at that and hurried back to Noah’s ark and rubbed himself all over with excrement – his hands, his face, his head and eyes, all the affected parts of his body and when again he had washed himself of the dirt, he was completely healed and no trace of the ailment remained.

He went to all of his people and told them about the wonderful medicine he had found Noah’s ark to be full of, and they all came out of their hiding to hear of it. (They had grown so hideous with their affliction they could no longer stand the sight of each other). They all ran towards the mess, applying the excrement to themselves on all parts, and all of them were healed of the disease.

As a result Noah’s ark was completely cleaned and the people were healed with their own dirt.

Then Noah's fireplace was seen to emit a flash of light. Or, according to another narration, water sprang from it, and this was the sign of the beginning of the flood. The waters of the earth began to rise and gush forth from all hidden places, and Noah spoke to his people: 'It is time to board the ark, the time of Allah's wrath has come.' So Noah and his family boarded the ark, all the other folk climbed to the top of a high mountain, believing themselves in safety. But they were all drowned on that peak, for the waters rose forty feet above the highest peak. The earth was covered by water, and there remained not a living thing on it except for those who were in the ark with their prophet Noah.

After 40 days the waters that had sprung from the earth were withdrawn, but the waters that had rained from heaven remained, as they were the waters of Divine Anger. Out of these remaining waters the present oceans were formed. The reason for their being bitter (salty) is this: When on the Day of Judgement all of Creation will be required to pass over the Şirāt, the unbelievers will be thrown into hell, while the believers will pass over in safety. Then the whole earth will be flooded again with water, as at the time of Noah's flood. Then Allah Almighty will order the angel Gabriel عليه السلام to transport all these waters up to the seventh heaven so that not one drop of water remains on the earth. Gabriel عليه السلام then says: 'My Lord, I have done according to Your Command, what shall I do now with these waters?'

Allah Almighty calls the chief of hell to Himself and says:

'Let the guardian of hell pour the water of the seven seas down the throats of the damned!'

And this is done, but the water dries up in their parched throats before it even reaches their stomachs."

May Allah protect us from this terrible fate!

Amin.

The key to Heaven

"O Muḥammad, tell us about the key to the heavens!" they asked, "and what is heaven's lock?"

THE MOST EXALTED of Prophets ﷺ answered them: "The lock of the heavens is the unbeliever's unbelief and the disobedience of the denier. Who so does not believe in my mission and in the revelation of the Holy Books, whoever does not testify to the Oneness of God Almighty, he will not be lifted up to the heavenly mansions. The Mercy of the Lord will not descend upon him from the heavens. This is heaven's lock.

The key to this lock is the attestation of faith, the belief in the Unity of God and the mission of the prophets, the revelation of Holy Scriptures, the upholding of the Law, following what is permitted and leaving what is prohibited, belief in the Day of Judgement and all the events thereof described. The heart of a person who believes and acts upon his beliefs will become the key to open the gates of heaven on that day. The angels of the seven heavens will descend with the books of good works, and these will be the key to unlock the gates."

The mountain of Qāf

“Tell us about the mountain of Qāf!” was their next to last question.

THE LEADER OF ALL PROPHETS ﷺ said to them, “The mountain of Qāf is a mountain which surrounds the whole world. Our world is right in the middle of it. This mountain is made all of green olivine. The green of this mountain is the reflection of the blue we see in the sky. When Allah Almighty created the earth, it moaned and entreated the Lord, saying:

‘O Lord, why have You created me? You will bring forth a creation upon me that will commit many crimes and sins and acts of disobedience, and they will shed blood upon my surface – is that what You have created me for?’

And the earth lamented and bemoaned its fate and would not hold still. So to stop the earth from swaying and shaking, Allah in His Almighty Power erected the mountain of Qāf, which holds the earth in its place. On the mountain of Qāf, Allah created another world the same size as our earth. This world is inhabited by angels so numerous that were a pin to drop down from above, it would not touch the ground. Each angel carries a banner in his hand on which is written:

Lā ilāha illā Llāh, Muḥammadu r-Rasūl Allāh.

Every Thursday night all the angels climb up upon the mountain and surround the earth, praying for the benefit of the sons of man, saying: ‘O Lord, shed Your Mercy on the sons of Adam, make them safe from the torment of the grave and from the punishment of hell.’ And in the morning they pray for those who are making their Friday ablutions in order to go to the Jumu‘ah prayers.

The Lord Almighty answers them and says: ‘O My Angels, from the overflowing abundance of My Mercy I have showered blessings upon the sons of Adam who are going to the Jumu‘ah prayer today.’”

That is why our Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: “Even if the price of a cup of water were a piece of gold, yet you should pay the price to perform your ablutions for the Jumu‘ah prayer.”

The End of Times

Finally they asked him “O Muḥammad, tell us about the destruction of the cities.”

THE ENLIGHTENED PROPHET ﷺ answered and said: “The Holy Qur’ān tells us: ‘There is no town which we will not destroy,’ which is to say that at the end of times, Allah Almighty will send a plague of destruction to each and every place. You must try to be in the safety of my Rawḍah (protected sanctuary) at that time. There will come a time when there will be no more holding to the Sharī’ah (the Divine Law), and there will be widespread transgression, the world being filled with evil doing and immorality. Everyone will follow his own desires. At that time Allah Almighty will send plague and punishment onto the earth, and all cities will be destroyed.

The Hijāz and Yemen will be infested with disease. Medina will be afflicted by a disease of red spots. Egypt and Morocco will be destroyed by earthquakes. The lands of Rūm (Asia Minor) and the West will perish through famine. Persia will come to a sudden end they know not from where it came. The Banī Sufyān will be destroyed by a man from Iraq. Baghdad and Mosul and Diyarbakir will drown in a flood. Khurazan, Tatory and the Caucasian lands will be stricken with pestilence. Samarcand will be destroyed by the Tatars; Kashgar, China, Kashmir and India by the unbelievers.

There will remain no order in the world, then Dajjāl will come forth, and he will invade the whole world except for Mecca, Medina and Sinai. Jesus ﷺ will descend from the heavens with a white flag, and his white throne will be lowered from amidst the clouds. He will be the leader of the Muslims and will fight against Dajjāl and vanquish him. Allah will order the earth to hold Dajjāl tight so that Jesus might catch him. The earth holds onto him fast and Dajjāl the accursed falls down and is killed.

The Muslim armies will kill all his followers. Thus the world will be cleansed from the evils of Dajjāl.

Thereafter Jesus ﷺ will become my deputy on earth, and he will rule with a rule of peace and justice for forty years. The years of that time will be as one month, and one day shall be as one hour. After forty years of justice and peace on earth Jesus will surrender his soul while he is at prayer. All the Muslims will wash and carry his body to Medina where he will be buried beside my grave in the Ḥaram of Medina, next to the graves of Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.

Then from the East Gog and Magog will be released, and there will be three kings among them. One will be named Ma’lulan and one Taliun, and they will each have armies of one hundred thousand men. There will be as many soldiers as there are inhabitants of the world in those last days. The soldiers of Ma’lulan will drink all the water they find and when they have passed, all will be dry as stone. After them come the armies of Taliun, and they will drink up the waters from the wells and the seas, and they will dig up the riverbeds, raking through the mud in search of the water that once ran in them. These soldiers will be one yard tall and one yard wide, none will be any smaller, and they will be so strong that one of them can throw a weight of one hundred batman (2000 pounds) over a distance of a bow shot with no difficulty.

Gog and Magog are the descendants of Noah’s son Ham. They have no beards, and their moustaches will cover their lips. Their ears will be such that when they lie down, one ear serves as a pillow and the other as a coverlet. Their wives always give birth to twins and they depart not from the world before they have borne one thousand babies. At the place they will issue forth from there is a great water, and when they have drunk all the water of that ocean they will come out and fall upon the world. For forty years they will roam the earth and the Muslims will be powerless and in confusion before them, unable to fight against them. They will assemble in my protected sanctuary (Medina) and pray for Divine Help and Assistance. Then they will be able to hear my voice coming from my tomb telling them not to fear – Allah Almighty has promised to protect them from the evil of Gog and Magog.

Allah will then create a very weak creature which will destroy them altogether. After this disaster, their remains will be collected by the wind and blown into the sea, so that the earth once more will be cleansed of their filth. The Muslims will then rejoice and give thanks to their Lord. Thereafter the Signs of the Day of Judgment will appear.”

*

After the Holy Prophet ﷺ had finished speaking, all the learned men and scholars were speechless and highly surprised. For the Prophet ﷺ had answered all their questions, to which they had found no answer, from the wisdom that had inspired his heart and by the teaching of the Angel Gabriel ﷺ. The light of faith then entered their hearts and they attested to the truth of Muḥammad’s ﷺ mission, and accepted Islam as their religion, *al-ḥamdu li-llāh*.

News of their conversion and of this event spread throughout the land and many more people became Muslims upon hearing what had transpired. This was a time of rapid spread of Islam.

May the Lord Almighty make us worthy of the intercession of our Holy Prophet ﷺ whose light illuminates our path, *Āmīn*.

And here ends our account, which we have presented with the most favourable permission of the Almighty God, exalted be He eternally.

Wa min Allāh at-tawfiq! –

And success is from Allāh alone.

*

*

*

APPENDIX

Notes on Questions

THE SECOND QUESTION

Jewel – (Ottoman Turkish – Jevher) here may also be taken to mean “substance, essence”.

nūn – in Arabic means big fish, Whale.

It is also the letter “N” in the Arabic alphabet.

THE THIRD QUESTION

rukuʿ – the posture of the formal Muslim prayer or *ṣalāh*.

sajdah – the position of prostration in the formal Muslim prayer.

qiyām – the position of standing in the formal Muslim prayer.

Various names are known for the 7 heavens, as there are: Raḥīʿah or Raqīʿah for the first; Afnūs for the second; Zaytūn or Qizūm for the third; Arfalūn or Māʿūs or Zāhir for the fourth; Hayʿūn or Delw or Ṣafīyyah for the fifth; ʿArūs or Qiyās or Khalisah for the sixth; ʿAjmaʿ or Gharībah for the seventh heaven.

THE FIFTH QUESTION

These are the opening phrases of the Muslim ritual prayer or *ṣalāh*, and they translate as:

“*Subḥānaka Allāhumma wa bi-ḥam-dika*,” – Glory to thee, O Allah!

“*wa tabāraka smuka*,” – Praise be to thee, O Allah!

“*wa taʿālā jadduka*,” – Blessed is Thy Name and exalted is the Majesty of Thee!

“*wa lā ilāha ghayruk*.” – There is no god other than Thee!

This prayer translates as:

“*Lā ilāha illā llāh*,” – There is no god but Allah,

“*waḥdahu, lā sharīka lah*,” – the One, the Only, He has no partner

“*lahu l-ḥamd wa lahu l-mulk*,” – To Him belongs all praise and to Him the Kingdom

“*wa huwa ʿalā kulli shayʿin qadīr*.” – and He has Power over all things.

THE SEVENTH QUESTION

ʿArafāt – is the name of the plain and mountain near Mecca where the annual rites of the Ḥajj on the ninth day of the month of Dhul-Ḥijjah are performed. ʿArafāt in the Arabic literally means ‘discovery, recognition’ and is usually taken as referring to the meeting of Adam and Eve on the plain as told above.

nabiyy – This distinction is in Arabic between *Nabiyy*, Prophet, and *Rasūl*, Messenger. A *Rasūl* is also a *Nabiyy*, Prophet, but in addition he is a messenger.

THE THIRTY-SECOND QUESTION

Padishah – Turkish word for ‘Sovereign’, and was one of the official titles of the Sultan beginning with Beyazid II (ruled – 1481-1512).

THE THIRTY-FOURTH QUESTION

Emir – Turkish for ‘Commander’ and in the Arabic form *Amīr*, means ‘Prince’.

THE THIRTY-NINTH QUESTION

khalīfah – Ottoman Turkish Halife, is literally the successor of the prophet Muḥammad, the Emir el-mū'minin, 'Commander of the Faithful', the deputy of God on earth, the Imam, as written in the Holy Qur'ān: "We made thee a Khalif in the earth; so judge between people with Truth." [38:6].

Abbreviations

☪ symbol inserted after every mention of the Prophet's name. It is customary to add this honorific phrase or say it under one's breath in conversation when mention his name. It means "Peace and Blessing of Allah be upon him!"

عليه السلام symbol inserted after the mention of any other Prophet's name or any of the Four Archangels' names, or Sayyidunā al-Khidr, The Green Man. It is customary to add this honorific phrase or say it under one's breath in conversation when mentioning their name. It means "Peace be upon him!"

☪ plural form: "Peace be upon them!"

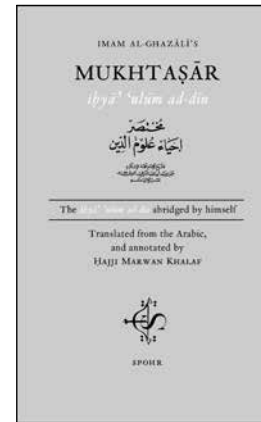
Qur'ānic References

All quotations from the Holy Qur'ān are given from A. J. Arberry's rendering *The Koran Interpreted*, Oxford University Press, 1998. The exact reference is given after each quotation.

About the author

The national poet, founder of classical literature, and spiritual leader Mawlānā Firāqī (pseudonym), actually Magtymguly Pyragy, was born about 1730 in Qaraqal'a, today's Turkmenistan, and died there in the 1780's. "His father was the poet Davlatmand Azadi, a Shahname reciter and a man of literature. At an early age, he studied the works of the great literary figures of the past, including Musliḥ ad-Din Sa'dī (1213-1292), Shams ad-Din Ḥāfiẓ (1321-1389), and 'Umar Khayyām (1021-1122) with his father. He then attended the Shirqazi school in Khiva, later on, he travelled extensively in the Bukhara region, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, and Iran. As a professional, Makhtumquli was an agriculturist, a silversmith, and a leather maker. Unfortunately, only a small number, between 5,000 and 10,000 verses, of his poems have survived. The rest have been destroyed either in the recurrent invasions of his homeland or in destruction resulting from inter-tribal strife." (cf. *Iraj Bashiri*, 1999, *internet*). –

His influence on local independence and autonomy movement in the 18th century was significant. "Over two centuries, his poetry dominated not only Turkmen, but all Turkic peoples living between Oxus and the Transcaucasus." (cf. *Youssef Azemoun*, *cit. Sochineniya*).



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